



# The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the  
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

July 2021 - Volume 14 Issue 7

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## Feature Article

### STAR 2021 from My Perspective

“Van” VanSteelant



June 13 - 16, 2021

After 24 months without a national rally, I was ready! Well, sort of. More about that later. For now, know this -“we” all had a wonderful time!! 275 riders enjoyed the resort, the roads and the comraderie! The planning involved behind the 3,000+ miles of routes and GPS coordination was well done and enjoyed by all who ventured out. The arrangements with the Canaan Valley Resort were terrific. Despite being understaffed, very few glitches actually had any impact.



*“Smoky” hills view right outside your window  
at the Canaan Valley Resort*

The location was beautiful, right in the midst of the State Park! “Smoky” hills and dales reminiscent of the Blue Ridge Parkway were right outside your window every morning, as the overnight coolness burned off with the rising sun. Mind you, the 47° mornings took some getting use to coming from 80° mornings here in Boynton Beach! But one did not break a sweat all week!

Back to the beginning. You’d think with 24 months to plan for a rally, I’d have been super ready. Well, the bike and gear were set for anything. The rider was a little less so. I had hoped to cover up my procrastination by tagging along with Florida riders I knew to be uber-prepared... That secret wish fell apart as they became no-shows, and I was left to “rely on the kindness of strangers” and lots of good company!! And what better place than a MSTA event!

I started my rally trek on Friday with a quick, hot and sweaty ride up to Sanford to check in with Amtrak. As a working stiff with limited time off, the AutoTrain is a great way to avoid the interstate slog up to Virginia. The COVID protocols were easily managed and actually resulted in my having two seats to myself to stretch out for

the overnight trip. After an evening watching flashes of greenery outside the window, we arrived to wet and overcast conditions. A shortened route to Canaan Valley Resort (CVR) was in order. No matter where you travel around D.C., the roads are under construction and overwhelmed by too many users. Until you cross over into Loudoun County, you have to be prepared for everything. The reward for my perseverance was beautiful green rolling hills, well-maintained highways (I-66 and SR-55) and clearing skies!

Rolling through the town of Davis, WV, where fuel and groceries were available, I enjoyed a wonderfully undulating road that would serve as our “in and out” route for the rest of our stay. Turning onto the pastoral 2-lane road through Canaan State Park to CVR, you note that it is posted at 30 mph. The number of deer grazing along the road side justifies the conservative pace.



*Plenty of company for my Ninja in the parking lot of the Canaan Valley Resort in WV*

After settling into my room with a view, my next move was to find some riders who I could tag along with for the next few days. Lucky for me, I found Brick and Chris in an agreeable moment. Both ride the Carolina mountains regularly, and they had recently finished a California Superbike School at VIR where they rode the wheels off their own bikes!! What a thrill to “tail gun” their group of like-minded riders and re-ignite my mountain riding skills! Connected with Sena communicators, stories and safety shoutouts were shared all day long!!

Route #1 was the choice for Sunday’s ride. As expected, great roads and a mix of weather. 100 miles in the dry, 110 miles in the rain! With 3 miles of gravel road mixed in to keep us focused! We were able to sit out a portion of the downpours in Kingwood at a very accommodating restaurant, Smokin’ Country BBQ, run by a young family. After an 2.5 hours of lunch and desert, we donned our gear for the wet ride home. Our delay tactics did minimize the worst of the rain that afternoon, and we pulled into CVR in the dry!

### **01 River RunsThru It**

RouteType: TOURING BIKE-FRIENDLY

Navigation difficulty: AVERAGE

Distance: 196 miles.

Lunch Stop: Apple Annie's near Morgantown, WV

Direction from Canaan Valley: NW, N, NE, CLOCKWISE

Comments: Something for big bikes, 2-up with some 1.5 lane twisty pavement to work up appetites. This route leans more towards civilization.

Route #8 made for a long ride on Monday. Fortunately, the skys cleared, with 52° at our departure and 82° when we parked the bikes 10 hours later. We started with breakfast at The Breakfast Nook, a local diner, run by another young family. Dad wears many hats. As they serve nearly everything the family grows or raises, he is busy working their sustainable farm. And scoots around on his GXR when things get boring! After miles of riding bliss, and a detour due to a washed out road, Brick and Chris relocated their lunch stop from days earlier. Lost the name... Then more miles of roads, which varied from 1.5 lanes wide to 2 and 4-lane byways, tight corners to wonderful sweepers!! Enjoyed sharing the ride with 7 riders in full sync!!

