



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Feature Article

Alternative Therapy for Cabin Fever

By Tom Blake

Normally, right now we would be elbow-to-elbow with friends, relatives, work colleagues, other riders... engaged in conversation about one topic or another. But for the most part, that's not where we're at. Most of us are cooped up at home, burnt out on TV news, crossword puzzles and solitaire. Face it – many of us are becoming stressed and relationships may be getting strained. What the heck can we do?

Well... communicating, experts say, helps us deal with the stresses and strains of isolation. It's supposed to be therapeutic. Okay, so how can a bunch of sport-touring motorcyclists like us engage with one another when we're sitting at home? We can't get together for a ride or share in a bit of camaraderie over a good meal.

No. But we can ride or dine *vicariously* by sharing accounts of motorcycling trips already taken, or maybe one being considered for the future. Or it could be a story about a particular restaurant or meet-up that was really enjoyable. Even a breakdown out on the road that had to be contended with would make a good conversation point. Yes, fiction could work, too. For us, anything motorcycle-related would be good.

So, just plop down behind your keyboard with a cup of coffee, or a glass of wine or whiskey, and engage in a little creativity. No wait, listen. Just put something together, serious or humorous, and send it to Don at editor@flmsta.org so he can put it in the next newsletter for us. If you're bashful, use a *pen name*. It doesn't have to be a saga either – short stories can be very entertaining. Believe me, it'd be much better than sitting endlessly in front of the TV half-doing through yet another virus report. C'mon, give it a shot. Besides, just the act of writing refocuses the mind in positive ways. I'll be looking forward to hearing from you.

Tom Blake

Here's How I Got Started in Motorcycling

My dad's oldest brother had an old Harley, or maybe it was an Indian, parked in his barn in central Pennsylvania in the early 1950's. Never saw or heard it run. But they also had a Moped that my cousin rode. I was intrigued but too young to ride at the time. Still, this was likely the spark that ultimately led me to motorcycling years later.

My own journey started during my early 1960's high school years in Melbourne, Florida. I talked my dad into helping me buy a used '58 Harley Davidson 125cc Hummer (against my mother's better judgement). What a piece of crap it turned out to be. But it got me to school. And it got me to my part-time evening job at the local Dairy Queen. It even got me to the Saturday night car races at the speedway west of town - and other pleasures, too. Except for the all too frequent engine-rebuild parts, it was cheap to operate. But 40 mph was about all it could muster without hitching a draft behind a school bus. I think it only put out around 5 hp.



1958 Harley Davidson 125cc Hummer

The picture (left) shows what a Hummer looked like except that I spray painted my fenders and tank purple! There was no rear wheel suspension, just big springs under the back of the solo seat. You can see by the short gators that the front forks had very little travel. You didn't want to ride it through deep potholes. I don't recall what happened to it. In any case, in December, 1966, the US Air Force and I agreed to a four-year deal.

In the early '70's, I was a civilian again and back in the Melbourne area. I bought a used '71 Yamaha 125cc Enduro. Mine looked exactly like the one pictured (below). I had an awful lot of fun with that bike. The local Yamaha dealer also sold BMW's. Back in those days, BMW was the only brand reliable enough to go long distances. And it got me to thinking about doing just that. And so, that's when I decided - SOME DAY I'm going to ride a motorcycle to MONTANA! Don't know why it had to be Montana. But that was my dream.



1971 Yamaha 125cc Enduro

It wouldn't be on the Enduro, that's for sure. And not on knobbies, either. Besides, someone on a 400cc Suzuki dirt bike ran into me head-on one day in a blind sweeper out in the sticks. Our engine cases collided! I didn't see or hear or feel a thing. No recollection. It broke my left humerus (upper arm bone) completely in two. A year and three operations later the bone finally healed. Thanks to the Miami Dolphins' orthopedic surgeon for grafting bones from my leg into the

arm. The bike was junked. That put a rather dramatic halt to my riding for about 12 years.

Then one day after work in the mid-'80's, I watched an older fellow whom I worked with hop on his Honda street bike, ease out to the road and, zoom, he was out of sight. The bug bit me again.

