



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Details on Page 8

In This Issue:

- Page 1 – [Feature Article](#)
- Page 3 – [Recent Florida Rides](#)
- Page 4 – [Safety Talk](#)
- Page 5 – [Florida News](#)
- Page 8 – [Florida MSTA Apparel](#)
- Page 8 – [Florida Rides](#)
- Page 8 – [Future Florida Rides](#)
- Page 9 – [Regional Events](#)
- Page 10 – [Classified Ads](#)

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Feature Article

Exhilarating Rides through Redwoods, Mountains and Volcanoes

By Tom Blake

[Ed: This continues Tom's multi-part article that began with "Here's How I Got Started in Motorcycling" in the May 2020 issue. Hyperlinks added.]

I left Oregon and the Pacific Northwest and headed into California and Nevada.



Prairie Creek Redwoods SP
south of Crescent City, CA

After leaving Crater Lake, I rode southwest to [Crescent City](#) for the night. It's just inside California and on the coast. Forests of giant redwoods can be found at many places in northern California. I rode through a portion of [Jedediah Smith Redwood Forest](#) approaching Crescent City and [Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park](#) south of the town the next morning.

Awesome! If trees could talk, imagine what stories the redwoods could tell.

At Arcata I turned southeast. Approaching Redding that evening the temperature reached 111° F! Dry heat, but it felt like a sauna. Just glad I wasn't there earlier in the day.

The next morning, my GPS, set to 'shortest route', guided me to [Lassen Volcanic National Park](#) to the east-southeast along twisty, narrow roads that were not on the map - a great ride. The land was strewn with rock. Vegetation was sparse and scrawny. Here and there, there were a few horses, cattle or an occasional deer, but no crop fields. After reaching the park, I read that the first eruption spewed rock a hundred miles to the west, which explained what I had just seen. A second eruption, actually from a separate but adjacent volcano, occurred in the early 1900's. The visitor center is situated within the latter's crater. Good lord!



Volcanic rock-strew land WNW of Lassen Volcanic NP

The little town of [Truckee, CA](#) in the Sierra Nevada Mountains was on my path to Lake Tahoe. Truckee is the site of Donner Pass and Lake named for an immigrant party, some of whom ultimately resorted to cannibalism to survive a brutal 1846 to 1847 blizzard on their trek to California. Nearly half the party perished from the cold or starved. There's a pioneer memorial at the base of the pass.



View from South Lake Tahoe

I reached [Lake Tahoe](#) at the north shore and followed the road around the eastern (Nevada) rim to [South Lake Tahoe](#) on the California side where I spent the night. Gambling and clubs were in full swing on the Nevada side. The lake is large, offering all sorts of aquatic opportunities. In the winter, the surrounding mountains are full of skiers.

The next day I rode CA 4, also known as the [Alpine State Highway](#), south-southwest over the Sierra Nevada's to near the western entrance to [Yosemite National Park](#). This was one of the most exhilarating rides of the trip. It lasted the better part of the day. The road was in great shape but very narrow, very twisty and with deep, abrupt, unprotected drop-offs in many places. I will never forget portions of that road!



Three shots from Yosemite Valley



Yosemite NP was a relief as there were no big drop-offs. And the bold rock mountain faces I was riding past were stunning. I recommend entering the park on CA 140 eastbound and exiting to the south on CA 41. I rode 140 in and then backtracked and crossed the park west to east on CA 120 which was further north and more like a nice ride in the mountains than the spectacular 140 was down in the valley. It was dusk when I

finally exited the park and well after nightfall when I got to my reserved room in the town of [Mammoth Lakes](#) east-southeast of the park. I was exhausted. Fortunately, the on-site restaurant made me a pizza, which I took to my room and devoured.

In the morning, I rode CA 295 down below Bishop and took CA 168 toward Nevada. This was an especially lively ride. The road was narrow 2-lane, hilly and twisty. Approaching rises, there was never a clue as to which way the road might bend on the other side so one had to slow down and stay alert. Usually there are power poles or trees to give an inkling of what's ahead, but not here. And the road rarely remained straight.



Western Nevada. The road I traveled is in the distance near center.

