



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Feature Article

2-Wheel Travels with The Boss

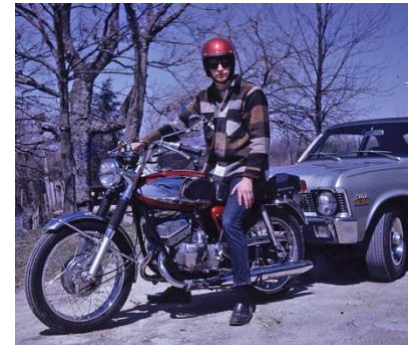
By Jim Park

[Ed. Note: Jim and Dianne Park have been touring by motorcycle since 1995. This is Part 1 of a 3-part article about their travels and adventures on two wheels. Hyperlinks have been added.]

If you're old like me, you'll remember the song *California Dreamin'* by the Mamas and the Papas. Well, thanks to Covid 19, that's what I've been doing in a way. We've elected not to travel this year for the first time in over 40 years because of this dang virus! So, with free time on my hands, it set me to thinking about all of the travels my wife and I have done together over the years - in particular those travels we have made on two wheels. We have been touring by motorcycle since 1995 every year, most here in the good Ol' USA, but there have been some trips elsewhere. The following is a recap of some of our experiences I'd like to share.

1995 was a year of change for me. My job was stressful, and I lost my father that same year. Some may call

it a mid-life crisis, but whatever it was, I definitively needed a change! Dianne (my wife) and I would often attend car shows where I would drool over the classics. I seriously considered a sporty rag top for a weekend release. Also, in the running was a motorcycle. I had several neighbors that had purchased Harleys during the yuppie Harley craze, so a motorcycle was also a consideration. I had owned a 350 Bridgestone in the late '60s, but it proved impractical and unreliable for commuting to college, so it was history by 1971. However, riding never lost its appeal. So, after serious consideration, a motorcycle it would be! Upon announcing my decision to my wife her reaction was, "If you get one, then I get one, too!" That was the beginning of our 2-wheel adventures. Little did we know at that time that touring by motorcycle in the coming years would be the way we would see most of our country and parts of the world.



My 350 Bridgestone in the late '60s



First trip to St. Augustine in 1995

Our first trip was an extended weekend ride to [Saint Augustine, Florida](#), about 280 miles. Dianne was riding a Honda 600 VLX, and I was on a Honda 1100 Ace Shadow. We were just starting to get the feel of touring, so we went on the cheap; soft-sided bags and Wal-Mart rain gear. As we still do today, we traveled back roads mostly along the ocean. Just north of Daytona Beach we encountered rain - very heavy rain! At one point we had to ride the centerline of A1A where the standing water was the shallowest. We quickly discovered that our rain gear was virtually worthless and upon arrival at our room, we also

found out that our soft-sided saddlebags were not waterproof. Every piece of clothing, including what we had on, was soaked. Perhaps our first lesson learned!

Our first “long” trip was in 1997 to [Clayton, Georgia](#). On the advice of our riding neighbors, we towed our bikes. Yes, folks, you heard it here first - Jim Park did once trailer an unbroken motorcycle(s). Again, another lesson learned! We quickly discovered that *it’s not always the destination but the ride itself that is the most enjoyable and creates the best memories*. We never towed our bikes again.

Here’s a good article to read - [Riding Buddies vs Touring Buddies](#)

2001 Trip – Western U.S. ([photos](#))

Over the years we became more confident with our touring knowledge and skills, so in 2001 we did our first truly big trip out West. We were on the road for 21 days, covered over 8,000 miles and visited 18 states. This was a wonderful trip! Dianne was riding a Honda 1100 Ace Tourer, and I was on a Yamaha Venture. While both bikes qualified as “touring” bikes, we discovered that our fuel range (at around 150 miles) was somewhat restrictive in certain areas of the West. We never ran out of gas, but it was certainly close on a few occasions.



*Our first big trip out West
Badlands National Park-SD*

2003 Trip - New England ([photos](#))



*We discovered why New England
mountains are green – all the rain!*

2003 was a notable year for our 2-wheel travels. We toured the New England states, which included a 2-day stop in [Lake George, New York](#), for the Americade rally. We have since been back to this area because of its fantastic riding and gorgeous scenery. This being our first venture into the area we discovered why their mountains are green. We had eleven days of rain! Our investment in good rain gear and touring bikes with hard bags aided in our travels enormously! Regardless of the rain, we had a wonderful time. Little did we know that future travels would expose us to even more difficult conditions that Mother Nature would throw at us.