### **08 Whistle Punk**

RouteType: DESTINATION, TWISTY route.

Navigation difficulty: AVERAGE

Distance: 308 miles

Lunch Stop: Whistle Punk Grill & Taphouse, East Main Street, Richwood, WV

Direction from Canaan Valley: W, SW, CLOCKWISE

Comments: An all day ride and good for the spirited rider as it's 308 miles total and 9-10 hours should be allowed to complete it. The county route section between Marlinton and the Highland Scenic Highway via Woodrow and Williams River roads is one of my all time favorite strips of blacktop in WV. US-219 between Elkins and Marlinton isn't bad either. Nor are the roads headed back north, WV-20, WV-15, US-19. Along US-19 North of Flatwoods is Falls Mill, a roadside stop with a beautiful waterfall on the Little Kanawha River. A back road route through the backwaters of Stonecoal and Stonewall Jackson Lakes will deposit us at Horner and US-48 for the mostly relaxed ride back to CVR.

Route # 3 made for a short and sweet ride. Since the morning dawned foggy and 53°, a slow start to the day was welcomed. And, I found two new riding partners, Bob and Dave, fellow Floridias who thought a lunch ride would be just fine. Narrow, curvy roads with lingering wet areas were all ours! And as we suited up after lunch, with dark clouds forming, we made haste back to CVR avoiding the rain drops. Riders from other routes reported showers and worse. One of those routes was a 2-hour ride over to Harrisonburg, VA for an organized lunch buffet. We heard only outstanding reviews about the route and buffet! If only we had read the STAR Event Schedule more closely...

### **03 Five Rivers Tour**

RouteType: SHORT, TWISTY

Navigation difficulty: AVERAGE

Distance: 94 miles

Lunch Stop: Melanie's Family restaurant (but it's only 50 miles into the short 94 mile route)

Direction from Canaan Valley: N, NW, CLOCKWISE

Comments: Five rivers- Blackwater, Dry Fork, Black Fork, Shavers Fork, and Cheat. Back Hollow Road to WV-72 (not suitable for large trucks!!!) A few miles north on WV-72 I have included a sharp left onto River Road to follow the banks of the Dry Fork of the Cheat. This is a tricky sharp turn and some may prefer to stay straight on WV-72 which is twisty itself but you don't have this sharp left hand turn which may be difficult on a large touring bike. River Road merges back onto WV-72 in about 5 miles so either way will keep you on the route. We'll go through the community of Hendricks where the Blackwater River joins the Dry Fork and creates the Black Fork ( about 3.5 miles in length I believe it's the shortest river in WV), the Black Fork merges with the Shavers Fork just north of Parsons to create the Cheat which ultimately meets its end at Point Marion Pennsylvania north of Morgantown, WV where it joins the Monongahela River. At Parsons we'll stay on WV-72 and just a bit north of town we'll drop off onto Holly Meadows Road to the right. We'll follow this to Limestone Road which will head up the mountain and eventually join Stemple Ridge Road. This will meet US-50 at which we'll turn right/east. I added Melanie's Restaurant as a waypoint in case folks want a bite to eat or coffee and Cathedral State Park is just across the road where one could stop and walk the trails among the old growth hemlock trees.

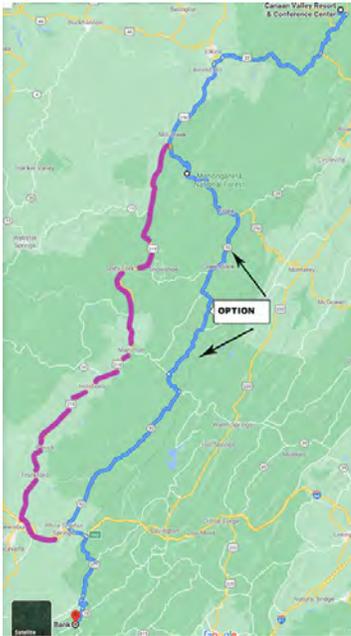
- From there we double back west on US-50 and back to Stemple Ridge Road but at the intersection with Location Road we will turn left onto Location Road and take it down into the valley to St. George. You will not regret riding Limestone, Location, and Stemple Ridge Roads, they are just incredibly beautiful.
- Once we arrive at St. George we will return to Holly Meadows Road until it intersects with Horseshoe Run Road, we will stay on it until we come to Lead Mine Mountain Road, we will take it, to the right. This road is a blast going up the mountain to it's terminus at US-219, there we will take US-219 and WV-32 back to CVR.