NV 266 and US 95 heading south-southeasterly got me the rest of the way to Las Vegas. It was hot with not much to see but sand, sagebrush and Joshua trees but that's Nevada. However, the wind was howling across the desert from the southwest. Sudden gusts strong enough to rip me off the saddle were frequent. It was impossible to grip the bars tightly for long periods of time. So, I learned to lean well forward, putting a lot of bend in my elbows. This way, I had a second or two from the start of a gust to get a good hold of the grips before my elbows straightened. That kept me alert, but it was still a tiring ride.

Once in [Las Vegas](#), I attempted to get downtown to the big hotels but kept running into dead ends. Finally, I just hopped onto I-15 and beat a path to [St George, Utah](#), concluding this leg of the trip.

Tom Blake

Recent Florida Rides

Pre-Brunch Twisty Road Appetizers with the Route Meister

By Dale Hall

There was always the threat of rain on this day, but the morning dawned bright and HOT. I was meeting **Chad Barker** down in Lake Alfred for some pre-brunch twisty road appetizers.

As usual, I got in a fight with my Garmin 595 which cost me some time to get to the meetup point, but ignoring the GPS and taking U.S. 27 South got me there in the nick of time. Chad was ready to ride the instant I pulled in, so off we went.

Now if you don't know one of our newest MSTA members, Chad Barker, I can tell you he is THE ROUTE MEISTER! If there is a curve in a road within a 30-mile radius of where you are riding, he knows where it is. I never expected to have this much fun riding in Florida until I met Chad.

We took off and found a couple of fun roads on our way to Egg Haven in Winter Haven for the Central Florida brunch ride. Arriving a little early, we grabbed a table and started breakfast before anyone else showed up. The weather reports or the heat must have deterred many from riding that day. Soon a couple other riders arrived and grabbed a table. Unfortunately, at the time we were unaware that they were MSTA members.



(l-r) Chad Barker, Wayne Semenick, Alan Hartzog & Dale Hall at the Central Brunch Ride to Winter Haven
(photo by Mike Engestrom)

Then **Mike Engestrom** showed up, introduced himself to us and sat down nearby to have breakfast. Now the count was up to five.

After breakfast, the other two riders, **Alan Hartzog** and **Wayne Semenick**, joined us outside. Conversation ensued as we got to know Mike, Alan, Wayne and vice versa. Alan was not able to ride afterwards. Mike was heading back home to get ready to move north to Deltona, but Wayne accompanied Chad and me for some more corner strafing around the Winter Haven area and then headed north. All of this was taking place in hot, but sunny weather.

As we each split off to go our separate ways, I headed north on U.S. 301 towards home. Getting low on gas and wanting some lunch, I stopped at a station just south of Dade City. Upon checking the weather radar due to darkening skies ahead, I could see there was a storm heading straight for me. Just as I hopped back on the bike, it started to sprinkle.

There was a shopping center across the street that happened to have a Subway shop. I beelined it over there and got inside the door just as the sky opened up in a torrential downpour. A leisurely lunch allowed me to wait out the storm until the sun came out. From that point to my garage, I rode home under sunny dry skies with just a few miles of damp roads.

Another great day with fellow MSTA members doing what we do best! Thanks guys!

Dale Hall



Egg Haven in
Winter Haven, FL

Safety Talk

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.

Aging and Motorcycle Safety

By Doug Westly



To stay safe, we all need to adjust our riding to fit our capabilities.

Potentially in lots of ways. Our reactions slow down. We can lose muscle strength. Our perceptions may not be as quick. Our eyesight changes (and not for the better).

Most importantly (I think), psychologically we may try to deny the aging process. It happens so gradually that we may not notice it. If we do, we tell ourselves we're still just as capable as we were 10 (or 20, or...) years ago. And this is where the safety part comes into play.

The reality is that as a 50-year-old (as an example and in most cases) rider, our reflexes are not as quick as a 20-year-old's. Let's face it, there are no 50-year-old MotoGP riders, SuperCross racers, etc.

This doesn't mean we have to give up riding. I've seen 90-year-old riders who can still safely navigate a bike. However, they are certainly the exception.

What is important is that we recognize the changes within ourselves and adjust our riding to fit our changing capabilities. Herein lies the next challenge. How do we recognize when those changes start taking place?

Like it or not, we're all getting older. We get in trouble when our body is telling us we're (pick your age) and our mind thinks we're still 20 years old...and we don't listen to the body.

So how does aging affect our riding?

