



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Events July 2019

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Feature Article

Tom's Recollections of STAR 2019

By Tom Blake

The days leading up to our Sport Touring Annual Rendezvous (STAR) were brimming with activity. After making the decision to ride vs. tow, I had to decide on which motorcycle to take. Would it be the trusty, comfortable and smooth 2014 R1200 GS? Or, how about my new, exciting and powerful 2019 KTM Super Duke GT? Of course, there are always decisions on what to wear and what gear could possibly be called for based upon weather conditions.

Rose was planning to drive up, spend time with me at STAR... and then go on to Ohio to visit her mom. But a distress call from a sister-in-law the Sunday before had her on the road for Ohio Monday morning. Although her mom's condition was improving by the time

she got there, Rose decided, with my support, to stay up there longer rather than come back to Bristol. And this solved the bike decision – it would be the KTM. (She would have been much more comfortable on the GS.)

Lousy weather forecasts loomed ominously in the background for the week leading up to departure. It did not appear that STAR 2019 would be entirely dry. Scattered storms were in the forecast every day except for Wednesday and Thursday around Bristol. It was likely that rain gear would even be needed on the ride up. Rain-avoidance routings would surely be called for.

Departure day arrived and I was on the road Friday at 7 a.m. The plan was to take I-95 to Brunswick and then US 25 up through Jesup and around Statesboro to Augusta. I usually prefer to get onto US highways once past Jacksonville... and would have this time. But the Waycross area was getting rain, so I stayed well east. Traffic on the super-slab was manageable. Even Jacksonville was okay because it wasn't rush hour. The KTM was comfortable cruising at about 75 - 80 mph (or really, any speed I wanted). Its cruise control worked flawlessly, which made my right wrist very happy.

I got to Augusta around 3 p.m. and decided it was too early to stop, so pushed on to Greenwood, SC for the night. Eight and a half hours on the KTM saddle was surprisingly painless.

The plan for day two was to get to our friends Bill and Nicole's new place in Boiling Springs, SC, just outside of Spartanburg. Then we would ride together to Bristol. This worked out fabulously. Bill is a route-planner extraordinaire and he led us up some really nice country roads through the mountains into Tennessee and on to the Holiday Inn and Conference Center in Bristol, Virginia. We hit light and then heavier, chilling showers for about the last hour or so. Wearing mesh, I got soaked. We stopped for gas about 45 minutes out and donned our rain jackets. At least now we were warm.

The thing I liked best about the Holiday Inn host hotel was their very comfortable bed. The coffee was good but was only offered during limited hours. My A/C cooled well and wasn't excessively noisy, but the room was always a bit damp. Once wet, the towels never completely dried. The same goes for quick-dry clothing that I washed in the sink. I used part of Tuesday morning to run some stuff through the guest laundry. Unfortunately, there was a miscommunication and I had to get on the road to the catered lunch before everything dried. Regrettably also, there was no refrigerator or microwave in the room. But I made do – we all did.

MSTA had breakfast catered each morning to a large meeting room separate from the hotel's offerings. The food was more than plentiful and it was delicious. Coffee, scrambled eggs, home fries, sausage patties, bacon, super good biscuits and sawmill gravy, fruit, cereal, oatmeal and more. I devoured all I could eat and gained 5 pounds for my efforts. I'm now a happier buddha!

We took advantage of the Honda demo rides. Bill and Nicole tried out the manual-shift Goldwing Tour and



Riders preparing for demo rides at Honda Bike Trailer during STAR2019

Photo: Raymond Harcourt

said they were very impressed. Enough, apparently, to renew their memberships and buy a raffle ticket. I rode the same but with DCT. It was smooth, comfortable and, compared to the KTM, boring. The nice thing about DCT is that it completely eliminates the need to think about gear changes. All that brain time can be placed on where you want to go. I rolled on the throttle and it smoothly gained momentum but not abruptly. You could switch to Sport mode which made it rev higher for a given speed but did not, in my opinion, make it snappy quick. It did handle very competently although I didn't test the ground clearance. It would make a great cruising/touring machine. But at 800+ pounds, it's not going to be a tight corner carver. Have to thank Honda for providing the demos and the Goldwing raffle bike. Our own Becky was in charge of demos. Hubby Doug was in another part of the country with their off-road machines.

In addition to long and short lunch ride options, planners had six loop routes ranging from 132 to 287 miles available for GPS systems or on paper. I think most attendees had all of them downloaded before leaving home. Bill, Nicole and I rode three or four of them plus, on Tuesday, the lunch options. All except the short lunch ride were on mountainous back roads. We had a great time. There is seemingly no shortage of really fun roads up in that area. I saw a little fawn standing along the road into Warriors Path State Park where we had the Tuesday lunch. Some riders reported seeing black bears. I saw either a turkey or pheasant on one loop. The big bird hopped into the foliage at the side of the road before I could get a good look at it. And there were numerous *attack* squirrel sightings. Ahem.

