



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Feature Article

On the Way to Utah, Colorado & New Mexico Incredible Views & a Close Call with Nature

By Tom Blake

[Ed. Note: Tom rode out across the country to STAR 2010 and saw some amazing sights along the way. This is Part 2 of a 2-part article about his memorable ride. Hyperlinks have been added.]

My plan to start the day was to head south on [Utah 12](#) from Torrey, Utah, and absorb myself in the [Grand Staircase – Escalante National Monument](#). Out on Route 12 and riding through the desert about 8:30 a.m. there was nothing but tumbleweeds and sparse vegetation in sight. I started fiddling intently with the GPS. Suddenly I became aware of something TAN momentarily filling my windshield. I instinctively rolled off the throttle and then before I could do anything else, the handlebars shook pretty strongly. It all happened in an instant! It must have been a deer or maybe a big cat - although I never actually saw anything but that flash of tan. Its rear hoof or leg must have bumped my front tire as it leaped out of the way. I stopped a few miles later after regaining my composure and checked the bike for damage.

Fortunately, there was none. Nor to me!

The only scenery I saw the rest of the morning was the road directly in front of me and about 30 feet on either side! That's no way to see the sights. So, I turned around well before reaching the good stuff. Have to say, that was as close a call as I ever want to have. I was forcefully reminded that mornings and evenings in the country are when animals are out and about and therefore especially bad times to be distracted. Whatever it was, it was gone when I rode back that way and hopefully unhurt.



Ferry crossing Lake Powell in
Utah

The wind was howling that same afternoon further east. I took a car ferry across part of white capped [Lake Powell in Glen Canyon](#) connecting the northern and southern sections of [Utah 276](#). Later, while traveling about 65 mph with the wind at my back, I reached out with my left arm but could feel absolutely no wind resistance. Hence, the wind was blowing at about 65 mph in the same direction I was heading. Nor was there any cooling affect. I'm glad the road changed directions as temperatures were in the mid-90's. I spent the night in east, central Utah in a two-story, wood-framed hotel. The wind was still howling and inside, the buffeting and creaking of the building's frame reminded me of being in a hurricane. The winds subsided by morning and I headed for Colorado.



Back in 1988, I had been in Colorado for a Goldwing rally near Aspen. Following the rally, Rose and I rode over [Independence Pass](#) below Aspen. It was awesome. Since I was in the area this time, I decided to take a detour up US 24 and then Colorado 82 to the Pass. At 12,095 feet, it sits atop the highest ridge in the Sawatch Range which includes the highest mountains in the Rockies. The road up from the south is narrow and treacherous with numerous switchbacks. The ride back down puts you right next to unguarded drop offs so undivided attention is absolutely imperative for self-preservation. Yet there are incredible views out into the valley, way below when you work up the nerve to very briefly glance away from the road.



Independence Pass in June south of Aspen

The upper Arkansas River between Leadville and Pueblo, Colorado must be one of the more popular whitewater rafting destinations in the country as I passed one group after another while coming down US 24 and then heading east on US 50.



(l) Looking down at the rafters on the Arkansas River below the Royal Gorge Bridge (top, r)

Just west of Canon City, I took a small detour to the [Royal Gorge](#). Rumbling over the 3" x 12" board planked suspension bridge spanning Royal Gorge had me on my toes as the bridge is some 1063 feet above the Arkansas River, and I was praying for no splinters in my tires. After crossing, I got off and walked back onto the bridge in order to look over the edge. Of course, this is when a propane tank truck elected to cross. The whole bridge was bouncing and wiggling as I hurried to a solid support pylon. Far below, rafters were coursing down the river unaware of the anxiety above. I'm just glad I was off the bridge with the motorcycle before the truck started across!

I headed to [Santa Fe](#) to meet Rose who flew out to Albuquerque and drove up in a rental. We spent the next day walking around a good part of downtown before heading up to Taos. Santa Fe (meaning Holy Faith in Spanish) is the oldest capital city in the US. The area was originally occupied by a number of Pueblo villages as early as 900 – 1050 A.D. It became the provincial capital in 1610 and continued as the state capital since New Mexico became the 47th state in 1912. The old downtown is quite interesting and well worth spending some quality time in.

After the Sport Touring Association Rendezvous (STAR) rally in [Taos](#), Rose and I went back to Santa Fe. In the morning, we rode the Rail Runner commuter train down to [Albuquerque](#) (about a 1 1/2-hour trip), walked around downtown including the adobe shops in the Old Town area and then used the city buses when we needed to cover ground quickly. That evening, we were finishing supper in the Route 66 Diner and, glancing at one of their clocks, I suddenly feared that we were going to miss the last train back to Santa Fe where my bike and Rose's car were and also our hotel room and luggage. Plus, her flight was out of Albuquerque the next morning. We rushed to the train station in mid-town and then with great relief realized that the clock I looked at in the diner was for a different time zone! We made it back in time after all but not by a lot. In the morning, Rose drove to Albuquerque to catch her flight home. I began a leisurely 4-day ride to accomplish the same thing by ST1300. – Tom Blake

I headed to [Santa Fe](#) to meet Rose who flew out to Albuquerque and drove up in a rental. We spent the next day walking around a



(Top, l) Adobe-style buildings in downtown Santa Fe (R) Picture of the spiral staircase inside Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe. The stairs are said to have been constructed with simple hand tools by a stranger who showed up, answering the parishioners' prayers, and then disappeared when the stairs were done. A railing was later added for safety.