Actually, most of the signs are probably self-recognizable. Maybe when you first bought that big, heavy touring bike, you didn't have any trouble hoisting it up on its center stand. Now however, you find yourself just leaving it on the side stand because it's just "too much trouble" to make that hoist at the end of a ride.

Perhaps your vision is changing, and you don't see around corners as well as you used to.

Your riding focus could be changing or diminishing. Do you find yourself drifting from your riding to other thoughts? Often?

Nothing says we have to give up riding as we get older. In fact, as the saying goes:

"You don't quit riding because you get old. You get old because you quit riding!"

However, to stay safe, we all need to adjust our riding to fit our capabilities. Maybe that big, heavy touring bike has seen its day and you need to find something more manageable. Maybe it is time to give up track days (we don't heal like we used to, either...). Perhaps long-distance days should be replaced by morning rides. Is it time to think about three wheels instead of two?

The important part of this is self-assessment and being honest with yourself.

And one more thought. If you have a significant other or riding buddy who is starting down the sunset road and it is evident in their riding, maybe it is time to gently bring it to their attention. Show them you care and want them around as long as possible, to keep riding together.

Ride Safe! - Doug Westly
radmoto@hotmail.com

Florida News



"Van" VanSteelant

State Director's Report

The continuing reality check for all of us.....

Cases and hospital admissions for COVID 19 are way up across the state and nation. As I've mentioned over the last few months, we would have to see how the general public behaved and deal with the resulting consequences. The data and video evidence is out there. For now, our monthly plans will continue as they have for the foreseeable future. Unless new or revived restrictions are announced over the next few weeks...

On our home front, we continue to be healthy and utilize as many guidelines as possible. The life we save may be yours...We sincerely hope that all of you have marked off another month of good health for yourselves and those near and dear to you.

We had both a Central and South Brunch ride this month!! The Central event to Egg Haven in Winter Haven drew members from several locations. I learned that some of the riders did not recognize one another, and therefore thought the ride was undersubscribed. Here's the take-away from this scenario. I'll make sure the restaurant knows that MSTAs members and riders will be announcing their arrival so the staff can direct you to the gathering group. And, in our event announcements, I'll emphasize the importance of checking in with the staff and to ask about where the other MSTAs attendees are sitting. Afterall, if you make the ride and want to dine with fellow members and riders, we need to ensure that you find one another!!

On the upside, we did get a terrific Central Ride report from Dale Hall and pictures from Mike Engstrom. See the results above!



Alternative brunch at beautiful H.L. Bishop Park in Lake Placid

The South Brunch Ride to Main Street America in Lake Placid was also well attended. We had five riders meet at the 7-11 and picked up two more at the Love's rendezvous! With Mini Season hitting Marathon and the Keys, Bob Summers got a very early head start and met us at the 7-11. Matt Sturgis has recently located to South Miami and decided to meet us at Love's to check us out. Also, at Love's was the "ghost" of Dell Haverland! As he was breaking in a brand-new Triumph, he was making his own (under 4000 rpm) way to the diner. With Buck Jones, Dave 'the CBX' Hammer and Prior Powers also in tow, we made the most of the small roads leading to Lake Placid.

Main Street America has adapted to the recent guidelines, and thus cannot take reservations. Too few tables to make any promises! Nonetheless, they had room for the seven dine-in riders. Coming in from Sun City Center, Eve, Dennis and a friend were joined by Dell, Dave and Matt. Smokin' Joe made a late addition to the group. Good grub and gab, as usual! A park visit apres brunch by Dave, Matt and Joe brought our group size to seven at the H.L. Bishop Park location. What a delightful respite! With several tables under a variety of native shade trees just a short few steps from the edge of Lake June in Winter, ample parking and clean facilities, what's not to love? After 90 minutes of gentle breezes, BYO refreshments and lots of stories, we saddled up for the warm and windy ride home. I'm figuring Bob was on the road for nearly 14 hours by the time he landed back home in Marathon!



(l-r) Prior Powers, Bob Summers, & Buck Jones dining al fresco at H.L. Bishop Park.

We did have riders make their way from the Melbourne area. Here's what Terry Casto had to say:

"Five of us rode down from Melbourne. Arrived at 10:30 and was told you guys had left already! There was another group of six or so who were just leaving. Don't know where they were from. [6 non-MSTA sport bike riders made their way from Ft. Meyers to have brunch. Met them waiting for the Sun City group.] So, we had a late breakfast and took the scenic route home. Nice ride despite a little rain."

