



# The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of  
the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 8 Issue 7

## Events in July

Details on Page 11

### In This Issue:

- Page 1 – [Feature Article](#)
- Page 8 – [Safety Talk](#)
- Page 9 – [Florida News](#)
- Page 11 – [Florida Rides](#)
- Page 11 – [Member Comment](#)
- Page 12 – [Future Florida Rides](#)
- Page 12 – [Upcoming Regional Events](#)
- Page 12 – [Member Profile](#)
- Page 13 – [Mystery Hyperlink](#)
- Page 14 – [Classified Ads](#)

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## Feature Article

### Change and the 2015 North Georgia Classic

By Tom Blake

For some, change is a 4-letter word. Others embrace it as a way to keep life fresh. And sometimes it has more pragmatic motivations. Recently, I decided to make some changes. For one thing, I needed to make room in my garage. So my stable of motorcycles had to drop from two to one but there was a good reason for two. I've had sport tourers such as Triumph's Trophy SE for long distance work as well as for when Mother Nature decided to throw cold or wet at me. And in Florida, having something more "open air" for use during our hot, humid summers is a big plus. Hence my Triumph Tiger 1050. So where's the middle ground?

There is one aspect of motorcycling that does not appeal to me in the least. And that is chain maintenance! Especially on a long haul bike. Some will disagree and that's okay. It's a personal choice. So the new bike would have to have shaft drive.

It would have to be capable of comfortable long distance work. That means good ergonomics and ample storage capacity. It would have to be big enough to pull a load, easily pass traffic on 2-lane roads and not be buzzy at freeway speeds. And it would have to be sporty enough to attack the twisties with good, solid handling. It should have electronic cruise control and ABS. It would need to provide a reasonable level of wind and rain protection but still be able to immerse me in a lot



Say good-bye to the Triumphs

of non-turbulent air when needed.

After reading all the reviews, I decided that what best fit the bill was a new BMW R 1200 GS – the water-boxer. Dealers don't stock striped down GS's. And, cost aside, who would want one without automatic stability control, ride modes, dynamic suspension, electronic cruise, ABS, heated grips and all the rest that comes with the Premium Package?



Say hello to the 2014 R 1200 GS with all 3 cases, Sargent rider's seat and SW-Motech crash bars

It was convenient, and I felt advantageous, that one of the closer BMW dealers in my area also handles Triumph. But would they deal? It was the last Saturday of Bike Week in Daytona. Turns out, after a little haggling, they gave me what on-line resources said my Triumphs were worth. And since the GS I was looking at was a new 2014, they were willing to discount it some. A deal was struck. I was delighted that they offered to deliver the new bike to my house – 100 miles away – and pick up my two Triumphs at no additional cost. Sweet!

So now I own a big GS. But there was work to do and fairly quickly because I wanted to attend the North Georgia Classic in Helen only a few weeks out. It needed bags. I opted for GIVI Trekker side cases and top box. Installation was a little tricky because the rear turn signals had to be relocated and the



GS with just the 33L case mounted on top

muffler temporarily removed. My local service shop did the work. I think the BMW cases would have been a little less expensive. But my GIVIs can be mounted interchangeably. For touring, I can mount the 33L and 46L on the sides and the 52L on top. For local riding sans side cases, I find the 33L works just fine as a light top box to hold the first aid kit, tire pump and plug kit, ball cap, Blue Book, rain gear, etc.

The seat also needed to be replaced. I've had several Sargent saddles and most of them have been big improvements over stock. Sargent and Russell Day Long (RDL) are both highly regarded in the BMW forums. The RDL is likely the more comfortable. But I went with a Sargent and it has been a good choice.

I also purchased the BMW (Garmin-made) GPS, SW-Motech crash bars (which allow valve adjustments without removal) and Denali PowerHub2 fuse block (for hooking up switched and non-switched electronics to the CAN-BUS

electrical system). And finally, I picked up liner bags for the side cases and a tank bag.