I found a low mileage 1981 500cc Honda Silverwing in good shape and bought it. The one pictured (right) is the same color and configuration as the one I had except that I put a small aftermarket faring on mine. My intention, of course, was to eventually ride it to Montana.



1981 500cc Honda Silverwing

During the 1987 Bike Week, I decided to ride up to Daytona as a test. By the time I got to Cocoa (just 20 miles), it became very clear, this was NOT a motorcycle I would be able to ride to Montana. Even Daytona was too far. Too buzzy and way too uncomfortable.

I traded it for a used 1984 GL1200 Goldwing. In 1988, Rose and I rode that Wing to Arizona and Colorado and came home via South Dakota and Ohio. But we never got to Montana. Here it is (left) at the Painted Desert in



1984 GL1200 Goldwing

Arizona. We did get up to the Smokies and lower Appalachians several times and I rode it to Knoxville once for a Wingding and Pennsylvania at least once to visit relatives.

Then it developed a stator problem in early 1989 and got traded during Bike Week for a new GL1500 Goldwing complete with pinstripes and air brushed murals of the Daytona area on practically every surface. I polished it so many times with Nu Finish that it wore through the clear coat and started looking pretty weathered. After 83k otherwise trouble-free and enjoyable miles, it was traded for a '96 Wing,

which I didn't like nearly as well.

Then came a '98 Valkarie Tourer which, though powerful enough to do power drifts, didn't have enough ground clearance for aggressive cornering in the mountains. My '03 Yamaha FJR buzzed at or above 70 mph. And an '03 GL1800 Wing had persistent saddlebag latching issues.



1998 Valkarie Tourer

Finally, in 2004, on the way home from Americade in New York, I traded the '03 Wing for an '04 ST1300 with 5k miles on it. It was a keeper. A throttle lock, Sargent saddle and Givi trunk gave it everything I needed for comfortable long-distance travel. I put 90k more trouble-free miles on it and kept it until 2013. That's it (below, right) when I got it ready to sell.



My 1989 GL1500 on the Cabot Trail – note the airbrushed murals



My 2004 ST1300 just before selling it in 2013

But let's jump back to 2009 for a minute. I retired at the end of July that year. On September 8th, the day after Labor Day, I began my long-dreamed-of journey to the northwest. Over the course of the next 32 days, I would ride in 26 states, including MONTANA, and put on over 10,000 miles. Mission MONTANA accomplished! The ST was rock solid throughout.

Even when I sold it at 95k miles, I would have had no hesitation to hop on it again for a repeat cross-country ride. I just felt like its resale value would plummet above 95k. Besides, I had my eye on a new Triumph Trophy SE. The SE had a number of desirable electronic amenities the ST didn't have.

I've owned other bikes during this timeframe. Let's see: '84 Honda Nighthawk 700, '94 Honda Magna 750, '95 Kawasaki Vulcan Classic 1500, '03 Honda VTX 1800, '07 KTM 990 Super Duke, '09 Ducati 1100 Monster, '07 Triumph Tiger 1000. But the others were my main rides up until 2013. The '89 Wing was a darned good bike. But the ST was, hands down, my favorite.

NOTICE

In April Pat Mogavero, MSTA President, informed the membership that STAR 2020 has been rescheduled to September 6-10 due to the Coronavirus COVID-19. The membership has been notified by mail or email of these new dates and any other changes.

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.*

Due to his busy schedule with Honda, Doug Westly has decided to discontinue his safety columns in our Florida MSTA Newsletter as well as in STARreview. We sincerely thank Doug for his many years of excellent articles. Until another rider steps forward to volunteer to prepare new safety-related articles, we will republish Doug's previous articles, with his permission.

Did Anyone Forget That We live in a Subtropical Zone?

[Ed. Note: This article was previously published in the July 2012 edition of *The Florida MSTA Grapevine*.]

OK, just in case anyone has forgotten that it rains around here, allow me to remind you of our recent visitor, Tropical Storm Debby:

Yep, that's Bayshore Blvd in Tampa...

OK, so we don't normally go riding through tropical storms. On the other hand, storms and those pesky summer "pop-up" showers are a fact of life in Florida. If you ride in Florida, you're going to ride in the rain.

