



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of
the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 9 Issue 4

Events in April

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Feature Article

Passage to Panama

By Mike McCrary, Austin, Texas

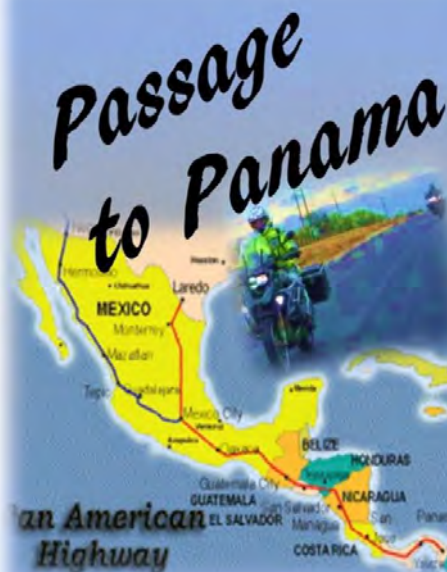
[Ed: This article was kindly provided by a fellow rider, whom I met at the RawHyde Adventure Rider training class in July 2015. The article has been slightly edited for publication and various hyperlinks added. Click on the hyperlinks for additional information. All photos by the author.]

It began with a discussion about joining another rider in South America for a trip to [Tierra del Fuego](#). His bike was already down there. Ultimately, his description of the trip and what he wanted to do were not too enticing, plus I was not enamored of shipping my bike there and back, so I suggested to Darrel that we ride to [Panama](#) instead. Just sort of rolled off the tongue. Simple. All land. Only 3,500 miles give or take. So [The Three Amigos](#), Mike, Darrel, and Olie, embarked on the *Passage to Panama* on February 9th. *Embark, Passage, and Panama* (as in *Canal*) sound slightly nautical, but our chosen mode of transport was not a boat, rather the best, big, wide, shaft-driven, dual-sport motorbikes that money can buy (more or less) – one [GSW](#), one [GSAW](#), and one [Super “Tinnerie”](#).

We secured our temporary vehicle import permits for [Mexico](#) on-line, so had only to obtain visitor’s permits when we entered Mexico at [Ojinaga](#), just across the [Rio Grande](#) from [Presidio](#), TX. I’ve crossed the border at Ojinaga three times, and it’s an easy transition because of its low traffic volume. In fairly short order, we were on the long, deserted road southwest. Our target destination for our first night’s stay was the [Gómez Palacio/Torreón](#) area, which we made well before dark.

The next morning we continued our journey south and, after 2½ days of easy riding through north-central Mexico, took a break in beautiful [San Miguel de Allende](#). The sun and cool temps had been a constant.

It was warm by noon the day we arrived, but we were still buttoned up due to the cold morning. We routed right through the city’s *el centro*: Three tall, loaded bikes; narrow, cobble-



stone streets; pedestrians; cars, taxis, and buses. The drivers in Mexico and beyond all have a habit of stopping at the myriad [topes](#) (speed bumps), instead of just rolling over. Continual stop and go on cobblestones uphill and down was not fun – we almost overheated. By that I mean us, not the bikes.

After a pleasant stay at a hotel that was reminiscent of the [paradores](#) in Spain or [posadas](#) in Portugal, we left San Miguel on Saturday morning. Against my better judgment and instead of using ‘pilotage’, I let Senorita Garmin plot our exit from town (by the way, her Spanish is atrocious). She routed us straight up the mountainside, through the old barrio, steep cobblestone streets and all. When I say steep, I mean stand up on the pegs, lean forward as far as you can, give it gas, don’t back off, and hope-no-one-gets-in-the-way steep. There were several turns to negotiate, even a car or two to pass, but eventually I topped out at the main road. Olie showed up a few minutes later, but unfortunately, no Darrel. After about an hour, I finally got phone service and had a text message – Darrel had lost us at one of the turns and returned to our hotel. No big deal – I rode back down via the highway this time, fetched him at the hotel, then met with Olie and set out for [Córdoba](#).



As we continued south, the highways ranged from deserted two-lanes, to fantastic sections of smooth-as-glass tollways, to pavement-sorely-needed, truck-rich “five lanes”. They were five lanes because you could get that much traffic on a two lane highway. The center section right down the middle was for passing, leaving two lanes as well as two shoulders. The shoulder would be where you go when a truck is passing another truck or bus. All swerve to miss the constant potholes, so when you’re passing you could easily get a surprise. But the drivers were not at all mean-spirited (ever drive in Houston?) and everyone seemed to know the rules of the road.