I left my house Wednesday at 8 a.m. and 565 miles later arrived in Helen at 7 p.m. On the interstate and other high-speed roads, it only got about 40 mpg. The SE was in the mid 40's for similar work. But in the mountains, they both were in the mid 50's. With the windscreen raised, I sat in non-turbulent air with my helmet getting good ventilation through the upper vents. With the screen down, you get a strong blast of air and it's not all that turbulent. Up is better for longer rides.

One advantage of the BMW is that on the highway, its motor just disappears. You don't really hear it or feel it. But when you're working it up and down through the gears, it sounds and feels great! Lots of grunt and loads of engine braking with a nice bark. It brings to mind the sound of racing BMW's at the Daytona 200 many years ago – perhaps in the mid '70's. There were two or three of them booming away in amongst the 2-stroke ring-a-ding-dings. You could follow them all the way around the track just by sound. Of course, they weren't competitive. But they did have a very memorable and melodious sound.

When I pulled into the Quality Inn parking lot in Helen, Jim Park was already there and came over to greet me. The next morning he took me on a tour of Lake Rabun between Helen and Clayton. It was a tight little road hugging the north shore but with fantastic scenery. Next we headed north toward Franklin, NC and west on 64 onto Wayah Rd.

Wayah is a gnarly 2-lane that winds up, down and around and eventually comes out on US 19 in the Nantahala Gorge. I'd been on Wayah Rd before and remembered it was

rough in spots and potentially dangerous. The long-travel, dynamic GS suspension pretty much eliminated the roughness if not the dangerousness. We made a right on 19 to the River's End Restaurant at the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) for lunch. The NOC sits down in that narrow gorge between two steep mountain ridges and right alongside the cold waters of the Nantahala River. Jim and I agreed, it's one of our favorite places on



Looking out on Lake Rabun. Despite the clouds, it did not rain this day.



The Nantahala Outdoor Center. Restaurant in background beyond the bridge



Little quackers below the restaurant looking for handouts

earth. Lunch was extra good as usual. We sat out on the covered deck where you can watch rafters float downstream and ducks paddle about quacking and seeking handouts.



Looking east at the Nantahala Outdoor Center, restaurant in foreground.

Coming back, we motored west on 19 which merged with 129 coming down from Robbinsville. Then Jim cut south off of 129 onto NC 141 (old 64) just after Andrews. 141 was new to me and took us through Brasstown, NC and then later, GA 69 took us south into Young Harris. All good.

From there we rode west to Blairsville, took 129 south, 180 east and then the very exciting GA 348 – aka, the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway -- over the mountain to Helen. Most of 348 has fresh pavement and was an absolute blast to challenge corners on. I don't know how close my crash bars were to tarmac on most of those curves but they could not possibly have been much closer without scraping. Absolutely exhilarating. The GS was rock solid throughout.

On Friday, I made a leisurely start and got to the NOC right at noon where I had arranged to meet up with fellow Floridian Steve Marcum and old riding buddy Ken Worland from Greensboro, NC. The NOC twice in two days? Dang! After lunch we headed for Robbinsville and NC 143 / TN 165 -- the Cherohala Skyway -- over to Tellico Plains, TN. Kenny led us over on his GL1800 Goldwing and wasted no time. TN 68 and then TN 123/GA 294 brought us



On the Cherohala Skyway (a fall picture from Google Earth)

back to 64 and 129 from which we turned east to Brasstown, south to Young Harris and eventually onto the Russell Highway to Helen. Steve paced us down the mountain on 348 and he had his big K 1600 GTL flying. Ken did not have enough ground clearance to keep up. Another fabulous riding day. Cool, too. From around 50 to around 60, as was the whole weekend.

For those who have not yet experienced the Cherohala Skyway, the following two screen captures from Google Earth will give you a sense of the twistiness of this wonderful roadway. The vast majority of the curves are sweepers which allow the rider to maintain a very invigorating pace. The eastern section near Robbinsville is quite tight but then opens up as you climb into the mountains.