What's Next??

Ok, *just like last month*, hang with me. I intend to support and encourage everybody's decision on whether to ride, eat or be merry. I am leaving the two brunch rides as scheduled *WITH CONDITIONS!!* I will contact the restaurants to listen to how they will operate if they are cooking and serving. I will send out the usual email announcements after conversing with the restaurants. It will only be then that we'll know if we have a ride to enjoy. I'll share what I'm told to help you make your own decisions. I am truly hoping we can get together **safely** and support the local economies.

Of course, *just like last month*, we have been exercising the option to a "regular sit down" brunch by brown-bagging our own brunch refreshments and finding a welcoming place to s p r e a d o u t to eat and gab! Additionally, we have "regionalized" the email addresses of members in your area; say a 60-mile radius. This enables you up to reach out and set up "local rides" all over the state. Of course, the ultimate definition of "distancing" is a solo ride!!

First up, on **Saturday, August 8th**, the **Central Brunch Ride returns to Grills Riverside Seafood Deck and Tiki Bar in Melbourne!** Great location, water views, shaded alfresco dining and great food. Look for a confirmation email a week before the ride with the latest info.

Two weeks later, on **Saturday, August 22nd, we have the South Brunch Ride to the Alva Country Diner in Alva!** Look for a confirmation email a week before the ride with the latest info. As this is written, both places are open and have 50% or more occupancy for indoor dining. Their dilemma is whether 10-15 riders might take over their available tables if we want to distance ourselves. We will also continue to promote park locations as alternatives to restaurant dining.

When we set up the calendar back in January, STAR was scheduled for the first half of June. *You now know that STAR has been canceled for 2020.* A brilliant email was sent to all members explaining in great detail the reasons for the cancellation. However, while the STAR rally itself has been cancelled, the MSTA 2020 raffle drawing has not. This year, the drawing will be held on August 29 in Marietta, OH at the Mail Pouch Fly-By rally (August 24-30), and plans are underway to stream the drawing on the MSTA/STAR Facebook group page. Please note that the same conditions apply to winning the raffle bike:

- The winner must be a member of MSTA in good standing;
- You don't have to be present to win the bike; and
- The winner is responsible for all local, state, & federal taxes & fees, and for making arrangements to pick up the bike at the dealer in Carbondale, IL.
- If the winner of the bike lives east of the Mississippi River or in Arkansas or Missouri, Pat Mogavero, President of MSTA, has graciously offered to personally deliver the bike and/or work with the winner to arrange for delivery.

The new date (June 13-17, 2021) and location (Davis, WV) for STAR 2021 is now on our calendar. We have left the various regional MSTA rides, and the Just For Fun rides, on our calendar. Check out the RIDES calendar for all the details and events through December at www.flmsta.org.

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...

My heartfelt 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...

We welcome a new Florida rider who has joined the MSTA recently:

Dell Haverland

We thank these Florida members for recently renewing their memberships:

Dennis & Dorothy Anderson Ellen Kocher Bill McDaniel Ed Palmer
Tulio Suarez Thillet

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Mary Crawford John Hunt

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 membership@ridemsta.com. Renewing or joining can be done quickly and securely online at PlanetReg.com/MSTAnew or PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin 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 PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate. 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 **Invitation-To-Ride quad-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 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!!

The response to the monthly rides has been very encouraging. The **positive vibe** during our gatherings is certainly welcomed!!

For the next month, PLEASE heed the directions of our local and state leadership and the health departments. I do recognize the need to sift through the mixed messages and contradictions. Bottom line, more people in the USA have died from COVID-19 than anywhere else.

This too shall pass. Be a patient contributor to the efforts to hasten the decline in the deaths from and the spread of COVID-19. The mental, economic and medical recoveries are simply all tied together with the behavior of our populace.

When you can... Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!! Join one of our monthly rides!!!!

ATGATT Van
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Northeast and Central Directors Needed

If you would consider taking the position of Northeast or Central Director, please contact Van, busavan@flmsta.org.

Florida MSTA Apparel

As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to mstaflorida.qbstores.com. 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!!