The ride to Córdoba was one to be remembered, as we had to compromise a lot: [Lane-splitting](#) when we encountered several miles of stacked-up trucks prior to one of the many tollbooths, then, when we reached a tollway that was completely closed due to an accident, lane splitting, shoulder riding, cutting through parking lots and gas stations, riding up the dirt “sidewalk” in town, etc., followed by nighttime riding to get to our destination. All against our own rules. After several detours, we were finally making progress once again, and made our way to Córdoba. Riding through the mountains, we topped out in the clouds. There were a lot of switchbacks, tunnels to negotiate, bonfires where trucks were stopped, and fields of rubble burning, which all added up to an eerie ride. But the hotel and dinner between ten and eleven PM were a great relief.

From Córdoba, we headed generally south to [Tuxtla Gutiérrez](#). The calendar said it was Saturday, February 13th, when we stopped there for the night. The land had morphed from [Chihuahuan Desert](#) and gradually-changing semi-arid landscapes to suddenly mountain-



ous and semi-tropical. The afternoon ride through the mountains from [Minatitlán](#) to Tuxtla Gutiérrez was glorious – a two-lane highway, not a lot of traffic, beautiful green, karst mountains.

On Sunday we headed for the [Guatemalan](#) border. Our timing was impeccable - the Pope was due in Tuxtla Gutiérrez the next day, and it would have been a madhouse. Our route was east toward Guatemala, and there was a constant stream of [Federales](#) heading in the opposite direction toward Tuxtla Gutiérrez. We had one military checkpoint before arriving at the Guatemalan border; they simply wanted to verify that we weren't carrying contraband. We talked, Darrel gave them some hard candy, took a photo or two, then we were off. The border crossing itself took about ninety minutes – no lines to wait in, but *los documentos* tend to take a while (a recurring theme). After clearing the border, we rode to [Huehuetenango](#), Guatemala, and found a great motel with an Italian restaurant next door, continuing our string of good hotels and food.

The next day's ride in Guatemala was a long and exciting one. Constant mountains. Very difficult to identify roads, very hard to find the right one out of the towns. Suddenly we would find ourselves “down-town” in the narrow, dead-end, and one-way streets, and the “highway” out was not apparent. We took one-way streets the wrong way on a number of occasions – people might point it out to us, but no one got excited. We also missed an unmarked, hidden turn in the mountains twice – both going and coming back after our turnaround, so we took some major detours.

Once on the right road, as we ascended again, the pavement disappeared. We then had a long, rough, ascending and descending ride of indeterminate length. In other words, we had no idea how far it was to our destination or when (or if) pavement would reappear. It didn't until we hit the edge of the city of [Cobán](#). It took us a while to find a hotel, and we even had a policewoman who was directing traffic stop her work, help us park along the plaza, and then direct us to a nearby hotel, all after dark.

We finally made it across Guatemala and entered [Honduras](#) on February 16th. The border formalities took two hours. We tried to arrive at border crossings and allow a few hours to get it done, and still make our target destination and hotel before dark. It generally



worked out, so there we were just inside Honduras at [Copán Ruinas](#). We were going to visit the adjacent [Mayan](#) ruins the next day, but it was raining off and on. Instead, we geared up and negotiated the wet, steep cobblestone streets until we were out of town. The rain didn't last long.

We had hoped to make it across Honduras and near the [Nicaraguan](#) border in two days, but that turned out to be “a bridge too far”, because of continuous mountains, roads of varying quality, truck traffic, construction stoppages, etc. So our second night in Honduras was at [Siguatepeque](#), north of [Tegucigalpa](#). We lost Olie for a time in Tegucigalpa (read on), but just a delay of an hour or so. The next morning we were off again, headed for Nicaragua. After yet another border crossing, we were on our way across the country. Our route took us on the north side of [Lake Nicaragua](#), but the volcanoes in the lake were not quite in sight.

Compared to Guatemala and Honduras, we saw improved highways in Nicaragua and [Costa Rica](#). Still very slow at times due to 18-wheelers, other trucks, buses of every type, pickups, cars, small motorcycles, bicycles, carts, pedestrians, cattle, horses, dogs, chickens, etc.

After leaving Costa Rica, our destination was [Santiago](#), Panama. We had spent the previous night on Costa Rica's NE Caribbean coast, in the small beachfront town of [Puerto Viejo](#) (“old port”). It was about 50 km from the border with Panama, so easy early morning ride for the crossing, and a very old bridge across the river. The crossing formalities



usually comprised export self, export bike, have bike fumigated (sprayed), import self, import bike, pay for insurance, pay municipal tax. After a couple of two-hour crossings, the next two were at least three hours.