Ah, the rest of the trip began on Wednesday. During Sunday's ride, I inhaled and then coughed up something that ended up severely irritating my throat. I'll spare you the gory details. The next five days would be significantly impacted fighting off whatever took up "residence" in my throat.

So, a morning nap helped pass the time waiting for the temps to get into the 50's. Then more route planning for the 4-day ride home before a short local ride to prepare the bike for departure. The day ended beautifully, sunny and in the company of the banquet crowd! The closing event went well. The Florida contingent took up two tables, with current and brand new members mixed in. Our traditional group shot is still being archived. We did miss having Sue Nemish accept her award, and the bike winner was in New Jersey, so a little in-the-room-excitement was missing. Nonetheless, ALL of the volunteers pulled together a helluva event.



*The Florida contingent took up two tables at the STAR banquet.*



Route from CVR to Floyd, VA

Thursday, and nothing but fun planned for today. Health matters compartmentalized, I headed south in 46° sunshine. Due to several detours along the Blue Ridge Parkway in the Roanoke area, I was very grateful that Steve Evans had shared a route from CVR to Floyd, VA that we published in our May *Gator Tale*! I rode every mile of it! CR 653/Shawsville Pike NE was my favorite!! Followed by CR 311! The lunch stop in Paint Bank General Store was delicious, as promised. And Floyd is a gem of a small town that is actively diversifying its economic base to protect itself from future calamity.



Lunch stop at Paint Bank General Store

Friday was Blue Ridge Parkway day!! Floyd to Balsam Gap, near Dillsboro, NC. I have dear friends waiting for me. But what a day for a ride!! Cough, hack, ride... The north end of the BRP is less interesting than the southern portions. Once in North Carolina, the hills-with-trees at every lookout becomes the norm and what you'll see in the promo materials! I know that summertime on the BRP can result in colossal tieups. Not this Friday. My first encounter with 4 wheels was 82 miles into the ride. I only dealt with three numbskulls the whole day, and each were dispatched with minor annoyance. And a joyous night with friends was the perfect end to this day!!



BRP lookout as beautiful as in all the promo materials

Saturday turned into the day you wished you'd have rented that U-haul after all. Cough, hack, cough, ride... The first 20 miles south from Dillsboro through Clayton, GA was the only "fun" for the rest of the day. Tropical Storm Claudette made her presence known with a good thorough soaking somewhere south of Abbeville. And those days of 50° mornings were replaced with 90° days! Dealing with below-average road signage and avoiding the interstate mess in South Carolina made for a long day to get to Kingsland, GA. Arriving just before sunset, the glow of the hotel oasis was most welcomed. I unloaded just as the rain began again.

Sunday. You know what that means. Early start and home before the temps hit 90°+. You remember TS Claudette... Winds, downpours, bands of yellow clouds on the radar... Cough, hack, cough... So I left Kingsland just as the rain stopped at 10 AM, knowing that I'd hit my last little bit of rain going through Jacksonville. I hit a LOT of rain going through Jacksonville. The rest of the ride was an exercise in gear drying/cooling. And patience with the clueless left lane hogs. With 94° on display, I was almost completely dry by the time I hit my back door.

After two years, what a return to sport touring!! 2615 miles. The new-to-me 2018 Ninja 1000 makes for a fun mount! The modifications made prior to the trip were successful. The best one was the pair of Michelin Road 5 tires. The OEM tires left me nervous. The 5's proved to be awesome and confidence inspiring. Rain and sunshine!!

Next year, we'll be heading to Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The STAR arrangements from 2020 were carried over for 2022!! See ya there!!

## **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. [Ed. Note: This article was previously published in the June 2015 edition of The Florida MSTA Gator Tale.]*

### **Summer Heat! By Doug Westly**



It's that time of year again. Becky and I rode back yesterday from the Riding Into History vintage bike gathering in St Augustine. On the way home, the ambient temperature readout on Becky's new VFR1200FD told her it hit 95 degrees as we rode through the Ocala forest. Our trip home was 4 hours in the Florida heat.

Every year starting about this time and for the next 4-5 months, all of us in Flatistan (central and south Florida) face this same challenge...the heat.

There are lots of ways to combat the heat. Some motorcycle owners just say the heck with it and don't ride. I discount them as fair weather riders. The real answer is to recognize the heat factor and plan for it.

For short rides, pick the right time. If you can ride first thing in the morning, you can usually get in several hours of bearable temperatures from dawn to about 11 am or so. The same thing applies for the afternoon and evening hours. After about 4 pm, riding becomes fun again.