Another highlight of this STAR was the Bristol restaurants. We took the short shuttle ride downtown and walked a block or two to enjoy a superb Thai meal Saturday evening at 620 State Restaurant and then salads at Machiavelli's Italian Restaurant Sunday evening. I should mention that the centerline on State Street is the dividing line between Tennessee and Virginia. Monday evening, we walked about a quarter mile from the hotel to Logan's Roadhouse for a good meal. Tuesday evening, we just ate in the hotel lounge. Of course, drinks and tall tales happened every night in the lounge. The banquet was Wednesday evening.

At the members meeting, four state directors got mentioned for having the most recruitments. Three of us (yes, I was one) recruited 3 new members each and a fourth had 4 (how's that for irony?). Thanks to those of you who listed me as your recruiter. Also, Florida was selected as the best state in terms of activities, newsletter, website, etc. For that, Van and I were recognized. We were presented with a seven-inch across by one-inch thick, clear



acrylic STAR engraved with the MSTA logo and below the logo this inscription: “State or Co-Director Of The Year, Paul VanSteelant “Van” & Tom Blake, Florida”. Van and I also presented, with your approval, \$500 to Carl and Denise Wieman, who administer the Dan Clark Safety Program. That \$500 will help them continue this unique-to-MSTA activity of refunding portions of member safety gear/rider training expenditures.

Information on how this works is available on the national website - ridemsta.com.

Also, I think it was mentioned that (about?) 320 attended the event. I ran into quite a few old friends and made several new ones. Florida had a sizeable turnout of 20 or so, and everyone was having a ball.

Did it rain? Advanced forecasts said it would every day except Wednesday. Numerous cancellations occurred based on this. My experience? Other than on the way up, riding was all dry. I believe there were overnight showers once or twice. That’s about it. Apparently, it’s very difficult to accurately predict what’s going to happen up there more than a day out.

I planned to take a day and a half to ride home. Thursday would be an all-dayer to Brunswick or possibly Kingsland. Then home Friday morning before Florida’s afternoon heat and storms kick in. But instead, I just pinned my ears back and did it all in eleven and a half hours of riding, about ten and a half in the saddle. Got home at 9:15. Google Maps tells me it was 724 miles and, based upon posted speed limits, should have taken about eleven and three-quarter hours. I made good time! So, that was eight straight days of riding booked-ended by two extra-long days. Yes, my body ached all over. But my smile still stayed on.

(Sorry there are no other pictures. I did record some video and stills on my helmet cam but haven’t figured out how to get them downloaded yet. I’m sure others will be reporting on STAR and will have photos.)

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.*

Spotting Distracted Drivers

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

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



[Distracted Driver](#)

Getty Images

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

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

In the MSF Basic Rider Course, they discussed leaving yourself an "out" at intersections. This has become even more critical as distracted driving crashes continue to multiply. Whenever you stop at an intersection or other location on a roadway, you need to monitor your rearview mirrors. If a vehicle is approaching from behind and shows no signs of slowing down, you need to make a decision. It may be time to take defensive action and move between cars and lanes, duck off to the side of the road, or otherwise get out of the oncoming car's way. It is a good reason why not to immediately put your bike in neutral at a stop. Leave it in first gear with the clutch pulled in, and be ready to move, if necessary, while you check out what's happening behind you. Distracted driving is becoming more and more of a hazard these days. You need to keep your eyes peeled every time you ride, especially in high traffic areas. You never want to find yourself on the wrong end of the idiot too busy texting to see you or the other drivers on the road!

Ride Safe!

Doug Westly – Safety Editor

See our [Mystery Hyperlinks](#) for further information on this topic.

Florida News

South Director's Report

SHORT AND SWEET....

When it rains, it pours. So the rainy season started early and with earnest...

You can catch up with Tom's report below. Luv bugs last month. Life threatening lighting this month.... It can only get better for our Central riders the rest of the year!!



Van VanSteelant

The Southies faired a bit better with our ride to a perennial favorite. The [Two Peas Café](#) was ready and waiting for us to roll in for the first rideable Brunch event of the summer season. Five of us came in from the east; two more from the south. Oddly enough, we all arrived nearly 30 minutes early! Wasting little time, we were ordering and gabbing and watching the weather radar! We were treated extra well, the food was delicious as always, and the clouds held their water for our rides home!! The rest of ya oughta been there....

I'll have special news concerning our 50/50 raffle and the good deeds we have accomplished with our significant sum in next month's newsletter. I thank all of you who fully supported the donation destinations that Tom and I proposed.

What's Next??