Often the traffic on the highway just comes to a stop at speed bumps, construction, buses disgorging people, cars stopping, cattle crossing, people walking, etc. In other words, you have to pay attention. As [Ringo](#) shouted on the [White Album](#), “I’ve got blisters on my fingers”. Not literally, but last summer’s calluses were certainly re-established on my clutch hand since we had been constantly up and down the gears, up and down in speed, up and down in position, and up and down the mountains.

We became accustomed to using the “GS pass”: When cars and trucks come to a sudden stop at speed bumps or construction or any change in the pavement, we would zip around them on either side, adjusting the speed to manage the obstacles. Speed bumps (known as *topes* or [túmulos](#)) came in all sizes, shapes, heights, and degrees of abruptness. There were even times we used the edge of the road or the shoulder/[borrow ditch](#) if there was any real estate there. We’re on dual sports after all!

Darrel had one flat that he had to repair, and a broken mudguard to remove (his GSAW was really loaded and the back end banged down hard a few times). Olie had a boot failure and his top case bracket broke (similar reason to Darrel’s mudguard). But nothing serious. Olie tended to creep in speed when he was out front (not too often), and as he was opening up a gap on Darrel and me, he was stopped by the police. Luckily, no ticket or he would have had to backtrack to town and find the magistrate for payment. We were stopped to have our *documentos* examined several times in Panama, and saw a lot of motorcycle officers stopped beside the highway with radar guns. That’s what got Olie.

We largely navigated with maps, since the GPS simply doesn’t do the job in Central America. Its compass was useful, and it occasionally showed the highways and major intersections, but not much more helpful than that despite my purchase of Central America maps. Most of the time, I’d see a motorbike icon in the middle of a blank screen. I’m sure it’s the lack of good data that makes it almost irrelevant. Most highways were not marked, nor were intersections, so I led the charge based on the map and gut feel. An occasional turnaround resulted when the compass said we were not going the right direction.

The ride from the Caribbean coast south across Panama was through the mountains yet again, then about 60 miles of construction on the [Pan-American Highway](#). We arrived at our destination, [Panama City](#), around noon on February 24th, after 14½ days of riding. At about 4,000 miles, it turned out to be a few hundred more than my original estimate. We were glad to stop there, park the bike for a while, wash the road-weary riding suit, and visit the canal. We took one full day off, found a very nice, economical hotel with a great location near numerous restaurants, and a coin op laundry nearby. We all did a little laundry, including, in my and Olie’s case, the riding suit. Darrel had vowed to **not** wash his suit until he was back home safely. It was light grey starting out...

The highlight of the stop was visiting the canal, of course – and seeing it up close and in action. Amazing that it has been in use for over a century. That says a lot about the vision and perseverance of those who conceived, designed, and constructed it. New parallel locks (wider and longer) should be completed this year and will allow more, larger ships to pass.



We left Panama City Thursday, February 26th, spending the first night in [David](#), Panama, followed by [Liberia](#), Costa Rica. They were long days with no stops except for gas. Our return route took us along the Pacific and the view was beautiful in spots. It was Panama all day Thursday, Costa Rica on Friday, Nicaragua on Saturday, and there we were on Sunday evening, February 29th, back in Siguatepeque, Honduras. The border crossings, although not particularly busy, were slow and laborious, and we averaged at least two hours per. The good news at this point was that we were back in the cool mountains. Since crossing the mountains in Panama earlier and spending time on the Pacific side, it had been hot. The wind along the Pacific side had also been howling down the slopes, making riding a struggle at times.

We lost Olie in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, twice – both going and coming. When going south, he got up beside me (maybe not the best way to follow ☺) and was boxed out when I took a quick exit to our highway south. Darrel was farther back (correct way to follow ☺) and made the turn, so he and I waited for an hour or so for Olie to go up the loop for several miles, find a turnaround spot, and return to us. The second time, on the way home, I pointed out a McDonalds as we passed, but missed the exit so took the next one, rode perpendicular to our route, turned around in a gas station, went back over the highway and directly to the McDonalds. Olie had been in the middle, between Darrel and me, but somehow he didn't follow us out of the gas station. Nor did he come to the McDonalds, which we've talked about as our own special "town center", using their WiFi and facilities a couple of times. So we took off for our destination city (Siguatepeque), sans Olie. He finally called and made his way there after a couple of hours. I'm going to recommend he tether his bike to mine if we ever go through Tegucigalpa again.

The next few days would see us head for the northern edge of Honduras, where we hoped to visit the Mayan ruins that we missed due to weather when we were traveling south. Then it was to shoot across Guatemala again, but not too fast on account of the roads, their direction (they don't necessarily go directly to where we want to go), the towns, one way streets, etc., etc. But Guatemala is very interesting and has an old-world feeling.

