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The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

September 2023 - Volume 16 Issue 9

Feature Article

Fly-By Week 2023 By Tom Blake

[Editor's Request: If you have ridden somewhere interesting at any time and would like to share your experiences and some photos from your journey with other riders, please contact editor@flmsta.org to publish an article. Thanks!]



First some general information about the rally. Last year and this, it was centered at the Comfort Suites Marietta - Parkersburg about a mile east of I-77 on the Marietta, Ohio side of the Ohio River. This 2023 event ran from Aug 21 - 27 (Monday through Sunday), although everybody left for home on Sunday. Next year, it will be at the same location during the 3rd full week of August.

Norm Kern, the event organizer, had a selection of 35 preplanned routes (26 Road plus 9 ADV) covering southeast Ohio's Hill Country and southwest West Virginia's mountains. You could view and print maps for each route, and there were GPX route files downloadable to your GPS. All but the 4 shortest routes (80 – 120 miles) were divided into Part 1 (outgoing) and Part 2 (returning) each with its own GPX file and with a mom & pop eatery at the end of Part 1. Some route segments were identified as "technical" and had their own GPX files. Most routes (Parts 1 & 2 combined) were around 200 miles but went as high as 315 miles (the New River Gorge near Fayetteville, WV).

Of the road routes, some were tour-bike friendly, some had sharper curves and elevation changes more appropriate for sport touring and sport bikes. Some included "technical" segments requiring reduced speeds over county roads with potholes, patches, gravel on pavement, slips, etc. and were more appropriate for ADV bikes (although we rode one like that). The 9 routes specifically reserved for ADV bikes were broken into EZ, Intermediate and Expert.

There is a lot more useful information on the rally website: <u>https://flybyweek.com/</u>.

FYI - This is one of the best MSTA events I've ever attended, thanks in large part to the efforts of Norm Kern and his volunteers. The location and roads made for lots of smiling faces, of which, there were 160 this year.



I attended last year's rally so this was my second go at Fly-By Week. Last year I had a blast. My 2021 RT swooped through the curves effortlessly. This year I had to muscle it through every darned one of them. Wore me plumb out. Turns out, my front tire was about shot with about 10K miles on it and a nice flat, Florida stripe around the middle! I'd been riding the KTM all summer and just didn't think to properly "preflight" the BMW before the trip.

My usual riding buddy wasn't able to go this year, but a neighbor and fellow MSTA member, Doug Farnham, was. Owing to the August heat and humidity, we elected to trailer-up with an overnight about halfway. That got us to Marietta right around 3 pm when rooms became available at rally HQ. We had time to unload the bikes and luggage, clean up and then drive into town for some good food at Boathouse BBQ right alongside the Ohio River. Norm was already there setting up the conference room for registrations. He went with us. The food was good, and the river views were excellent. The Ohio River has a lot of fascinating history, and I find myself drawn to it in awe whenever I have the chance to see it.



Hillbilly Hot Dogs in Lesage, WV

Monday morning we were ready to ride. Doug was curious to experience *Hillbilly Hot Dogs* in Lesage, WV. The 95-mile tour bike friendly route down included a good stretch of 4-lane OH 7 which followed some of the Ohio River south and then Rte 2 on the WV side. We crossed over to WV at Point Pleasant and stopped for a break. Doug filled up, and when he went to restart his GSA, the battery was dead! Fortunately, a kind lady offered to drive him back across the river and south to a NAPA dealer near Gallipolis, OH. Then, with the battery replaced, we were on our way again and soon reached Lesage and that hillbilly haven. One of the signs there said "Jeet yet? Yont to?" We ate our hotdogs in one of two old school buses set up as dining rooms and appropriately graffitied. The whole place looked like a real hick dump – but on purpose.

The trip back to Marietta was supposed to be 131 miles of not too curvy or hilly 2-lane roads. We were enjoying this kind of riding but encountered two separate places where construction work blocked our way. My 2021 RT's nav system doesn't have a "detour" option. So, we got creative and eventually made it back to the hotel. It was a warm afternoon with temps in the upper 80's. All the other afternoons were milder.