If you want to ride in the middle of the day during our hot season, there are a couple of strategies to help you out.

First off, don't think that riding in a t-shirt and shorts will make you feel cooler. The blazing sun on your skin will only cook you like a Thanksgiving Turkey. Besides that, you have pledged to wear ATGATT, right?

Armored mesh gear is the way to go. The air flows through it and the gear keeps the sun off.

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. If you wait until you're thirsty to stop for a drink (of water!), then you're already dehydrating. Drink early, drink often. If you're riding longer distance and don't want to stop, invest in a Camelbak or other water supply system that you can draw from on the ride.

There are lots of commercial cooling vests, rags, etc, on the market. There is even an electric a/c system available for motorcycles. I've tested it and it works, but it seems bulky and a little impractical, at least for my riding style.

Want some easy, low-cost A/C while you ride? Take a bottle of cold water and pour it over your shirt, then immediately put your mesh jacket on and ride. The air flowing through the jacket turns that wet t-shirt into a cooling vest. Even in 95 degree weather in Florida it will keep you cool for at least 30-45 minutes. The jacket keeps the sun off the shirt and that combined with our humidity prevents the shirt from drying out too quickly.

Whatever you do, watch for the signs of heat-related illnesses. Don't overdo it. Take frequent breaks.

Finally, watch out for each other as well as yourself. Let's all take care as we ride during the hot summer months!

**Ride safe! – Doug Westly**



## South Director's Report

### **Diligence pays off...**

Fortunately, follow-up calls saved the day! Our original destination doesn't do brunch, despite being part of a national chain that promotes their breakfast options on their website!

Further research around LaBelle turned up an unexpected surprise. The Log Cabin BBQ is open for breakfast, with a 2-page menu!! Four of us made our way from points east across the Gateway to West Palm Beach County...Ah, the Glades! We picked up Don at the Marathon Station in Clewiston and cruised to LaBelle. Dorothy and Dennis were there to meet us, breaking in a new Spyder. Ellen made her way by 4 wheels, recovering from her ride to STAR. And Alan did a fine job representing the Central membership. Given the heat and expected shower activity, a fine summer turnout!!



*Given the heat and expected shower activity, a fine summer turnout for the South Ride in LaBelle.*

As for the Log Cabin...Everybody agreed that it was a hit, AND we need to schedule a Lunch ride back there next year!! Lots of room, friendly staff, and good eats!

Our group looked at the weather radar and decided to ride a more direct route home. But we did make time for a stop for cooling A/C, along with a little ice cream sweetness at the Tropical Village Market back in Clewiston. Most of us made it home dry...sweaty yes, but "dry"!!

We'll be looking for more of you next month!!

### **What's Next??**

We have decided to drop the park locations for the remainder of 2021. With the summer heat and the significant vaccination rates for our cohort, we think fewer of you will still consider a picnic table over restaurant service.

The **Central Ride will be a BRUNCH ride, on Saturday July 10th**, with a ride to **Four Seasons Restaurant in Frostproof**. There's a small chance some Southies will get up early and join you all.

Two weeks later, on **Saturday, July 24<sup>th</sup>**, the **South** riders head for **BRUNCH at Main Street America in Lake Placid**.



*We'll be back to the Log Cabin for a Lunch Ride!*

## 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...

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Dee Cramer      Mike Engestrom      Pete Kauk

These Florida memberships have recently renewed their membership in the MSTA:

Budd Breheim      Doug Christensen      Becky DeShazo-      Robert Fischer      Glenn Monroe  
Doug Westly      Westly

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](mailto:membership@ridemsta.com). Renewing or joining can be done quickly and securely online at [PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew](http://PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew) or [PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin](http://PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin) respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARreview 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](http://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 brand new **Invitation-To-Ride Tri-folds!** For each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a **raffle ticket for the motorcycle 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.

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## Random Ramblings!!

STAR was a success, due to a HUGE effort by a lot of volunteers. Several alterations to the schedule due to concerns about crowding and available staffing worked out very well. If you had your doubts about how the EC and the STAR Event crew were going to put on a good show, put them away. And plan to be at STAR 2022 now!

With the newly released guidelines regarding the opportunities for vaccinated people to mingle safely, I do hope to see more riders roll up their sleeves asap.