The calendar said it was March 3rd – I have to admit that much of the time I didn't know what day it was; when you're on the bikes for an extended period, it doesn't make any difference anyway – when we were ready to re-enter Mexico from Guatemala. We finally found an uncrowded, efficient, quick border crossing. The formalities of exiting Guatemala and entering Mexico were conducted quickly and effortlessly by the two very pleasant immigration officials, maybe five minutes each. The only problem was that the two countries' border stations were separated by about three hours, and miles of rough, rocky, hilly, two-track dirt road and a wide, swift-moving river WITHOUT a bridge. The "ferry" noted on one of our maps turned out to be a bunch of long, narrow launches the locals use to go back and forth between the two countries. People movers that is, not built for vehicles, especially the big ass, wide-load, heavy, dual-sport bikes that we know and love...

To digress, we spent our last night in Honduras in Copán Ruinas, at the same small hotel we used going south. Nice people, nice little town, good restaurant nearby, a coffee shop that served espresso, and Mayan ruins to visit. The ruins at Copán were near the southeastern edge of the Mayan empire and were interesting to see, as were the colorful [macaws](#) flying around and squawking. So we had a rare afternoon off for a history lesson. Upon leaving Copán Ruinas, we crossed from Honduras back to Guatemala. Leaving Honduras wasn't too bad, but getting back into Guatemala was another slow-moving bureaucratic maze, meaning 2-3 hours in the hot sun. Nice officials, but officials and official documents, and getting said documents signed and checked and stamped, and having them copied, takes time. Perfectly understandable... you can never be too careful with gringos and motorcycles and immigration and customs and fees and taxes. No telling what kind of nefarious schemes we might have up our hot, sweaty, dirty sleeves...

Once in Guatemala, we made our way northward to [Flores](#), where we stopped for the night. It was our worst hotel of the trip (Darrel selected it). A/C didn't cool all night, mosquitos outside (dare I mention the word "Zika"??), bugs in the bathroom. But we survived and headed across Guatemala the following morning. We cleverly settled on a small, out of the way border crossing. Our maps showed it to be a proper highway, with a ferry across the river...

I may have mentioned that not only the GPS is useless beyond Mexico, the maps obviously leave a certain amount of information to your imagination. Our "highway" (shown like most real highways, a solid green line on Olie's map, red on mine) to the border turned into wide, packed dirt. Despite our hopes, not a construction zone since it never turned back into pavement. It just got narrower and rougher. In other words, the pavement ended well before the border; over forty miles according to Olie's odometer. We never saw the Guatemala immigration office set back from the road, but thank goodness they were alert and yelled and whistled at Darrel and Olie after I blew by. Back to the station, we learned that they couldn't properly export our bikes there. If we took them out of the country, there'd be the devil to pay if we ever returned to Guatemala. Somehow we decided that was OK (!) and had our passports stamped anyway. After cooling off for a while, back to the bikes and the dirt road. No man's land between countries (in an official, diplomatic sense) wouldn't be an issue, since Mexico was just a few miles and minutes away. Or so we thought.

After winding and climbing up and down on a two-track dirt road for an hour and half or so, we arrived at a small village on the riverside. The only concrete in town was a street/ramp leading down to the river. It looked promising until we walked out to the end – steep concrete steps that ended well above the rough river's edge. No way was any bike going down that. A couple of locals led us farther down river to a steep bulldozed road that ended on the same rocky beach. Then up pulled the ferry, which was a launch. A long discussion ensued. The launch was about 30' long, 6' wide in the center, pointed at both ends, and had 18-24" gunwales (sides). Despite the assurances of the locals, we thought, "How the heck are you going to get a big motorcycle on that?"

After returning to the village, cooling down with water and Gatorade, sitting on the concrete ramp, and carefully considering our status and alternatives – officially out of one country, no bike export stamp, not yet into the other country – we decided the boat was a perfectly rational choice. No, the bikes were not insured in that particular country. But I volunteered to go first, so back down the road and onto the rocky beach. The process was to remove the panniers and top case to lighten the bike (not by much!); get everyone psyched up; put a short, steep ramp alongside the bow of the boat; about five of us rolled the front wheel up, then alternately lifted



and moved the front and rear wheels to turn the bike; rolled it down another steep ramp into the boat; tied it down; crossed the river after a couple of swimmers navigated us through the shallows; beached the boat on the other side; pushed the bike up the ramp onto the prow; lifted it off. Voila – I was dry and in Mexico! Olie and the boat departed for the Guatemala side to get his bike, along with Darrel and his bike. After a couple of hours, they returned with two bikes on two boats. Olie’s boat had no thatched cover, so it must have been a freighter. The only place for him was astride his bike and he’d vowed to “go down with the bike” if anything happened. It didn’t.