The evening meal was downtown again but this time at an upscale place called *The Gallery* a block off the river. I had pan-roasted salmon, sautéed asparagus, herb-roasted potatoes and lemon caper aioli. It was pretty good.



The beautiful Ohio River

One of the other attendees, Bob Cowin from Knoxville, came along. Some others joined us at the restaurant. So we had a lot of motorcycle talk going on while we enjoyed fine food.

Afterwards, Doug, Bob and I strolled over to the park along the river and just took in the beautiful sights.

On Tuesday, Doug and I along with Bob (who

turned out to be a very competent rider), headed 109 miles west to Laurelville, OH and the *Ridge Inn Restaurant*. The route is considered twisty but tour-bike friendly. Part 1 Tech included a separate "tech" section which was an additional 72 miles of poor pavement, but we elected not to go that way. The ride back was 105 miles of wonderful Hill Country roads. Part of the route went through the popular Hocking Hills SP.



Upscale dinner at the Gallery Restaurant



Twisty, tour-bike friendly roads to the Ridge Inn Restaurant





Tuesday evening we took the rally-supplied shuttle downtown and walked a short way to another upscale restaurant called *Austyn's*. I had teriyaki salmon which was delicious. We were joined again by several other riders which kept the conversations lively. Also, Don Mroczenski and Ellen Kocher showed up there for supper. Very nice to see them both.

I was having eye problems and went to see an eye doctor first thing Wednesday morning. She got me straightened out and then the three of us decided to head to the Historic *Beallsville Diner* in Beallsville, OH for good home cooking – truly, it was comfort

food at its best. Beallsville is northeast of Marietta. The route up was 110 miles of sharp curves and elevation changes and then another 89 back.



Along the way, we encountered a large tree laying across the highway. There was no way to get past it, so we turned around, backtracked a ways and took another road which appeared to head in roughly the same direction. A few miles out it turned to gravel! Doug, with his GSA continued on. Bob and I lingered. Finally, I went ahead and rode several miles at about 16 mph to a T intersection and stopped. Doug had turned left but came back past me to the right. A few minutes later Bob came slowly up. Then Doug called and said he made it back to the pavement. So Bob and I plowed ahead and finally, with great relief, we were back on pavement again, too. It happens.

We took advantage of the food truck that evening right at the hotel.



Doug and I headed over to WV for bumpy and twisty rides

On Thursday, Bob said he had to do laundry. So, Doug and I headed over to WV and took WV 47, the old Staunton (VA) Turnpike east about 60 miles on very pleasant, not too sharp but still curvy and hilly 2-lane. We then turned north onto WV 18 for about 25 more miles of twists and hills. Next, we headed west on US 50 for about 16 miles. This was a divided 4-lane and sort of boring. But then we turned northwest on WV 16 and took it 16 miles along a very narrow, very rural, not really 2-lane paved path to Saint Marys. On several occasions following "Bumpy Road" warning signs, our suspensions bottomed out then went full extension tossing our butts in the air. This road would have been designated "tech". Finally, we meandered along the WV side of the Ohio River about 18 miles on WV 2 all the way back to I-77 which took us across the river into Marietta and our hotel. It was about 125 miles in total.

The preplanned route including the old turnpike covered 208 miles, but I had a 3:30 massage appointment with Ann Marie LaFrance out of western NC. Ann offers her exceptional skills free of charge (tips appreciated) at more than one MSTA rally, and she is without equal! I do not miss a chance to have her work my aching body.

Bob, Doug and I along with Steve Evans from Lake City and Ohioan, Brian McNeil (whom I met 2 years ago at the Big Lynn Lodge rally), walked over to *Wings* – a bar and wing joint near the hotel and had something to eat and a few drinks to close out the day. Brian and Steve kept us uproariously laughing the whole time!