2004 Trip - Northeast Georgia & Western North Carolina ([photos](#))

Mother Nature made our 2004 trip to [Northeast Georgia](#) and [Western North Carolina](#) to be perhaps our most challenging. Our plans were to leave home on Labor Day weekend. However, approaching Hurricane Francis had other ideas. With evacuations in progress, we knew just to get out of the state getting gas would be difficult and time consuming, not to mention securing a hotel room at the end of the day. So we elected to delay our start date and ride the hurricane out at home.



*Chasing and being chased by 3
hurricanes in one trip – Dang!*

A few days later we headed out leaving behind our home that was a few shingles lighter and no electricity. Francis was a slow moving storm; consequently, we caught up to the back side of it at the end of the first day’s ride! Regardless, the following day and the week to come would bring excellent weather. We rode our favorite roads in the area and the [Blue Ridge Parkway](#) under cool clear skies, a “life is good” experience. After a week of being out of touch with the world, we stopped for the night at a hotel in Clayton, Georgia. It was there that we learned that Hurricane Ivan was hitting the area that night! We parked our bikes under the hotel stairwell and hoped for the best. The next morning we awoke to a hotel room without electricity and severe flooding and downed trees in the area. Our plans to attend a (then) HSTA rally in the area were nixed as it was canceled due to the storm. We almost made it home on this trip when we reached northern Florida and found out that Hurricane Jean that was “heading out to sea,” did a 180-degree turn around was headed smack in our path. Dang, the third hurricane on this trip! We made it as far as Lake Placid, Florida, where I have family, to weather out the storm. Again, we left my sister’s home without electricity and street debris. We got home tired but safe, and yet we would do it all again!

2005 Trip – Europe ([photos](#))



Our European tour group – 4 countries in 10 days on BMW motorcycles – a must for the bucket list!

Europe on two wheels in 2005! I had read about a Four Country Tour offered by *RoadRunner Magazine*, so we decided to give it a try. This was perhaps our best and most memorable trip. We arrived in Munich, Germany, a few days before our scheduled tour to give us time to both adjust to the local time and do a little sightseeing on our own. We did a citywide tour on two wheels - as in bicycles. It was great! We had an English-speaking tour guide and saw many of the sights around Munich.

Having adjusted to the local time and having our fun around town, we met up with our tour group. The whole experience of a preplanned tour was a completely different world for me. I was used to doing my own research, planning routes and sights along the way. However, everything was done by the tour company. The tour was 10 days with some meals included, and we visited four countries - Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. We were provided with low mileage (nearly new) BMW motorcycles. I rode a 1200GS with top box and side cases, while the Boss (Dianne) had a 650GS with the same luggage setup. The mountain roads and passes in Europe are much different than those here in the States. With their tight turns and steep inclines, I had this feeling their routes were established by goat herders in centuries past, then paved over when automobile travel came about. If you think Deals Gap is challenging, well it ain't nothing like Stelvio Pass! We had good weather for the most part and saw many interesting sights along the way. Touring Europe on two wheels needs to be a bucket list item! (Explore motorcycle tours in Europe [here](#)) –*Jim Park (Stay tuned for Part 2 next month)*

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 March 2014 edition of The Florida MSTA Gator Tale.]*

Coping with the Left-Turn Menace

By Doug Westly



We've all seen it and talked about it. So why does it still happen? Why do we continue to lose so many riders (and sometimes friends) to the left-turning vehicle that violates our right-of-way? According to statistics, more motorcycle- involved multi-car accidents occur at/in intersections than anywhere else on public roads (*Source: MSF*).

There are lots of factors involved in left-turn car/motorcycle crashes. The most obvious one is the inability of the driver to visually recognize the approaching motorcycle in the oncoming lane. Whether it is a distracted driver, someone trying to squeeze through a perceived “hole” in the traffic, etc. the result is usually bad news for the motorcyclist.

So how do we cope with this all-too common traffic menace? Here are just a few thoughts, collected from various sources, riders and just plain old experience:

First off, we just have to make the assumption that NOBODY sees us on the road. Just because you're wearing hi-vis everything, from underwear to a one-piece, day-glow orange, LED-lit billboard suit, do not expect that to protect you. SOME drivers may see it. Ride like you're invisible.

Treat every intersection with caution. That doesn't just mean the ones with lights, stop signs and so on. Remember, every driveway emptying onto your road is an intersection. Every side street off your path of travel is an opportunity for a driver to turn in front of you.