As I was waiting in Mexico for the others, a great song from the film [The Motorcycle Diaries](#) sprang to mind: “*Al Otro Lado del Rio*” (the other side of the river). In the movie, [Che](#) swam it; thankfully, we didn’t have to.

After clearing the river and finding the Mexican immigration office, we mounted up and rode the hundred miles to [Palenque](#), Mexico (site of another Mayan city), where we took only our second day of the trip off!

The objective the next day was to relax, wash clothes again, repair Olie's top case mount and boots that were coming apart, generally catch up on the world. Then it was to ride the length of Mexico again, at least as far as [Matamoros](#), and cross back into the USA. So that's what we did, routing through Córdoba, the famous port cities of [Veracruz](#) and [Tampico](#), and along the Gulf Coast on a great deserted highway to Brownsville, TX. Nice ride back to Texas and home.

Our hotels on the trip ranged from acceptable to very, very good, as did food. Finding gas was never a problem. At most military or police checkpoints, they just waved us through, although a couple of times, they asked where we had been and wanted to see import documents for the bikes.

The standard question from John Q. Public goes something like, "Is Mexico (or fill in the country of your choice) safe?" I'd sum it up scorecard-style:

6,700 miles outside of the USA

6 countries

28 days

3 times one rider became separated from the other two (Olie)

2 cases of mild food poisoning (Darrel)

½ dozen times up or down a one-way street the wrong way (me)

1 *real* river crossing

2 small bike breakages due to rough roads (Darrel and Olie)

1 day of rain

Lots of nice, normal, hard-working people – everyone we came across

0 accidents, incidents, breakdowns, robberies, muggings, kidnappings, high crimes, or misdemeanors. In other words, **ZILCH, NADA, NIL**

Finally, thanks to *Truckin'* from The Grateful Dead:

*"Sometimes the light's all shinin' on me;
Other times I can barely see.
Lately it occurs to me what a long, strange trip it's been."*

Additionally, Mike has uploaded a five-minute video of their journey to Panama at the following link on the Vimeo website: [Passage to Panama](#)

SAFETY TALK

IMPORTANT NOTICE: 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.

Motorcycles and Bicycles

If you have spent any time riding the back roads around Florida, you've probably seen the bicyclists out and about. Most of the time it's just one or two at a time, but occasionally you may encounter entire groups of bicycling clubs out for a ride on a sunny weekend morning. In some cases, particularly if you ride regularly in the central part of the state, you will encounter organized rides and races on the back roads.

Bicyclists on the back roads offer their own particular challenges to us as motorcyclists. First off, remember that they have as much right to the road as we do. That being said, we have probably all encountered bicyclists that are impeding traffic. Technically, bicyclists, except when on paths or lanes designated for their vehicles, must ride to the right of the lane, may not ride more than two abreast in any lane of traffic, and may not impeded the regular flow of traffic in doing so (FS316.2065(5b)). Unfortunately, bicycle clubs are just as guilty of impolite road usage as some motorcycle clubs, and we often find them blocking the entire lane. So how do we handle this issue?

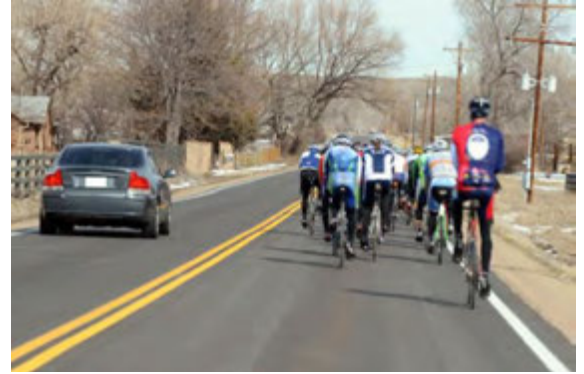


Photo: ilovebicycling.com

Remember that regardless of the law, you as the motorcyclist are in control of the faster and more responsive vehicle. Additionally, as you will undoubtedly be the overtaking vehicle in the lane, it is going to be up to you to avoid the bicyclists. Florida law says you may pass the bicyclist in the same lane, but must do so at a safe distance of at least 3 feet between you and the bicycle, to the bicycle's left. In other words, if either you or the bicyclist could hold out an arm and be at risk of touching the other, you are too close. When the bicycle pack takes up the entire lane, what do you do? Again, it is pretty simple. DO NOT risk an unsafe or inappropriate pass. Wait until the opposing lane is clear and the road lane markers allow, and then pass the pack as you would any other vehicle, safely moving into the clear, opposing lane of travel.