Cherohala Skyway – Western section toward Tellico Plains, TN (Google Earth screen capture)



Cherohala Skyway – East, Central Section (Google Earth screen capture)

It rained Saturday morning until about 9. Everyone was delighted that the rain did not last all day as forecast. Most everyone went out and rode but a few of us just hung around Helen and got a little exercise taking in the local sights.

On Sunday, Steve, Ken and I did the Lake Rabun ride and then over to Toccoa, GA where the 101st Airborne Division – Band of Brothers Mini-Series -- trained for WWII. The old train depot downtown where the recruits came in still remains and is now the Currahee Military Museum. Unfortunately it didn't open until 1:00 and it was only about 11:30. So we rode on.



Old Toccoa Depot, now the Currahee Military Museum

After I got home, a little on-line research revealed that the camp, located 5 miles SW of town, was only active for 22 months. Originally named Camp Toombs after a Civil War general, it was felt that this probably wasn't the best for the morale of the men training there to go into battle. So it was renamed Camp Toccoa. Little remains today. There's a concrete pad at the entrance upon which a battle tank once stood. The pad is now the base of a small monument. There's also one block building, a water tower, an old camp street sign and a few sections of sidewalk at the entrance. Currahee Mountain which the trainees had to run "3 miles up and 3 miles down" is nearby and the old road to its summit is still there. One of the YouTube videos shows the property most recently covered with saplings. In a way, it seems a shame nothing more substantial remains. That Band of Brothers went on to great sacrifice, valor and accomplishment in WWII.

Now back to the Helen Rally. We resumed our ride, heading over to Rider's Hill on Rte 19 just north of Dahlonega. We picked up some eats in the café and then sat in rocking chairs outside on the covered porch overlooking a stretch of the highway. When we just couldn't stand any more cool breezes and relaxation, we saddled up and rode up to Suches and on up a very undulating GA 60 into NC. This time we got back via Hiawassee and GA 17 over the mountain into Helen – squiggly tar snakes be damned.



Rider's Hill above Dahlonega. Sales / café on left with concrete pad in front. Tires and service on right. Rte 19 in foreground (Google Earth screen capture)

In the evenings we managed to consume our fill of spirits and good food. I recall two different German restaurants and one Mexican restaurant twice – all good. Back at the hotel, tall stories were told well into the night among the 20 or so present. The threat of bad weather no doubt kept many away as this is usually a well-attended rally.

Monday morning I was on the road at 8 and home by 6:30. Riding was cool through GA then on and off showers between roughly St Augustine and Daytona. No downpours. The tank, radiator shrouds and cylinders kept my tucked-in legs dry. Hands stayed dry behind the hand guards. The rest of me took some rain but my coat was waterproof so I stayed dry and comfortable the whole way. I was glad to be home but not at all wore out. I think this Beemer is going to be a keeper and a really nice do-it-all-anytime change of pace.

## ***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.***

### ***Situational Awareness***

Two weeks ago, Becky and I were in Reno, NV, managing demonstration rides at one of our Honda events. I was out on a demo ride with another of our team riders. He was leading the customer flight of seven bikes, and I was bringing up the rear as chase rider. The demo route was through an industrial and health care (hospital, clinics, etc.) area of the town. Our flight was in the left lane of a four-lane road (two lanes in each direction, with a center divider containing additional, alternation turn lanes), passing a slow moving car in the right lane. The driver of the car was obviously looking for something. The flight had just passed and as the last bike, I was right beside the car...when the driver decided what she really wanted to do was turn left, without warning. She pulled directly into my lane, then into the median turn lane.

Fortunately I was watching her as I started to pass, and saw her swing the steering wheel and the car start to come over at me. As she moved into my lane, with me right beside the driver's door, it forced me into the turn lane. I couldn't slow down, as that was what she was doing. I couldn't swerve into the oncoming lanes and traffic. My only choice was to accelerate around and in front of her. I was able to slide around the left front corner of her car and miss the upcoming median curb as well. You could see the shocked look on her face as she realized I was there...and then gone.