Well.... STAR is over for another year. You'll read about everyone's great adventures next month. As well as finding out where the 2020 event will be held!

Back in Florida, we have our usual BRUNCH rides planned. The Central Brunch kicks off on July 13th at [Camelot Country](#), on 351 North US1, in Oak Hill. Tom is trying a new place out that sounds terrific!! You really need to visit our website for more info. www.flmsta.org

The following Saturday, July 20th, the South Brunch ride also finds us at a new-to-us location. [Dimitri's Pizza Kitchen](#), on 2710 Kenilworth Blvd, in Sebring. As I discovered, the name is deceiving... Join us and see for yourself. And those who have ever waded through a Greek/Italian dinner menu up north, you know what's in store.... "I need more time to get through the 15 pages of breakfast options...." Good times!

Oh, and there's a "months" worth of regional events happening too!! So many roads, so little time ☹️

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 one new Florida rider who joined the MSTA in June:

Steve Balistreri

We thank these two Florida members for renewing their memberships in June:

L Dee Cramer

Robert 'Bob' Shields

These two Florida memberships will expire soon or have recently expired:

Robert Bourbon

Ed Palmer

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and to 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 quickly and securely done online at PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew or PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARreview or an ITR, be sure to mail it to Beth Hemstreet, 5560 Stone Church Court, Loveland, CO 80537, and not to the address of a 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!

I feel for Tom and the Central/Northern members. You've been thwarted twice over the past two months!! Let's plan on better times ahead!

I thank all of you who have contributed to our raffle funds!!

Ah, a riding vacation in the southeast hills and dales!

Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!!

ATGATT Van

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report - June 2019

Well, I cancelled the central ride – again. A disturbance was working east from Texas and was forecast to impact central Florida the day of our ride. Weather reporting apps and telecasts, throughout the week and as late as Friday morning when I made my decision, were all predicting wide area (70% - 90%) coverage of thunderstorms. Radar confirmed it. So, this was real.



Tom Blake

While two or three of us from the Melbourne area could have done the nearly two-hour ride safely (and unknown Southies), Tampa and Orlando were certainly going to be affected. These are the two areas with the most central riders. Tampa-area riders would have been affected on the way to Frostproof - meaning they

wouldn't have gone. And the Orlando folks would have been affected going home afterward - meaning they shouldn't have gone. Carl, up in Altamonte Springs, confirmed this was the case. And it was primarily for the benefit of the many Tampa-area riders that *Four Seasons* was scheduled in the first place.

Now, I have personally ridden in severe electrical storms – lightning popping all around with **thunderous CLAPS** and **wicked BOLTS**, one right after the other. The experiences were more than a little unnerving. But that happened years ago when I was fat, dumb and happy and totally uneducated about the lack of protection motorcycles provide.



Like many, I was under the impression that the rubber tires would keep the lightning from reaching through the bike and rider to ground. Then I heard a story about a Goldwinger and his wife who had been riding in a storm. When they came to a stop at a light, his wife rocked forward into him. Turns out, sorry to say, she had been hit by lightning and was dead!

Here's another, this from June 10, 2019, reported by WESH-TV: *A motorcyclist is dead after being struck by lightning while driving on Interstate 95 in Volusia County, authorities*

said. Benjamin Austin Lee, 45, of Charlotte, North Carolina, died Sunday afternoon on I-95 near Ormond Beach. Troopers said Lee's helmet was struck by lightning around 2:15 p.m. Sunday as he rode southbound on I-95. Lee was pronounced dead at the scene. Troopers said an off-duty Virginia state trooper witnessed the lightning strike and its aftermath.

I've since read up on this. The truth is that occupants of cars and trucks are protected by the cocoon of metal enveloping them. (I thought about this with apprehension when I had my Mustang *convertible*.) Motorcyclists, on the other hand, are like little lightning rods sticking up in the air. We're totally at the mercy of the randomness of ground strikes – and, perhaps, fate.

Will I ride in an electrical storm? Maybe. Depends on where I'm at when I come upon bad weather, how desperate I am to get through it, how close the flashes are and whether they're air-to-ground or just heat lightning. Will I leave my house for a pleasure ride knowing there'll be lightning to contend with? No! Under the circumstances, I just didn't want any of my friends to take that risk, either.

I guess in hindsight I could have just let everyone know the risk and my decision not to go myself and let each rider decide for him or herself whether to go or not. Those unaffected may have had a good time. My bad.

OK, moving on. On July 13th (don't EVEN tell me you're superstitious), we'll try brunch at a new to us place in Oak Hill – the Camelot Restaurant. On-line reviews are pretty good. Details are below and on-line. Let's have a nice morning ride and give them a try.