On Friday morning it rained but let up around noon. Doug, Bob and I wanted to ride some of Ohio's famed triple nickel – OH 555. (Steve and Brian were off on their own rides.) This road is notoriously twisty and hilly with its share of dangerous 90° turns with barely any warning. You go over a rise, and BAM the road drops away and abruptly turns 90°! Trees and powerlines give no hint of these turns let alone their direction. I pieced



together about 27 miles of it between Bartlett, OH (at Rte 550) and up to OH 37 Knowing its dangers, I was leading conservatively. One sudden 90° bend had stones all over the road – a sure wreck had we been going our normal pace. And then, after a pause to recompose, we headed east on OH 37 to McConnelsville, OH where we had lunch at the *Blue Bell Diner*. The ride back to Marietta was 39 miles of meandering OH 60, which mostly followed the Muskingum River all the way to Marietta. All in all, we logged about 120 miles of really fun roads including the demanding triple nickel. So, yes - mission accomplished!



The Big Muskie

On Saturday, we decided to do the Big Muskie ride. *The Big Muskie* is a huge earth-clawing bucket (like an ultra-giant dragline) which attaches to a big crane. The route was 186 miles of twistiness with a planned lunch at the *Woodsfield Diner* in Woodsfield, OH. Brian, who lives in Ohio, was familiar with the roads, and we let him lead the way. I turned off my BMW Connected App's GPS routing and just followed as we buzzed past at least two big herds of deer out in fields. When we got to Woodsfield mid-morning, he said I could lead the rest of the way which was supposed to include a look at the Big Muskie. Well, I loaded the GPX file for part 2 of the route and proceeded to circle the block and head right back the way we came! We immediately got separated, and everyone else eventually headed the correct way.

Seems we came up to Woodsfield on part 2 backwards (!) and would then have to run part 1 backwards. Once I figured that out, it was too late. I loaded part 1 but did not disable part 2 (an unfortunate possibility, I discovered, for newer BMW's). So when the two paths crossed, I had blue lines running in two different directions. Doug called me on the cell about that time. I told him to continue on, I would see them at the hotel. I was sort of pissed – but mostly at the BMW GPS App the 2021 and newer models have. Everyone who has one complains about it. It was a short riding day for me. I did the 47 miles of Part 2 twice and missed the 139 miles of Part 1 and the Big Muskie. I was not happy.

Saturday evening, Doug, Bob, Brian and I had a couple pizzas delivered and drank a few beers in the hotel breakfast area as we ate. Then Norm opened closing ceremonies out back at 7:30 and thanked all the event volunteers, recognized the attending club president and area/state directors (but not mere area Ride Coordinators like me) and noted how many were in attendance by state. Florida had 5 (although he said 4) – Don and Ellen from the southeast, Doug and me from east-central and Steve from Lake City up north. I think Don was the longest-distance rider, but Norm missed it. Quite a few door prizes were handed out. Tickets had been sold during the week to raise money for the Ride for Kids charity. Two numbers were drawn at the ceremony to split half the money collected. Then, it was all over for this year.

Everyone scattered in different directions Sunday morning. Don and Ellen were on the road at daybreak or before. Doug headed for PA to visit a friend. I left at 7:20 and drove all the way home (app. 900 miles) arriving about 10 p.m. that night.

For the whole week, I logged just shy of 1,000 mostly fun-filled miles of riding (despite all the muscling, GPS and eye issues). Had we ridden up and back, it would have been about 2,800 miles in total.

I'm glad to be home, but another trip to Marietta next year is already swirling around in my head.

-Tom



<u>Safety Talk</u>

IMPORTANT NOTICES: Ultimately, the safety of motorcycle riders and their passengers is their own responsibility. Nothing presented in the column supersedes, negates or relieves a motorcyclist and/or passenger from assumption of personal responsibility for their actions and safety. [Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the July 2019 editions of the FLMSTA Gator Tale.]

Spotting Distracted Drivers By Doug Westly



Today, after riding home from my local dealer, and almost getting run over twice in five miles by distracted drivers, I decided to take action. I pulled up alongside the second one and put my boot right through...not really. I thought about it, though.

We've all seen it. Drivers using cell phones. Drivers eating a Big Mac. Drivers putting on make-up, shaving, etc. So, how do we proactively find these driving zombies and in the process offer ourselves at least a little situational awareness? As it turns out, there are a number of clues we can look for.