The final warning is that bicycles appear when you least expect them. Blind corners on back roads tend to be where they show up most unexpectedly. If you live or ride (or drive, for that matter) in an area where bicyclists normally congregate and ride on the weekends, you should be expecting these appearances, around blind corners, over the tops of hills and rises, etc.

Don't expect the bicyclists to know the rules of the road, and/or follow them. Bicyclists are like any other vehicle drivers. There are good ones and bad ones. Expect them to do the unexpected. I've seen bicyclists do some weird (and totally unsafe) maneuvers right in front of me, sometimes ending up right where I intended to be in order to avoid them in the first place.

As the weather warms up, we will be seeing more and more bicyclists on the road. Be ready for them. Expect them to be there and don't expect them to follow the rules of the road. You can be guaranteed that if an incident does occur between you and a bicycle, you're going to be fighting an uphill battle to prove you were in the right!

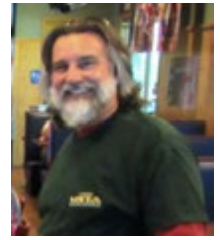
Ride Safe in 2016!

Doug Westly – Safety Editor

Florida News

South Director's Report

WELL, SPRING HAS SPRUNG!! BUGS ARE BACK (DO THEY EVER LEAVE??), DAYTONA WAS FILLED WITH BIKERS, AND WE'RE BACK INTO THE 80'S BY 10AM!! COULD BE WORSE, COULD BE FREEZING RAIN AND FEET OF SNOW...



Van VanSteelant

A buddy of mine, living in Maine, sent me a photo this week of the front of a pickup with frozen mini-icicles hanging from the grill. As the hot engine cooled, the freezing rain began to stick and the drips turned into "teeth" along the front of the truck! I promise, the weather for STAR in Vermont will be much better...

Back in our humid world, we enjoyed **three** MSTA gatherings this month!! First up was the Central Lunch ride to Jay Bee's in Lake Wales. As this destination is well within reach of the usual Southies group, we made our way to join up with the Central gang. Truth be told, we outnumbered the Central count! As usual, Jay Bee's made the 18 of us feel welcome and made sure the service and food was up to snuff. We also had a terrific pot for our 50/50 raffle – \$55.00. Our winner, Jim Park, once again donated his half back to the kitty, so we THANK him and now have a total of \$531.50. At least until our next lunch ride...



Shortly after Jay Bee's lunch, we had our annual Daytona Lunch ride, hosted once again by Phil Ridgdill!! Another smashing success! See Teresa's report and photos for more details on this well attended event. We even had a group from Spain make their way to our little party!!



Up next was a lunch date at the Marsh Landing in Fellsmere. It's been years since we set up a lunch date here, and we were treated to the same great service and food we have enjoyed during our breakfast rides in the past. And they pulled this effort off despite having two large groups to care for as well – one was 60+ dinners!! As for our 50/50 raffle, we had another repeat winner with Don Williams, who also donated his share back to the club!! So, another \$50 brings our total for the end of March to \$581.50. As always, a BIG THANKS to all who participate!



Do you ever wonder what our events look like? Besides the few photos that we can fit here, we have a "page" on [our website](#) dedicated to Florida event pictures. Click on the PHOTO link, and then on the "chain link" in the lower right corner. That will take you to 185+ [shots of our events](#), dating back to '03 right up to last week!! Check 'em out!!



What's Next??

We have a riding trip planned for 4 out of 5 weekends this month!!

First up is the Just-For-Fun Event in Cedar Key! You had better hurry if you want join the festivities during the 10th Annual Wizard's Wild Weekend. This event takes place April 1-3!! Check out the info on our site and follow the "rules" to ensure your spot... [Ed: Since access to the PDF file there is restricted, use [this one](#) instead.]

Next up is Teresa's Central Lunch Ride an old fave... Join her at the [Lake Harris Hideaway](#) in Tavares on April 9th!! Get there for the 11:30 AM gathering and enjoy the view!!

Another Just-For-Fun Event takes place April 15-17 in Helen, GA!! This is a terrific event, and has been on the MSTA national schedule for years in one fashion or another. Get the details at www.flmsta.org. And thanks to Andre for saving the day by stepping up and organizing this legendary event at the last minute...