This was an atypical car/motorcycle encounter. Most crashes and near crashes involving cars and motorcycles occur when the car turns into the path of the oncoming bike. In this case, she literally just came over two lanes while I was right beside her. She never looked, checked her blind spot, etc. So what does this mean for us, as riders?

Situational awareness can be defined as being cognizant of the activities going on around us. As riders, it means paying attention to those actions and activities that can impact our safety, no matter how unlikely.

In this case, the atypical behavior of the vehicle and driver, the slow speed and her looking for something, caught my attention. It had also caught the attention of my lead rider, who alerted me to the vehicle's activity in advance. Both of these brought my focus on the vehicle as I started to pass, and I wasn't really surprised when it all started to go bad. Really mad...but not surprised.

We can't always predict drivers and their behaviors. However, when we spot a vehicle/driver behaving erratically or out of context with the driving situation, it becomes absolutely critical that we pay attention to what's going on. This is not to exclude maintaining other awareness of the environment, but certainly any erratic driving should catch our notice.

My lead rider said he never saw what happened. However, he said he knew something occurred and could guess, based on my language exploding in his ears, over the radio.

The moral of the story? Situational aware-ness can save your life, or at least your riding day! RIDE SAFE!

***Doug Westly – Safety Editor***

## Florida News

### South Director's Report

#### SO MUCH FOR THE RAINY SEASON...

We have had some great riding weather... Lots of heat, sun, humidity, but very little wet stuff out of the sky!! I hope you've made the best of it. As one whose ride has been more than a little cranky lately, I have missed a lot of opportunities to hit the road! Case in point, I missed BOTH Brunch rides this month!! I heard very good things about the happenings at the Crossroads Restaurant, where nearly 25 members and friends enjoyed themselves!!



Van VanSteelant

#### What's Next??

Rest assured, I'll be at the next Southern Brunch ride... Our friends at Florida Sports Cycle found a plethora of things to fix on my Busa, and I'm back on two wheels. First, we will make our way on July 11<sup>th</sup> to C's Waffles in New Smyrna Beach for the CENTRAL FL. BRUNCH RIDE. The next weekend, July 18<sup>th</sup>, join us for the SOUTH FL. BRUNCH RIDE to Beef 'O' Brady's in Clewiston. We enjoyed our lunch ride there a while back, and their breakfast looks to be as good!! As always, visit our AWARD WINNING WEBSITE!!

[www.flmsta.org](http://www.flmsta.org) for all the details and much more!!

Yes, you read that correctly!! During the membership meeting at STAR 2015, we were awarded "State Website of the Year"!! Our webmaster was there to pick up our plaque and assured the group that it was a true team effort to create and maintain our new site!!! So, we now have been recognized for our Newsletter AND Website!! Go FLMSTA!!! Congrats all around!!

The location and dates for STAR 2016 were also announced at the Membership meeting!! We're heading to New England!! Hot damn!! STAR 2016 will be located at [Stratton Mountain Ski Resort](#) in south central Vermont. The dates are June 19-22, 2016. This may very well be a first for this area. Having lived in Conn. and toured in the area, I am very excited about this location!! Beautiful scenery, wonderful roads, a very long and rich history... Start planning NOW!!

We are always looking for unique lunch/brunch spots for the next few months. As long as they can handle 10-20 riders at once, we want to hear from you!! AND know this, we are looking for members to share anything that interests them with the rest of the gang!! Favorite roads traveled recently; travel photos; why your ride is the best; what your first ride was; recent training you've completed and your "a-ha" moment; best advice you've ever heard about motorcycling; new gear purchases; new parts, farkles, accessories that everybody else should know about; promote your motorcycle biz or product that we all should know about... You get the idea, so, send your idea to me and we'll see what/where/when we can enjoy your presentation!! The more the merrier!! Don't worry about how long you need to entertain us! Two minutes or twenty, it won't matter! If we could do this at every ride....

I'd like to thank the members who have recently sent along some suggestions! We will be venturing to new venues once we return to our lunch ride schedule. Stay tuned!!