Usually it's a short ride under the one black cloud in the sky that just happens to be right over top of your route. So how do we deal with rain riding?

First off, know what you're dealing with. Is that black wall of rain in front of you a mile deep or 20 miles deep? If you don't know, then rerouting your ride might be your best option.

One of the greatest resources for Florida riding is real-time weather radar, now available on some GPS devices. It can tell you approximately how extensive the storm is, allowing you an informed decision on whether or not you want to try and ride through it.

Tires, tires, tires! How often have we said this? Are your tires (think tread) up for wet roads? Bald tires on a motorcycle in the rain are like the skids on a snowmobile. They are great for sliding. Traction...not so much. Those of you who like to ride your tires until the cord is showing (see the recent article!) may have issues when it is not only raining, but when the roads all of a sudden are being used by the osprey as fishing grounds.

Keep the rain gear handy. You might actually run into a storm sometime when you want to put it on.

Slow down. Stay out of the deep stuff. Give yourself more distance from the vehicle in front of you. Motorcycle tires actually cut through standing water better than car tires, but that's not a license to go screaming down the highway through the puddles and streams.

The biggest dangers are probably wind and lightning. Sudden storms can bring unexpected winds. Be prepared for them. As for lightning, don't expect the motorcycle to protect you. Get out of the way of the storm, or seek protection.

Oh, and remember one more thing: If you don't like the Florida weather, wait 5 minutes or go 5 miles. It will change. ☺

Doug Westly – Safety Editor (Retired)

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

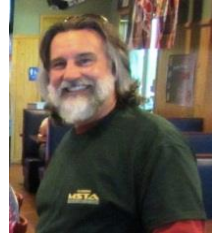


Florida News

South Director's Report

SO, HOW Y'ALL DOING.....

Seriously, I do hope you have taken all the necessary steps to keep yourself safe and virus free. And that goes for all of your love ones, right here and around the world. We can report that all's well with us and our extended family across the country. To my knowledge, everybody followed the guidelines, sheltered or at least stayed home, and stayed in touch with one another for fun and support.



Van VanSteelant

What's Next??

Ok, 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 first determine if they have reopened. And then 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, there are a few other options available to us if a "regular sit down" brunch is out of the question. Since we wear helmets and many of us are wired up with communicators, "social distancing" is a no-brainer!! We could bring along our own "brown bag" brunch/lunch and find a welcoming place to spread out and eat! And/Or, I can send out an email to you with the email addresses of members in your area; say a 60 mile radius. Then you could reach out and set up "local rides" all over the state. Of course, the ultimate definition of "distancing" is a solo ride!!

On May 16th, the South **Brunch** Ride heads to the [Country Café](#), on 2053 SE Hwy 70, in Arcadia! In an attempt to avoid the worst of the Luv Bugs, we are starting brunch rides earlier this year. And we're trying out a new-to-us destination!!

A week later, on May 23rd, the Central **Brunch** Ride heads to the [Goodrich Seafood Restaurant](#), on 253 River Rd, in Oak Hill! This is a return visit to a new favorite! And this is about as east as you can get without sinking into the ocean... If the stars align and it's truly safe, you just might see Tom Blake... from a distance!

You know what to do to find all the small print and the brunch timing... 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 one new Florida rider who joined the MSTA in April:

Brent Liming

We thank these three Florida members for recently renewing their memberships:

Rebecca DeShazo-Westly Victor Salisbury Doug Westly

These 11 Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Budd Breheim	Robert Fischer	Michael L Miller	Larry Solomon
Douglas Christensen	Adrian Jones	Glenn Monroe	Ed Zaslow
Michael Engestrom	Pete Kauk	Robert 'Bob' Shields	

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 done quickly and securely 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 the new member of our new membership team, **Scott Snedden, 11484 Waterwood Dr., Tyler, TX 75703**, who replaced the retiring Beth Hemstreet, 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!

As you read last month, Tom has made the decision to let somebody else take the reins of Central Director. It has been a great pleasure to work and play with Tom. We have shared meals, plans and anxieties. I will miss my team mate's contributions and hearty laugh. And I know he will work to make the next co-director's transition as smooth as possible. Feel free to contact Tom or myself about assuming this vital role.