(Below, l) In the Market – Rose (pink blouse) - is checking out the guy with the Australian aborigine didgeridoo and artwork in the tent. The whole town square was filled with vendors of humor!



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

Merge

By Doug Westly



We were recently making one of our routine rides from the house over to a local dealer- ship on the other side of town, using the Tampa freeway / Interstate system, when I experienced a traffic management epiphany. It is something we all do, probably almost every day. It's a technique as simple as merging into traffic on a controlled-access highway.

Here's the problem and generic solution. How do we safely merge into moving traffic on the freeway or interstate, from the dedicated entrance lane? The obvious answer is we accelerate to the traffic speed, select an open area in the lane nearest the merge lane, and insert our vehicle into that spot.

There are some techniques you can use to enhance safety while performing the maneuver. First, make sure you start observing the traffic flow as soon as possible. Often you can see the traffic flow from a long distance away, before you ever reach the turn into the merge lane from the local streets. Also, don't wait until the last second to start looking for that empty spot in the traffic. Find it early, and then monitor it to make sure it doesn't disappear, accelerate or slow down, or get filled.

Here is the epiphany part, and it has to do with our speed. As riders (or drivers) we want to match our speed to the general traffic flow and the movement of our selected empty spot in the traffic. What I recognized that day is something that I had been intuitively doing, although not through any conscious planning. As we merged onto one controlled highway from another, using a dedicated merge lane, I realized we were accelerating up to a couple of mph over the traffic flow's general speed. Let me emphasize this acceleration was not excessive, but just enough to allow us to then easily slow and insert our bikes into the selected empty spot in the traffic. I am also not advocating speed in excess of the posted limits.

So how is this different than just speeding up to meet an open traffic spot, or pacing the traffic as you begin your merge? Well, if you have to speed up at the last minute, it may be difficult to match the traffic speed. You run the possibility of overshooting the aimed-for spot or having to then brake once in traffic to avoid the car in front. This tends to irritate the drivers behind as well. If you simply pace the traffic and empty spot, it will work as long as the spot doesn't alter its pace in the flow, based on varying speed rates of surrounding vehicles. It is a lot easier to simply be moving just a couple of mph faster than the traffic flow and then gently slow to fit into the selected spot. The maneuver is more seamless and seems to work well in most situations involving the described merge circumstances.

Remember this is just one potential technique, to be utilized when appropriate to assist in rider and traffic safety. As always, YOU are responsible for your own safety and that of your passenger!

Ride safe! – Doug Westly





"Van" VanSteelant

State Director's Report

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

Cases and hospital admissions for COVID 19 are still up across the 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 Sept. 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.

We had both a **Central and South Lunch Ride** this month!! A little switcheroo... The **South ride** went first, to our most westerly destination so far. Three of us left the Shell station for the start of a 400-mile day, heading for **Woody's River Roo and Tom Bennett Park in Ellenton/Bradenton**. Though we were traversing the state diagonally, we were able to keep to two lane roads until the last 6.5 miles! And we enjoyed temps that remained under 80° going west and under 90° returning home...



Woody's is a gem! Waterfront location and motorcycle parking at the front door bodes well for our crowd. Their outdoor area was set up with tables properly placed, and the "party crashers" from the Central membership were well represented! James held up the Southern contingent until he was joined later by Jackie, who had to deal with an unexpected flat tire just as she intended to ride off to the start point. Perseverance



is a virtue!! Eight diners shared good grub and gab! Meanwhile, Bob and Van made their way back to the expansive Tom Bennett Park. Quite the oasis in the sprawl of Bradenton. For the first time, we were closed out of the pavilion option - a big birthday party had reserved it. No biggie...Bob carries his own collapsible chair, and I found shade and grass to pass the time! As happens with longer rides, the four Southies essentially made their own ways home. Kudos to Bob, who enjoyed a 700-mile lunch ride!! I only clocked 397.



A week later, the **Central Lunch ride** headed as far south as they get. And the Southies played "party crashers" this time! Four of us gathered to blitz our way to **Don Jose's Mexican Restaurant in Sebring**. Jackie is now on two new tires, and James and Laura rolled in for a perfectly timed departure! We enjoyed several familiar roads to get to the north end of Lake Jackson, the focal point of Sebring. As we rode past the **Veterans Park**, we noticed several riders already established at a large pavilion. Catching up with the riders at Don Jose, eight hungry faces were set to enjoy tacos and burritos. Greetings and salutations were shared, as well as meeting a potential new member who discovered our crowd of bikes and smiles!!