The next weekend finds us back on the West Coast for the South Lunch ride. We are trying a new place for us. We'll dine at [Pop's Sunset Grill](#) in Nokomis, FL. Be sure to set April 23rd aside for a new adventure for us! Find the fine print at www.flmsta.org. (yup, we changed the date from our last newsletter to maximize the turn out in GA and FL! That's why you need to check our site a couple of times a month, just to see what really is next...)

We are currently spacing our ride destinations out to allow for lots of riding time before the weather forces us back to our brunch ride schedule. I led two rides this month that allowed us to take 2-3+ hours to ride mostly back roads to our lunches. The feedback was wonderful!! So... with just two more months of decent riding weather, get your butts in gear and join the fun for lunch!!

Membership News

Nothing to report for this month. Look back a few issues and make sure you're not up for renewal or already expired!! Many of you may need to look up your own renewal date to make sure that you membership status is still current. Some of our large events require a membership in good standing in order to participate! I renewed my membership online, and the website info is current and working just fine. I'll let you know how long it takes to receive my new renewal package through the mail.

I have updated Invitation-To-Ride (ITR) quad folds. I was able to hand out a bunch of ITRs to all in attendance at our lunch rides, so I expect to see a bump in new members here shortly!! Remember, each new member who references you on their application puts \$5 STARBUCKS in your hand!! You can use them for a variety of club expenses and fees!! You'll want to grab some to hand out to "our" kind of riders!!

As a heads up to all, be sure to forward any new email addresses or changes to Michael Tissandier membership@ridemsta.com. He then forwards the info to the various State Directors, VP's, and EC, as well as our newsletter editor.

Random Ramblings!

If you have a destination or event or hidden gem that the rest of us should see or know about, PLEASE send the info to me to include in future planning!! I keep looking for new ideas to add to the legacy of events that we have enjoyed for years. And don't think your idea has to appeal to everybody... if you like it, that's enough. We'll put it out there and see what happens!! You'll never know if you never try!!

You've registered for STAR 2016, right...??? This is going to be a terrific event!! First time in New England, and a perfect spot for our first visit! Plan to ride around the surrounding areas! I've heard from some that they're going to use STAR as the kick off for their trip up through the Canadian Maritimes! Go online NOW and sign up!! And get your room reserved NOW too!! Then start planning your route(s)...

EXTRA EXTRA – READ ALL ABOUT IT!! You all received the email about the demo rides that Honda will offer all through STAR!! Five days of options for just us!! Even extended lunch ride options!! Plan to take full advantage of this amazing offer. This opportunity just doesn't happen for a rally as small as ours usually are. Mind you, 350-450 riders are a LOT of potential customers. BUT, compared to 30,000-50,000 riders at Americade, you can see how lucky we are to get the same big-time treatment without the massive headache of fighting for a spot on the demo ride board!!

Ride well! Ride often! Do it safely!!

ATGATT Van
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report

Central FL March ride report....

25 riders enjoyed the Florida sunshine & Daytona bike week for Phil Ridgill's March 10th event at South Beach Grill in Crescent City including four guests from Spain. (In the adjacent photo, the ladies at the event: Elena Ramirez & Merche Redind from Spain, Central FL director - Teresa Vipond, & Oklahoma Director - Denise Dickenson.)

To finish out our lunch ride season, we'll return to two old favorites. Neither will reserve a table, but they usually have plenty of seating, & they know we're coming.

Central FL April 9th Lunch Ride

Saturday April 9th, 11:30 - 1:00,
[Lake Harris Hideaway](#),
11912 Lane Park Rd.,
Tavares 32778



Central FL May 7th Lunch Ride

Saturday May 7th, 11:30 - 1:00,
[Gator Joe's](#),
12431 SE 135 Ave.,
Ocklawaha 32179

Teresa Vipond, DeLand
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Member Comment

This special announcement was provided by Dianne Park:

A Very Special Opportunity

It's been announced – the super exciting news that **The Honda Demo Team** will be at **STAR 2016** in Stratton Mountain, VT!!! This is HUGE. This has not happened since STAR 2010, Taos, New Mexico.

But they have a request – and we can meet it!!! The request is simply to occupy every available bike for all the demo rides at STAR – free ride on a brand new bike! With all that is going on at STAR this year, PLUS the Honda Demo Rides – you will want to make an extra effort to attend. And tell your friends! Current MSTA members as well as your good riding buddies who have yet to experience a STAR event.

With the fabulous scenery, mountain roads, pure New England ambiance, a celebrity guest speaker, two raffle bikes, optional guided off road tours, optional on-road motorcycle training, great SUPER door prizes, numerous additional door prizes, nine seminars, vendors, ice cream social, etc. plus the opportunity to visit with friends you might only see at STAR – make the extra effort to attend STAR 2016!