*We are finally realizing the positive results of the convergence of the mental, economic and medical recoveries, which are simply all tied together with the behavior of our populace... Please do your small part to keep the momentum going!!*

*When you can...*

*Join one of our monthly rides!!*

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

**ATGATT Van**

**MSTA Florida State Co-Director**





Carl Swofford

## Central Director's Report

### **June Central Ride – Grills Riverside Seafood, Melbourne**

A fine morning for a ride. The temp was 72°, and the sky partly cloudy. At 07:45 three of us met at the corner of Aloma and Howell Branch Road in Winter Park for the 63-mile ride to Grills Seafood Restaurant in Melbourne. We took a few backroads but ultimately ended up on I95 heading south. We arrived at Grills at 08:50.

Grills is right on the river. The location is scenic and relaxing. Eight of us were seated at 09:30. Gary Gray rode the longest distance, 200 miles. The food was tasty and well prepared, the service was great, and the comradery was outstanding. It's always good to see friends. No one was in a hurry to leave.

The three of us hit some brief rain showers on the way home. The showers simply cooled us off. We were in summer temps for the ride home.



*We rode a few backroads to Melbourne.  
Gary Gray rode the furthest – 200 miles.*



*Grills is right on the river, and the food was tasty!*

## Florida Rides This Month

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, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Location: **Four Seasons Restaurant**, 5298 US-27, Frostproof, FL ☎ (863) 635-2951 ([map](#))

Description: We always have a good time riding in this part of Florida! Luckily, there's also a good place to stop and enjoy a brunch!! And you just might see few a Southies who got up real early to make this ride!

We have decided to drop the park locations for the remainder of 2021. With the summer heat and the significant vaccination rates for our cohort, we think fewer of you will still consider a picnic table over restaurant service.

Contact: Carl, [carltr6@hotmail.com](mailto:carltr6@hotmail.com), or ☎ (386) 793-0030

## MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: Saturday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 – 11: 30 AM

Location: **Main Street America, An Eatery**, 22 S Main Ave, Lake Placid, FL ☎ (863) 612-9818 ([map](#))

Description: Some places always shine. This is one of them! Fun roads, central location and great service keeps us coming back year after year!

We have decided to drop the park locations for the remainder of 2021. With the summer heat and the significant vaccination rates for our cohort, we think fewer of you will still consider a picnic table over restaurant service.

Contact: Van, [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com), or ☎ (561) 386-2594

## Red River Gorge Rally / MSTA

When: Thursday-Sunday, July 8-11, 2021

Description: Visit [www.ridemsta.com](http://www.ridemsta.com) Click EVENTS/2021.

Location: **Mt. Sterling KY**

## Big Lynn Lodge Rally / MSTA

When: Thursday-Sunday, July 15-18, 2021

Description: Visit [www.ridemsta.com](http://www.ridemsta.com) Click EVENTS/2021.

Location: **Little Switzerland, NC**

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## 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 any updates.

## MSTA Florida Central Brunch Ride

When: Saturday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Location: **The Cup Diner**, 1407 13<sup>th</sup> Street, St. Cloud FL ☎ (407) 891-1488 ([map](#))

Description: A bit more urban compared to some of our destinations...But look at the menu and the rave reviews! Join the Central riders for gab and grub! They might even share a secret road or two with ya!!

We have decided to drop the park locations for the remainder of 2021. With the summer heat and the significant vaccination rates for our cohort, we think fewer of you will still consider a picnic table over restaurant service.

Contact: Carl, [carltr6@hotmail.com](mailto:carltr6@hotmail.com), or ☎ (386) 793-0030

## MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: Saturday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:30 – 11: 30 AM

Location: **Hot Skillets**, 161 S. Brevard Avenue, Arcadia, FL ☎ (863) 993-2337 ([map](#))

Description: NEW!! Let's check out this new destination. Just might be all the reason we need to visit Arcadia!!

We have decided to drop the park locations for the remainder of 2021. With the summer heat and the significant vaccination rates for our cohort, we think fewer of you will still consider a picnic table over restaurant service.

Contact: Van, [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com), or ☎ (561) 386-2594

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](#).

## Florida MSTA Apparel

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



Shopping finds online... We found some fun motorcycle t-shirts you can order online. Click the image for this particular t-shirt. There are other fun motorcycle t-shirts online at <https://teespring.com/shop/motorcycle-tshirts>.

## North Director Needed

If you would consider taking the position of North Director, please contact Van, [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com).

We welcome articles and comments from our members for publication. Contact the editor at: [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org).

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

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

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

### More Contact Information

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## Classified Ads

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org). Don't trash it, recycle it! One man's trash is another man's treasure!