Pay attention to vehicles as they approach or are facing you in the oncoming lanes. If they are stopped or are slowing, expect them to turn...and not see you in the process.

Can we catch clues about their intentions? Watch the driver. See where they are looking. Oh, and just because you make eye contact with them, don't assume they actually see you. Catching a theme here?

Another effective tactic, particularly at controlled intersections where vehicles are waiting to turn, is to watch the front tires. If they start to turn or roll, you can guarantee the driver intends to GO.

How about announcing your presence? Modulating headlight systems seem to work well and are legal in all 50 states, provided they are activated only during daylight hours. On the other hand, flashing your high beams can be a two-edged sword. The other driver may think you're indicating for them to proceed with their turn. Be careful about signals!

Finally, a last thought...SLOW DOWN for those intersections and situations where an unwanted physics lesson with another vehicle is a real possibility. Remember to SCAN AHEAD for traffic and possible danger. Don't forget the MSF mantra: SEARCH-EVALUATE-EXECUTE (SEE)! (It really does work...)

Ride safe! – Doug Westly

[Florida News](#)



"Van" VanSteelant

State Director's Report

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

So, another month has passed, and the cases and hospital admissions for COVID 19 have jumped alarmingly across large portions of Florida and the nation. As I've mentioned over the last several months, we would have to see how the general public behaved and deal with the resulting consequences. The data and video evidence are out there. Though significant restrictions for Florida were lifted on September 25th, for now, our monthly plans will continue as they have for the foreseeable future....

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.



Oct Central Ride at Lake Harris Hideaway in Tavares

We successfully ran two lunch rides again in October! The **Central Ride to the Lake Harris Hideaway** in Tavares was enjoyed by Alan Hartog along with Brian and Helen Johnson. The weather held and the Hideaway's outdoor dining option was much appreciated!! We are working to fill the role of Co-State Director for the Central region and anticipate having a ride leader in the new year.

The **South Ride to Dock 633** in Lake Placid appealed to riders from coast to coast! From the Tampa area to Melbourne, they came to enjoy a splendid day on the roads and good company at the restaurant and Bishop Park! Bob Summers again left Marathon (in the Keys) in the dark and met up with James, Buck and myself for the ride over hill and dale. Nice temps, dry roads and competent riders made for grins all the way to Lake Placid. We had 8 riders choose to dine outdoors but under cover at

Doc's, and 7 others were truly outdoors at the park. The photos tell the story! With the weather gods on our side for the day, we all made it home still enjoying the sunshine. (See more photos [here](#))



Oct South Ride (l-r):



Oct South Ride - Bishop Park top (l-r): Buck & ?
bottom (l-r): Buck,

October Just For Fun Ride – Bartow Airport

Eve organized a Just For Fun ride to the Bartow Airport restaurant on October 24th. Tom Blake enjoyed being on the bike (especially going over since it was cooler), the meal (cheddar omelet with bacon! which I haven't had since March) and, of course, the camaraderie. Moving to an alternate location was not in the least a downside. He'd been to the airport restaurant before (Pappy's). It used to be accessible directly from US 17 vs. now having to wind around through the industrial part of the property. No wonder they can't stay open! His only quibble with the alternate Eagle Lake Family Diner was the lack of elbow room. An extra table to put more space between the nine of us would have felt a lot more comfortable, under the circumstances (COVID). At least we were outdoors with a light breeze (although it was blowing across our pair of tables straight at him).

Eckert and Tom took the more direct route over from Grant-Valkaria via Fellsmere to Yeehaw Junction, where we picked up Larry, and on through Lake Wales. FL 60 is a bore, especially along the 2-lane between Yeehaw and Lake Wales. Coming back, we cut east just above the restaurant on a very pleasant country road to Scenic Highway (17) and took it up to Kissimmee where we hopped onto Neptune over to St. Cloud and then Canoe Creek down to Kenansville on our way back through Yeehaw and home. The Kissimmee area is always a mess, but at least Neptune kept us away from 192. A little before Kenansville, we took a 5-mile detour down Joe Overstreet Road to a camp at the edge of Lake Kissimmee. Great chance to relax in wide open spaces and enjoy the views. It did get a little warm around mid-afternoon but nothing like a month or two ago. It was just shy of an 8-hour outing. Felt great to be out of the house and doing something we really still enjoy.

What's Next??