Florida Rides This Month

Important Note

**EVENTS MAY BE CANCELED OR POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19.
CHECK WITH EVENT COORDINATORS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.**

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: Saturday, **August 8th**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Where: [Grills Riverside Seafood Deck & Tiki Bar](#), 6075 N US Hwy 1, Melbourne, FL 32940 (321) 242-8999 ([map](#))
Description: This is a very attractive property alongside the Indian River Lagoon. Brunch fare is especially tasty and affordable. Plenty of seating and paved parking.
Contact: Van, busavan@flmsta.org, or 561-386-2594

MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: Saturday, **August 22nd**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Where: [Alva Country Diner](#), 21220 Palm Beach Blvd #3841, Alva, FL 33920 (239) 728-3366 ([map](#))
Description: How many years has it been since we dined here and then learned about Honda's DCT from Doug and Becky? Let's reacquaint ourselves with the good country cooking and friendly surroundings!
Contact: Van, busavan@flmsta.org, or 561-386-2594

Future Florida Rides

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **September 19th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Where: [Woody's River Roo Pub & Grill](#), 5717 18th St E, Ellenton, FL 34222 (941) 722-2391 ([map](#))
Description: The Southies head way west again. We shouldn't have as much competition for chairs and tables in Sept. verses the winter snowbird season! Join us for some riverside grub and gab!
Contact: Van, busavan@flmsta.org, or 561-386-2594
We're back to lunch rides in September. 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: Saturday, **September 26th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Where: **Don Jose Mexican Restaurant**, 4731 Lakeview Dr, Sebring, FL 33870 ☎ (863) 385-9326 ([map](#))
Description: The southern-most excursion for a Central ride and accessible from coast to coast. This place opens at noon and fills quickly. They offer an extensive menu of delicious Mexican food in very colorful surroundings. We'll try for the patio overlooking Lake Jackson.
Contact: Van, busavan@flmsta.org, or ☎ 561-386-2594

Regional Events

Fall Colors Rally / MSTA

When: Thurs.-Sun., **September 24th – 27th**
Where: **Quality Inn**, 540 N. Jefferson St., Lewisburg, WV 24901 ☎ (304) 645-7722 ([map](#))
Description: A Just for Fun rally with no registration and no fees. A shuttle provided on Thursday evening for a group dinner downtown. Breakfast included at the hotel. Call the hotel directly and ask for a room in the MSTA block.
Location: Lewisburg, WV
Contact: Syd Mayes touringman5@gmail.com
Information: Visit www.ridemsta.com Click EVENTS/2020

Star 2021 / MSTA

When: **Sunday-Thursday, June 13-17, 2021**
Where: **Canaan Valley Resort and Conference Center** 230 Main Lodge Rd, Davis, WV 26260 ([map](#))
Description: Visit www.ridemsta.com Click EVENTS/2021.
Location: Davis, West Virginia

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

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

We welcome articles and comments from our members for publication. Contact the editor at: editor@flmsta.org.

The MSTA National [website](#) has extensive event information:

- ❖ To join the MSTA or renew your membership: [click here](#).
- ❖ For the Events in 2020: [click here](#).

[National MSTA RideMSTA.com](http://NationalMSTA.RideMSTA.com)

[Florida MSTA FLMSTA.org](http://FloridaMSTA.FLMSTA.org)

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

Classified Ads

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

Ellen Kocher is retired but with COVID-19 sheltering in place, she's been clearing out closet and bookcase items, shredding and organizing her place. Here are some items she dug up for sale. Maybe you'll find some motorcycle items, too, while you're self-isolating at home during the lockdown. Sell'em right here in the Classified Ads!



First Gear, Men's "M" mid-weight jacket with zip in liner
\$40 o/b/o
Call Ellen Kocher at 561-308-4756 & leave message



Magnetic tank bags, 9" x 14"; identical except red one says VARIO and black one says Motoline
one large compartment and decent sized map area (if you don't rely on GPS)
\$15 each o/b/o (+ shipping, if that's necessary)
Call Ellen Kocher at 561-308-4756 & leave message



Haynes BMW (Twins) paperback manuals
Green one covers 1970 to 1985
Blue one covers 1970 to 1988
\$15 each o/b/o
Call Ellen Kocher at 561-308-4756 & leave message



Clymer BMW paperback manual for R series (1970-1989)
\$20 o/b/o.
BMW Twins (1955-1985) Restoration paperback
\$20 o/b/o
Call Ellen Kocher at 561-308-4756 & leave message