- *The Lane Wanderer*: The car that is wandering from one side of the lane to the other. Maybe the driver is DUI, or maybe they are too busy looking down at their phone.
- *The car that sits at the light, even after it turns green*: We've all been the victim of this one, waiting for the car's driver to finally look up and realize they've sat through half of the green light.
- *The driver constantly glancing down at their lap*: Now that Florida has (finally!) enacted a no-texting while driving law as a primary offense, drivers try to hide their phone in their lap.
- The "no hands" driver, using their knee to drive while they are busy tapping out their latest text.

And finally, the one you never want to see. Unfortunately, we read every now and then about a motorcyclist or another vehicle at a light or intersection, struck from behind by a car that never even applied its brakes or slowed down. It is obvious in these cases that the driver was distracted, most usually by that damned cell phone. How do you prevent this?

In the MSF Basic Rider Course, they discussed leaving yourself an "out" at intersections. This has become even more critical as distracted driving crashes continue to multiply. Whenever you stop at an intersection or other location on a roadway, you need to monitor your rearview mirrors. If a vehicle is approaching from behind and shows no signs of slowing down, you need to make a decision. It may be time to take defensive action and move between cars and lanes, duck off to the side of the road, or otherwise get out of the oncoming car's way. It is a good reason why not to immediately put your bike in neutral at a stop. Leave it in first gear with the clutch pulled in, and be ready to move, if necessary, while you check out what's happening behind you.

Distracted driving is becoming more and more of a hazard these days. You need to keep your eyes peeled every time you ride, especially in high traffic areas. You never want to find yourself on the wrong end of the idiot too busy texting to see you or the other drivers on the road!

Ride safe! – Doug Westly





South Director's Report

Stormy weather...

Well, historically, September brings the heat and the hurricanes. Please be prepared and ready to help others, as Idalia has come and gone. If you need help of any kind, and have managed to reconnect your cell phone service and Internet, let me know at <u>busavanflmsta@gmail.com</u>. We'll do our best to share your story with the membership. I recently traveled to Fort Myers Beach to visit with family, and even though we "toured"

the waterfront after sunset, it was still very clear how badly they were hit with Ian.

Hey, did you see how many photos of Florida's members were chosen to be included in the latest STAReview??? Prior and I are the two bikes on the way to the BBQ lunch ride... 🟵



Once again, our August brunch rides spanned the State. Catch up with Tom and Doug's reports below! The Southies gathered at Big V's in LaBelle for lots of gab and a good brunch! Jim and Buck were waiting for me at the 7-11, enjoying the "cool" morning with temps in the 70's. The ride was straight forward (emphasis on straight...) there and back. We were joined by five others, with two Spyders among them!! Dennis and Dorothy have helped Ellen to gracefully transition to 3 wheels and likely have many more years of riding ahead of her! And FYI, most of the riders rode 125+ miles to break bread together.

Two Spyders joined the Southies at Big V's in LaBelle

It had been 7 years since our last visit to Big V's. They spruced it up since then, and yet maintained their great prices and service! We would have hung out longer but the forecast called for early afternoon rains... Most of us made it home before the lawns received their usual soaking!

As we wrap up our Brunch rides in September, we will kick around the idea of Dinner rides for next summer's RTEs. Several States have experimented with the concept as a way to beat the heat, and still have members gather. Of course, some may choose to 4-wheel it for a variety of reasons. Remember, all brands and tire counts are always welcome!! Feel free to chime in with thoughts and suggestions. The goal is to increase participation among the membership!



Good brunch and gab at the spruced-up Big V's

What's Next??

We have two brunch rides and one lunch ride in September. We continue to spread out the destinations to entice as many of you as we can!! On the 17th., join the Southies for a **SPECIAL SUNDAY BRUNCH RIDE!!** The Outpost Bar and Grill in Indiantown only serves BRUNCH on SUNDAYS!! On the 23rd, join Tom for the East Central Brunch Ride, when we head to a new-to-us location, Kountry Kitchen With Love, in Vero Beach! And on the 30th., join Doug for the West Central **LUNCH** Ride, which heads to the Shamrock Inn in Floral City, another new-to-us destination.



Membership News!!

If you are receiving the *Gator Tale*, but not my announcements, **PLEASE** email me ASAP to correct my files. I believe I'm up to date...

THANKS to Don Moe for his efforts EVERY month to bring our Florida membership up to date with all the news about our new and renewing members!!