For the next month, PLEASE heed the directions of our local and state leadership and the health departments. Stay the course with social distancing and consistent hygiene efforts.

This too shall pass. Be a contributor to the efforts to hasten the decline in the deaths from and spread of COVID-19.

We've lost more people in less than 5 weeks than 15 years of outright war in Vietnam.

When you can... Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!!

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.

Member Comment

In the April issue of the Gator Tale, Van wrote a very nice article about Tom Blake and I would like to add my 2 cents. I'm sure it was with a sad heart that many of you received the news about Tom stepping down as Central Director, I know I did. Not only was he outstanding in his duties, but having him and Van as co-directors was like having Larry Csonka & Jim Kiick on your team, the job got done. Call it what you want but things in the state of Florida could not have been handled in any better manner than when they were working together. Although I live up north in Lake City, I tried to make it to every brunch/lunch date that was held north of Orlando and there were many to choose from.

I'd like to take this moment to say a sincere thank you to Tom for all of the hard work, time and effort that he put into his duties which, made for an outstanding time during these past 3 years or so. He always had great rides planned along with great places to eat. He had excellent organizational skills which made things go well and he was always there at the function. But the one item that stood out to me was his interaction with people. Whenever I made it down to a central lunch, Tom always made a trip around the table to say hello to me. He always made it a point to ask how I was doing and he always thanked me for coming down as in some regards I was a stranger to this group living where I do. Tom treated me with respect and kindness, as Van has always also. To me they are both class acts. Tom, you will be missed and I sincerely wish you and yours the very best.

Stephen Evans

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

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

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.

We are starting the BRUNCH rides earlier this year. We hope to miss the worst of the Luv Bugs...

MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: Sat., **May 16th**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: [Country Caf ](#), 2053 SE Hwy 70, Arcadia, FL 34266 ☎863-993-0094 ([map](#))

Description: The Southies kick things off with a ride west, to a new destination for us in Arcadia. A week later, the Central riders will be heading east, to the ocean!!

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

MSTA Florida Central Brunch Ride

When: Sat., **May 23rd**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: [Goodrich Seafood Restaurant](#), 253 River Rd, Oak Hill, FL 32759 ☎386-345-3397 ([map](#))

Description: We've enjoyed the brunches here. Casual dining adjacent the Canaveral National Seashore and Mosquito Lagoon. In addition to delicious special seafood brunch items, this restaurant has good service and great views. Parking is unpaved, so you might want to bring a kickstand support just in case. This place is really growing on me.

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

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., **June 20th**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: [Four Seasons Restaurant](#), 5298 US-27, Frostproof, FL 33843 ☎863-635-2951 ([map](#))

Description: This will be our 3rd trip. They're centrally located east to west, accessible and clean. Food has been good and prices very reasonable. Plenty of seating and paved parking.

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

MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: Sat., **June 27th**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: [Crossroads Restaurant](#), 5050 NE 128th Ave, Okeechobee, FL 34974 ☎863-763-8333 ([map](#))

Description: It's been years since we dined here. Let's fix that!! Simple location, good food and great service. Join us at the long table for grub and gab!!

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

Regional Events

TriSTAR / MSTA

When: Fri.-Mon., **May 22nd-25th** (Tentative)

Where: [Alleghany Inn](#), 341 N. Main St, Sparta, NC 28675 ☎888-372-2501 or 336-372-2501 ([map](#))

Description: A regional favorite!! In 2019 the event was designated as a Just-for-Fun event; this year it may be a regular event with registration and meals as in prior years. Check the event webpage for updates.

Location: Sparta, NC – Excellent street riding in Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern North Carolina.

Contact: Geoffrey Greene at hawkgtrider@aol.com or ☎865-659-4755

Information: The event webpage is available at www.msta-se.com/tristar/

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

Florida MSTA FLMSTA.org

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



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

- [Hyperlink #1](#)
- [Hyperlink #2](#)
- [Hyperlink #3](#)

CLASSIFIED ADS

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!