I headed back to the wonderful park, situated right on the lake's edge. Several pavilions with multiple tables made this a great find and very pleasant for the six members who opted for the "BYO" experience. Two additional Southies, Don and Buck, had made their own way to the park, and were joined by Rich, Eve, and Tom! After months of avoiding groups of any kind, we were the benefactors of Tom's venturing out party!!

Lunch at Veterans Park – Rich, Don, Tom & Buck After a little "arm twisting", Buck took the lead for the ride home. After we rode south through Lake Placid and Venus and more, we stopped for a cooling cup of stupendous ice cream at the most conveniently located Marathon Station, just east of Clewiston. Though the clouds were alternating between friendly and puffy to "isolated showers", we mostly avoided a good soaking, and welcomed the "chilling" effect of the brief showers through our vented gear!

Just a wonderful two weekends of riding and camaraderie!!

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 "s p r e a d o u t" to eat and gab! Additionally, we have "regionalized" the email addresses of members in your area; say a 60-mile radius. This enables you up to reach out and set up "local rides" all over the state, any time you're motivated! Of course, the ultimate definition of "distancing" is a solo ride!!

First up, the **Central Lunch Ride** heads back to an old favorite! On **October 10th**, we head to the **Lake Harris Hideaway**, at 11912 Lane Park Rd, in **Tavares**. Lakefront with a covered deck, good food and friendly prices.... Make your plans now!

One week later, on **October 17th**, the **South Lunch Ride** returns to **Dock 633**, at 633 Lake June Rd, in **Lake Placid**. A great destination surrounded by plenty of fun roads... Oh, and a tasty menu!! Load your calendar now!!

Membership News!!

If you are receiving the *Gator Tale*, but not my announcements, **PLEASE** email me ASAP to correct my files. I believe I'm up to date...

My heartfelt THANKS to Don Moe for his efforts EVERY month to bring our Florida membership up to date with all the news about our new and renewing members!!

Here's what we know today...

We welcome a new Florida rider who have joined the MSTA recently:
Brian Van Scoy



These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Stephen Albert	Cecil Broom	David & Diana Cassell	Douglas Farnham
John Gilreath	Mike Halburnt	Buck Jones	Don Later
Nelson Norman	Rick Sapir	Harry Hal Smith	Roger Spice

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 **Invitation-To-Ride quad-folds!** For each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a **raffle ticket for the motorcycle drawing at our next STAR event**. Any new or current member who joins or renews as a Sustaining Member will likewise receive a coupon for a raffle ticket for each year of the new membership term.

Random Ramblings!!

The response to the monthly rides has been very encouraging. The positive vibe during our gatherings is certainly welcomed!! 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, busavan@flmsta.org.

Florida MSTA Apparel

As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to mstaflorida.qbstores.com. We have made arrangements with the supplier for our National Gearbox to allow our State membership to buy shirts, hats, etc. with our State logos directly from the source!!! No muss, no fuss!! Order yours today!! They offer both embroidery and digital



print options. Click onto the Embroidered Apparel or Shop By Logo for each option. Don't hesitate to contact Queensboro directly with any and all questions. They are very customer friendly. They also offer Polo shirts and T-shirts with pockets!!

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

Florida Rides This Month

Important Note

We're back to lunch rides in October. 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 Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **October 10th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Where: **Lake Harris Hideaway**, 11912 Lane Park Rd, Tavares, FL ☎ (352) 343-3585 ([map](#))

Description: A perennial favorite looking out on Lake Harris from the attractive covered deck. Good food and reasonable prices. We just keep going back!

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

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **October 17th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Where: **Dock 633**, 33 Lake June Rd, Lake Placid, FL ☎ (863) 699-6330 ([map](#))

Description: It's been too long since we dined here. Good food, lots of parking and the whole back patio for us to rock and rumble...Remember how much fun the roads are around here...Like you need another reason to join us!

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 any updates.

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

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

Where: **Pop's Sunset Grill**, 112 Circuit Rd, Nokomis, FL ☎ (352) 343-3585 ([map](#))

Description: As promised, we have our last westerly destination for the year. Join the Southies and more for a return visit to great dining experience. Be sure to walk around the facility and marvel at the multitude of dining rooms and water views!

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

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 / MSTA

When: **Sunday-Thursday, June 13-17, 2021**

Where: **Canaan Valley Resort and Conference Center** 230 Main Lodge Rd, Davis, WV 26260 ([map](#))

Description: Visit www.ridemsta.com Click EVENTS/2021.

Location: Davis, West Virginia

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

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

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

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

🏍️ To join the MSTA or renew your membership: [click here](#).

🏍️ For the Events in 2020: [click here](#).

National MSTA RideMSTA.com

Florida MSTA FLMSTA.org

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

Classified Ads

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

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