Here's what we know today...

These Florida memberships have recently renewed:

Dell Haverland Ellen Kocher Kim Krzywicki Bill McDaniel Robert Miller Kendra Semenick

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Jim FaulknerMichael KwonMabel NavarroBob SummersLynn TreischmannTom Treischmann

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and continue supporting their MSTA. If you have a question about when your membership expires, please contact the membership committee at <u>membership@ridemsta.com</u>. Renewing or joining can be done quickly and securely online at <u>PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew</u> or <u>PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin</u> respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STAReview or an ITR, be sure to mail it to the new member of our new membership team, **Scott Snedden**, **11484 Waterwood Dr., Tyler, TX 75703**, and not to the address of any prior membership director.

If you only want to update your phone, email, bikes, or other details, you can do so quickly via <u>PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate</u>. Please include enough unchanging information to assure the correct member is updated in the database.

When you encounter a rider who would seem to be a good fit as a new MSTA member, please pass along one of our brand-new **Invitation-To-Ride Tri-folds**! For each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a **raffle ticket for the motorcycle touring package drawing at our next STAR event**. Any new or current member who joins or renews as a Sustaining Member will likewise receive a coupon for a raffle ticket for each year of the new membership term.

Random Ramblings!!

We're at the end of our BRUNCH rides for this year. Cooler temps and longer rides await!!

With 3 rides a month, you have plenty of chances to invite a friend along and introduce them to our group!! More ITRs are available now...

We will continue to support our local, small business restaurants. Please send your recommendations to any of the ride coordinators.

Hoping you're living the life you love, and loving the life you live...

When you can...

Join one of our monthly rides!! And invite a friend to ride along!!

Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!! ATGATT Van MSTA Florida State Director





East-Central Ride – Kay's Real Pit Bar-B-Q, Cocoa, FL – Tom Blake



The (ah-hem) well-fed attendees at Kay's

The August East-Central brunch was at Kay's Real Pit Bar-B-Q in Cocoa. They've really enlarged the place since I last ate there. It started out in the 1960's (?) as a Fat-Boy's Bar-B-Q, maybe the second of many that sprang up in the state back then. The original was in Cocoa Beach/Cape Canaveral. Back in the late 1980's and early 1990's, Chapter N of the Gold Wing Road Riders Association (to which I belong then) ate there on many happy occasions. Around that time, the one in Cocoa became Kay's and has been in operation as Kay's ever since. It's always busy, which means the food must be good. So, I thought it would be a good spot for our August brunch.

Mike DeMario and I met in West Melbourne, got over onto south Merritt Island and rode meandering Tropical Trail (SR3) all the way north to Kennedy Space Center. The Indian River was to our left and the Banana River to our right. Lots of nice properties. It was quite a scenic ride.



Brand-new bridge on NASA Parkway

Then, we crossed the Indian River on a brand-new bridge on NASA Parkway to get back to the mainland. A left turn just west of US1 put us on Perimeter Road

around the Space Coast Regional Airport. This is the old Tico Airport and home of the Valiant Air Command Museum. That perimeter road has about a dozen curves that can be taken at speed. It's the most fun you can have on a motorcycle in Brevard County! Then, we ambled south to Cocoa and Kay's. Alan Spears was waiting for us.



Perimeter Road around the Space Coast Regional Airport

West Central Brunch Ride – Rooster's Cafe, Brooksville, FL – Doug Westly

On Saturday, MSTA'ers met at Rooster's Cafe for brunch. We can only figure that it was such a nice morning, some decided to go for a longer ride instead of meeting up, as we had only 6 folks for the morning. Nevertheless, Rooster's is a great family cafe. They were already holding tables for us, and we were welcomed with open arms. After a leisurely breakfast and lots of tall motorcycle tales, everyone hit the road again, most opting for the long way home on a sunny Saturday. If you get the chance, we highly recommend planning a stop at Rooster's for a meal!



Beautiful sunny day for the ride to Rooster's Cafe



Florida Rides This Month

Always remember to check the Florida MSTA <u>Event Calendar</u> and/or your email for updates on scheduled rides. Changes in times, dates, and especially locations are often out of our control and with short notice.

MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: **SUNDAY**, **September 17**th, **9:30 AM** – **11:30 AM**

- Location: The Outpost Bar and Grille, 14057 SW Golf Club Dr., Indiantown, FL 🕿 (772) 597-3790 (map)
- Description: SUNDAY, SUNDAY, SUNDAY!!! New-to-us destination that only does BRUNCH on SUNDAYS!!
- Contact: Van, <u>busavanflmsta@gmail.com</u>, or **2** (561) 386-2594

MSTA Florida East Central Brunch Ride

- When: Saturday, September 23rd, 9:30 AM 11:30 AM
- Location: Kountry Kitchen with Love, 1749 Old Dixie Hwy, Vero Beach, FL 🕿 (772) 567-6733 (map)
- Description: Extra good breakfasts, friendly service, reasonable prices. What's not to like? Though new to FL MSTA, this is an old favorite of the Space Coast BMW Riders.
- Contact: Tom, <u>tblake1@cfl.rr.com</u>, or **2** (321) 794-6147

MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride

- When: Saturday, **September 30th**, **11:30 AM –1:30 PM**
- Location: Shamrock Inn, 8343 E. Orange Ave., Floral City, FL 🕿 (352) 726-6414 (map)
- Description: Back to LUNCH RIDES!! One of our local rider's favorites.
- Contact: Doug, <u>flwingrdr@msn.com</u>, or **2** (813) 928-1663

Future Florida Rides

Note that the future ride events are included to facilitate longer term planning. The destinations and/or dates may be changed just before the ride dates. Please check the Florida MSTA <u>Event Calendar</u> for any updates.

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

- When: Saturday, October 7th, 11:30 AM 1:30 PM
- Location: LaBelle Brewing Company, 670 W. Hickpochee Ave., LaBelle, FL 🕿 (863) 230-7991 (map)
- Description: BACK TO LUNCH RIDES! Another new-to-us destination!! And a chance to sample some ice cream on the way home.

Contact: Van, <u>busavanflmsta@gmail.com</u>, or **2** (561) 386-2594

MSTA Florida East Central Lunch Ride

- When: Saturday, October 21st, 11:30 AM 1:30 PM
- Location: Goodrich Seafood & Oyster House, 253 River Rd., Oak Hill, FL 🕿 (386) 345-3397 (map)
- Description: Just too good to pass up!!
- Contact: Tom, <u>tblake1@cfl.rr.com</u>, or **2** (321) 794-6147

MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride

- When: Saturday, October 28th, 11:30 AM –1:30 PM
- Location: KiKis Egg House, 720 N. Charleston Ave, Fort Meade, FL 🕿 (863) 285-6072 (map)
- Description: And the "newness" continues this month as well.
- Contact: Doug, <u>flwingrdr@msn.com</u>, or **2** (813) 928-1663

For additional Florida events and information, <u>click here</u> to see the Florida MSTA website's Events page.

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The Florida MSTA chapter also has a presence on Facebook with upcoming events and past photos: click here.

Florida MSTA Apparel

As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to <u>mstaflorida.qbstores.com</u>. We have made arrangements with the supplier for our National Gearbox to





allow our State membership to buy shirts, hats, etc. with our State logos directly from the source!!! No muss, no fuss!! Order yours today!! They offer both embroidery and digital print options. Click onto the Embroidered Apparel or Shop By Logo for each option. Don't hesitate to contact Queensboro directly with any and all questions. They are very customer friendly. They also offer Polo shirts and T-shirts with pockets!!Shopping finds online...We found some fun motorcycle t-shirts you can order online. Click the image for

this particular t-shirt. There are other fun motorcycle t-shirts online at <u>https://teespring.com/shop/motorcycle-tshirts</u>.

These MSTA websites have extensive event information:

National MSTA <u>RideMSTA.com</u> SE Regional MSTA <u>MSTA-SE.com</u> Florida MSTA <u>FLMSTA.org</u>

We're also on Facebook: <u>facebook.com/FLMSTA/</u>

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Classified Ads

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to <u>editor@flmsta.org</u>. Don't trash it, recycle it! One man's trash is another man's treasure!