Florida Rides This Month

Important Note

Always remember to check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) 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 Central Lunch Ride

When: Sat., April 9th, 11:30 PM – 1:30 PM

Where: [Lake Harris Hideaway](#) – 11912 Lane Park Rd., Tavares, FL 32778 ☎352-343-3585 ([map](#))

Description: To finish out our lunch ride season, we'll return to an old favorite. Although they will not reserve a table, they usually have plenty of seating, and they know we're coming. Join Teresa and the Central gang for lunch... Summer's coming and so are the BRUNCH rides!!

Contact: Teresa Vipond termayn@gmail.com or ☎713-504-5763

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat., April 23rd, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM [*Note: Date Changed*]

Where: [Pop's Sunset Grill](#) – 112 Circuit Rd, Nokomis, FL 34275 ☎941-488-3177 ([map](#))

Description: “Go west young man...” And so we do, as we head to a new-to-us destination just a little north of Venice. The waterfront setting looks spectacular, and menu is sure to please everybody.

Contact: Van busavan@flahsta.org or ☎561-386-2594

Future Florida Events

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 [Event Calendar](#) for possible updates.

MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride

When: Sat., **May 7th**, 11:30 PM – 1:30 PM

Where: [Gator Joe's](#) – 12431 SE 135 Ave., Ocklawaha, FL 32179 ☎352-288-3100 ([map](#))

Description: To finish out our lunch ride season, we'll return to an old favorite. Although they will not reserve a table, they usually have plenty of seating, and they know we're coming. Join Teresa and the Central gang for the last lunch of the season!! Next month, we start our BRUNCH ride schedule!!

Contact: Teresa Vipond termayn@gmail.com or ☎713-504-5763

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat., **May 14th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Where: [Lightsey Fish Co & Seafood](#) – 10435 FL-78, Okeechobee, FL 34974 ☎863-763-4276 ([map](#))

Description: I can't remember when we were last here... So, let's start a new memory with the last LUNCH ride until October!! Summer time is coming...

Contact: Van busavan@flahsta.org or ☎561-386-2594

Upcoming Regional Events

Just-For-Fun Event!! Wizard's Wild Weekend!!

When: Fri.–Mon., **April 1st–4th**

Where: Cedar Key, FL 32625 ([map](#))

Description: Brand new MSTA member, and longtime friend to motorcycling, Kevin Healey, has organized an event you do not want to miss!! I've been there before, and you'll want to be there this year for sure!!!

More Info: [WizardsWW_2016.pdf](#)

Just-For-Fun Event! North Georgia Classic!

When: Fri.–Sun., **April 15th–17th**

Where: [Quality Inn](#) – 15 Yonah St., Helen, Georgia, 30545 ([map](#))

Description: A block of rooms is being held at a \$89 rate for this event until March 31, 2016.

Call ☎706-878-2268 and mention MSTA for your reservation.

Contact: Andre Hubble jandrayhubble@mindspring.com ☎256-572-2719

More Info: msta-se.com/helen

Riding Into History Bike Show

When: Sat., **May 21st**

Where: Riding Into History Annual Show at the World Golf Center, St. Augustine ([map](#))

Description: Spectacular vintage bike show worthy of your attendance. More details coming!!

Contact: info@ridingintohistory.org ☎904-677-9452

More Info: RidingIntoHistory.org

For additional Florida events and information, [click here](#) to see the Florida MSTA website's Events page.

MSTA website information on upcoming sanctioned events: [click here](#). For Just-For-Fun events: [click here](#).

National MSTA www.ridemsta.com

Florida MSTA www.flmsta.org

More Contact Information

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ALL GRAPHICS WERE PROVIDED BY THE CREDITED AUTHOR, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

This month's [Mystery Hyperlink](#) provides another perspective related to the safety article.

CLASSIFIED ADS

2001 Triumph Tiger

2001 Triumph Tiger, 955cc, 104hp, 3 cylinders. Comfortable 2 up, seats recently recovered, 200 plus miles per tank, 40-50 mpg, lots of torque, fast and quick. Full set of bags (3), handlebar risers, new Penske rear shock, Thunder Bike muffler, Triumph tool kit. The bike has had the 15,000 mile major service. Gorgeous black color. The bike is in great shape and has been lovingly ridden and cared for. 23,185 miles. **\$3,500.00**

Extras: Service Manual, all Tiger manuals, 3 additional windshields, Penske Shock manual, Stock muffler, all receipts.



Contact Hugh Palmer at ☎407-399-1755 or ✉cugotaride@aol.com

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to editor@flmsta.org