Ok, *just like last several months*, 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 LUNCH rides as scheduled WITH CONDITIONS!! Though restrictions have been lifted for several types of restaurants and bars, I will continue to contact the restaurants to listen to how they are operating. I will send out the usual email announcements after my research. 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 several months*, and likely until a safe vaccine is available and widely administered, we will continue exercising the option for a "regular sit down" LUNCH by brown-bagging our own lunch refreshments and finding a welcoming place to "spread out" 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, any time you're motivated! Of course, the ultimate definition of "distancing" is a solo ride!!

First up, on **November 7th** the **South Lunch Ride** heads to a brand-new destination for us!! **Havana Café of the Everglades**, on 191 Smallwood Dr. in **Chokoloskee**!! I know, it's near the end of the road, literally! Their decor and menu are not to be missed. We were to ride here back in March, just as the old "normal" disappeared... Join us for our yearly, southernly ride. A unit of the **Everglades National Park** system will cover the park option this time around!

A week later, make plans for the **Central Lunch Ride** on **November 14th** at **Eaton's Beach Sandbar & Grill**, on 15790 SE 134th Ave, in **Weirsdale**!! Another new-to-us destination, it's member-recommended as a much better alternative to Gator Joe's. On the south end of Lake Weir... Or head for **Hampton Beach Park**, just 6 minutes north of Eaton's, for a waterside picnic!

And once again, on **Friday, November 27th**, we will have the **Special Black Friday Lunch Ride** to the **Goodrich Seafood Restaurant**, on 253 River Rd, in **Oak Hill**!! Though the frantic shopping rush may be tempered a bit this year, we rarely need an excuse to ride-to-eat!! If a park suits you better, just a few yards north is **Sunrise Park** with a newish pavilion and waters-edge views!!

Looking forward to our last ride of the year on **December 5th** for our **STATEWIDE HOLIDAY Lunch Ride to Jay Bees in Lake Wales**. See below....

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:

Thomas Blake	Cecil Broom	Edward Clay	Douglas Farnham
Buck Jones	Dennis Mitchell	Hugh Palmer	Stephen Phillips
Rick Sapir	Harry Hal Smith		

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

Mike Halburnt	Norman Nelson	Roger Spice
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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/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**, 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 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.



Random Ramblings!!

Please vote!!

The response to the monthly rides has been very encouraging. The positive vibe during our gatherings is certainly welcomed!! We continue to encourage our small gatherings AND fully respect the needs of those who gather!

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 and are still dying at a rate unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

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...

Join one of our monthly rides!!

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, busavanflmsta@gmail.com.

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 South Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **November 7th**, 12 PM – 2 PM

Where: **Havana Café of the Everglades**, 191 Smallwood Dr., Chokoloskee, FL 📞 (239) 695-2214
([map](#))

Description: Near the end of the road, literally! Their decor and menu are not to be missed. Join us for our yearly, southernly ride. A unit of **Everglades National Park** system will cover the park option this time around!

Contact: Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com, or 📞 561-386-2594

MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **November 14th**, 12 PM – 2 PM
Where: **Eaton's Beach Sandbar & Grill**, 15790 SE 104th Ave, Weirsdale, FL ☎ (352) 259-2444 ([map](#))
Description: This place is member-recommended as being superior to Gator Joe's, so we'll give it a try. It appears to be an attractive place on the south edge of Lake Weir. SR 42, one of the better motorcycling roads, will get you near!
Contact: Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com, or ☎ 561-386-2594

MSTA Florida Special Black Friday Lunch Ride

When: Friday, **November 27th**, 12 PM – 2 PM
Where: **Goodrich Seafood Restaurant**, 253 River Rd., Oak Hill, FL ☎ (386) 345-3397 ([map](#))
Description: This is our Black Friday ride after the early morning rush to the stores is over. They're in a small community so there's never much local traffic. Mind your speed around Oak Hill – it's often radar-patrolled. We came here for brunch in May. The lunches are even better. Casual dining adjacent the Canaveral National Seashore and Mosquito Lagoon. In addition to delicious seafood, 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: Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com, 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 MSTAs [Event Calendar](#) for any updates.

Special Event

MSTA Statewide Holiday Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **December 5th**, 12 – 2 PM
Location: **Jay Bees**, 8625 FL-60, Lake Wales, FL ☎ (863) 696-1901 ([map](#))
Description: This destination worked out very well for us last year. We were able to draw members from many parts of the state. And some attendees mentioned that having only one lunch date in December made planning for all their other obligations much easier. And "Santa Van" may again have some swag to bestow on those who gather...

Star 2021 / MSTAs

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

Florida MSTA FLMSTA.org

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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. Don't trash it, recycle it! One man's trash is another man's treasure!