Safe Journeys,

Tom Blake

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Florida July Brunch Ride

Sat., July 13th, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

[Camelot Country](#) ([map](#))

351 North US-1

Oak Hill, FL 32759

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

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 13th, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: [Camelot Country](#), 351 North US-1, Oak Hill, FL 32759 ☎386-345-0352 ([map](#))

Description: New-to-us, here we have a smallish diner in front of the Oak Hill flea market. But inside it's roomy enough for our purposes and immaculate. The food is plentiful and VERY reasonably priced. Service is excellent. Plenty of parking. Let's do it!

Contact: Tom Blake, tblake1@cfl.rr.com, or ☎321-723-2857

[MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride](#)

When: Sat., July 20th, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: [Dimitri's Pizza Kitchen](#), 2710 Kenilworth Blvd, Sebring, FL 33870 ☎863-385-7323 ([map](#))

Description: I KNOW. I KNOW. **THIS IS STILL A BRUNCH RIDE!!**

This is new-to-us, though highly recommended. One look at their menus, yes, plural, and you'll know why we are heading here for BRUNCH!! If you pine for those Greek/Italian diners up north, you have found your siren call!

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

Future Florida Rides

Note that the future ride events are included to facilitate longer term planning. The destinations and/or dates may be changed just before the ride dates. Please check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) for possible updates.

MSTA Florida Central Brunch Ride

When: Sat., **August 10th**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Where: [Koffee Kup](#), 1407 13th St, St. Cloud, FL 34769 ☎407-891-1488 ([map](#))
Description: New to us but well known by locals and Space Coast BMW riders, I'm told this place has the best breakfasts in Osceola County! They're one block south of US 192 in downtown St Cloud – right under the water tower. This is a family diner well known for home-style food at reasonable prices.
Contact: Tom Blake, tblake1@cfl.rr.com, or ☎321-723-2857

MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: Sun., **August 18th**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Where: [Shuckers](#), 9800 South Ocean Drive, Hutchinson Island, Jensen Beach, FL 34957 ☎772-229-1224 ([map](#))
Description: **SUNDAY SUNDAY SUNDAY!!!** We had a blast here last year! On the beach. Easy access. A change of pace, a change of day... Their BRUNCH includes made-to-order omelets and more! See what you missed...
Contact: Van, busavan@flmsta.org, or ☎561-386-2594

Regional Events

2019 Kentucky Red River Gorge MSTA Rally

When: July 12 – 14, 2019
Where: [Ramada Limited Mount Sterling](#), 115 Stone Trace Drive, Mt. Sterling, KY 40353 ☎859-497-9400 ([map](#))
Description: Info at: ridemsta.com/mstaforums/index.php?topic=2697.0
Contact: Patrick Mogavero, kzrex@aol.com or ☎859-620-6352

Big Lynn Lodge MSTA Rally

When: July 18 – 21, 2019
Where: [Big Lynn Lodge](#), 10860 Hwy 226A, Little Switzerland, NC 28749 ☎828-765-4257 ([map](#))
Description: This is the 8th year that the [MSTA](#) has held this regional event. Come for the roads and stay for the view. If riding curvy mountain roads are your thing this event is for you! With limited room availability and million dollar views with some of the best roads anywhere! You must also register with the MSTA for this event.
Info at: msta-se.com/BLynn or facebook.com/events/776978822664067
Contact: Dave Brickner, dwbrick@gmail.com or ☎828-448-5429

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 2019: [click here](#).

National MSTA [RideMSTA.com](#)

Florida MSTA [FLMSTA.org](#)

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

Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

This month's Mystery Hyperlinks are related to the safety article.

[Hyperlink #1](#)

[Hyperlink #2](#)

[Hyperlink #3](#)

[Hyperlink #4](#)

CLASSIFIED ADS

Two Air Jackets for Sale

I worked as a salesman for this company, “[Point 2](#)” out of Wellington, FL and sold their Air Jackets. They retail for \$499 and I have two, never used. You can look at their [website](#) for additional info. I like the idea but the way they are cut, it’s uncomfortable on a Harley. They are better suited for Rice rockets, since you lean over.

You tie a strap under the seat and attach to the jacket. If you are ejected off the bike the jacket inflates within a few seconds. It forms a protective cocoon around your upper torso, supports your back from the neck down to the waist.

I have two for sale, \$250 each. One is a black Med and the other is a neon lime XL. Each jacket comes with two straps (in case you have two bikes) and extra CO₂ cartridges.

Contact: Jeff Garten gartenj@bellsouth.net
LTC(ret) Jeff “Cowboy” Garten
PGR Assistant State Captain, District 6



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

Editor’s Request:

If you have ridden somewhere interesting at any time and would like to share with other riders your experiences and some photos from your journey, please contact me at editor@flmsta.org to discuss publishing an article. I can offer assistance in preparing your article. Thanks!