We are in the final stages of scheduling all of the 2015 lunch/brunch rides. The dates and places are [posted](#) through October. The rest of the dates-only are posted through December, so you'll be able to mark your calendars and be sure to line up those pesky "honey dos" around the reality of what's really important....

## Membership News

Well, we are back to normal for our national updates to our membership rolls. We do not have any new members to recognize this month. We are looking forward to new names next month!!

If you know any of the following members, let them know that their membership has, or is about to expire:

Stephen Albert  
L. Dee Cramer  
Charles Quesenberry  
Ron Stechert

Wilma Boyle  
George Kunkle  
Bobby Shields  
Carlton Tedrick

Scott Courtney  
Glenn Monroe  
Robert Shields  
Alan and Terri Singer

As a heads up to all, be sure to forward any new email addresses or changes to Michael Tissandier, [membership@ridemsta.com](mailto: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!

Just last month, I mentioned this about our website, not knowing a thing about our pending award...

"A lot of volunteer work went into the creation of our splendid website, and the constant tweaking keeps us busy all month long. The info in the RIDES calendar is there for you – check in often, as updates, cancelations, additions etc. happen regularly. As this is the FLORIDA MSTA site, you are welcome to send along any moto related info that would be of interest to the rest of us!! I will do my best to add it to the site ASAP. I'd recommend at least a month's lead time so others will have a chance to check out the event info and plan according."

Now we've received national recognition for our efforts. I suggest that you check out what all the fuss is about!!

YOU ARE PLANNING ON ATTENDING STAR 2016....

Ride well! Ride often! Do it safely!!

ATGATT Van  
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

## Central Director's Report

### **Central FL Brunch Ride**

Sat. **JULY 11<sup>th</sup>**, 9:30 - 11:30 According to [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com), the place where the locals eat breakfast -

C's Waffles

4166 S. Atlantic Ave.

New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169

386-663-3915

Teresa Vipond

DeLand, FL

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

### **Member Comment**

By Don Moe

Since there were only five MSTA members attending from Florida during this year's TriSTAR rally, I suggested that we should pose for a group photo. From left to right are: Fred Christ (Miami), Ellen Kocher (WPB), Don Moe (Jupiter), and Diana & David Cassell (Crestview).



### **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 Brunch Ride**

When: Sat., **July 11<sup>th</sup>**, 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Where: [C's Waffles](#), 4166 South Atlantic Avenue, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169 ([map](#))

Description: According to TripAdvisor.com, the place where the locals eat breakfast!!

Contact: Teresa Vipond - [termayn@gmail.com](mailto:termayn@gmail.com) or ☎713-504-5763

#### **MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride**

When: Sat., **July 18<sup>th</sup>**, 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Where: [Beef 'O' Brady's](#), 892 West Sugarland Highway, Clewiston, FL 33440 ([map](#))

Description: We found out how great this place was for lunch a while back, so we're going to give their breakfast a try!! Top off your brunch with a ride around the Big Lake!!

Contact: Van - [busavan@flahsta.org](mailto: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 Brunch Ride**

When: Sat., **Aug. 8<sup>th</sup>**, 9:30 am – 11:30 am  
Where: TBD  
Description: Place holder for the August brunch ride!! Stay tuned!!  
Contact: Teresa Vipond - [termayn@gmail.com](mailto:termayn@gmail.com) or ☎713-504-5763

### **MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride**

When: Sat., **Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>**, 9:30 am – 11:30 am  
Where: [JR's Runway Cafe](#), 130 Authority Lane, Sebring, FL 33870 ☎863-655-0732 ([map](#))  
Description: We've been going to the Sebring area for years, but haven't hit this place before. Nice setting, cool planes, and some nice roads to enjoy coming and going!!  
Contact: Van - [busavan@flahsta.org](mailto:busavan@flahsta.org) or ☎561-386-2594

## **Upcoming Regional Events**

Regional events from around the country are posted to the [MSTA National forum](#) under "Events".

### **MSTA Big Lynn Lodge Ride**

When: Fri., **July 24<sup>th</sup>**, until Sun., **July 26<sup>th</sup>**  
Where: **Big Lynn Lodge**, Box 459 Hwy 226A, Little Switzerland, NC 28749 ☎800-654-5232 ([map](#))  
Description: The venue is along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Dave "Brick" Brickner's organizes this event! Check the event's website at [msta-se.com/BLynn](http://msta-se.com/BLynn) for information.  
Contact: Dave's email address is [brick@ncwireless.net](mailto:brick@ncwireless.net)

## **Member Profile**

We would like to publish profiles of our members, on a strictly voluntary basis of course. If you would like to participate, please send an email (or a letter) to the [editor](#) of our Florida newsletter and answer as many of the following questions as you feel appropriate. Please send an attachment with a suitable photo of you with your primary or favorite motorcycle. If you prefer to send by regular mail, please find the mailing address [on page 13](#).

Member Profile Questions:

Hometown/State?	Who or what was your biggest influence in motorcycling?
What was your first motorcycle?	What are your favorite places to ride?
Current motorcycles?	Describe a memorable motorcycle adventure?
What is your all-time favorite motorcycle?	What is the best motorcycle advice or tip learned over the years?
How long have you been riding?	What turns you on about motorcycles or riding?
When did you join the MSTA?	What do you get out of your MSTA membership?
How did you hear about the MSTA?	What are your hobbies and interests outside of motorcycling?

Thank you for your participation.

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](#).

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National MSTA [www.ridemsta.com](http://www.ridemsta.com)

Florida MSTA [www.flmsta.org](http://www.flmsta.org)

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

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## Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

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

*(Although there are formatting issues on this page, the content is definitely worth reading.)*

## CLASSIFIED ADS

### 2003 Honda VFR800 (32,615 miles)

It is time for me to sell my 2003 Honda VFR800 and move on to having more fun with cars. All maintenance is up to date. Perfect running condition. Starts every time. Some scratches on the side from previous owner. The rest of the paint and body and all good. Located in South Lakeland. Feel free to come look or meet up, but no test rides without cash in hand.

Asking \$3,300 obo

#### The details:

This bike is excellent. Not just excellent condition, but as a bike too. It is a blast to go around the mine roads or to take it 200 miles to lunch or 600 miles to the Barber Vintage Festival. The rear tire was installed at 26,327 miles (Pirelli Angel ST) and the front was installed at 29,855 miles (Pirelli Angel GT). The current miles on the bike are 32,615. Based on my last rear ST, there should be about 3-4k left. The last tire on the front was an ST and got 11k and the GT is said to last longer, so there is more than 8k left on the front. The oil was changed with the front tire, so there is 5k left until the next one. The coolant was flushed around 25k and then replaced with Water Wetter. It was required for track days, but sadly, I never found time to make it to Jennings. The spark plugs are due for replacement and if I have time before it sells, I will replace them. It also has a K&N air filter installed. It comes with a Corbin Saddle with a back rest and a cowl cover.

I average 42-46 mpg when having fun and 45-49 when cruising on the highway. Yes, it has VTEC and no, it doesn't feel like an abrupt blast when it "kicks in". It is a perfectly smooth transition. The bike goes from 2-valve to 4-valve operation and becomes more spunky. It is great for up to 500 miles +/-, but if you plan on going across country, I would recommend 1" risers. The bike is very nimble for it's size and I usually take it 230 miles before filling up and it isn't even on "E" yet.

If you have any questions, please ask. I want this bike to go to a good home where somebody will enjoy it as much as I did.

#### Other Items:

A set of size 42 [Joe Rocket Leathers](#) that have been worn once are also for sale. Mine are the red ones. Leathers were about \$600 new.

Asking \$350.

A [Sargent seat](#) which is better for long distance and shorter riders that will be sold separately. Mine has the red stripe. Sargent is about \$300 new. This is very lightly used.

Asking \$250.

See my [Craigslist Ad](#) for further information and additional photos.

Contact: Bobby Shields – ☎ 863-513-3627 – ✉ [rjs@mail.usf.edu](mailto:rjs@mail.usf.edu)



To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by e-mail to [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org)