



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 13 Issue 9

Events September 2020

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Feature Article

On the Way to Utah, Colorado & New Mexico Earth, Wind & Power

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 1 of a 2-part article about his memorable ride. Hyperlinks have been added.]

On the way out, I stopped at the [Barber Motorsports Park](#) just off I-20 east of Birmingham, Alabama and spent about 4 captivating hours touring the **motorcycle and car museum**. There were five floors of exhibits, and they had much more either stored or being worked on. I saw motorcycles that I never even heard of before. Find some excuse to get out there - it's really incredible! There is also a fantastic road racing course next door. Several race teams were doing tire testing while I was there. The museum wall facing the track is glass, so from inside you can see racers rounding the corkscrew and heading down the short straight to the esses.

(top l) 1956 Parilla Corsa
(top r) 1925 Bohmerland



(bottom l) 1929 Pierce Four
(bottom r) 1957 Harley Davidson ST 165



From Birmingham, I worked diagonally up to Memphis and then stayed on I-40 through Oklahoma. Near Weatherford west of Oklahoma City, I noticed a large number of giant wind turbines. A local informed me it was the largest wind farm in the state and was owned by Florida Power & Light. That raised an eyebrow. Apparently, it's one of many that FPL operates around the country. The electricity is sold to local utilities.

I did not want to go through Amarillo, so I cut northwest on Route 152 in the Texas Panhandle. Along the way I encountered one natural gas pumper field after another - many pumps were no longer productive. The gas smell was quite strong in some areas, and I worried that a spark could set the whole area ablaze.

On US 87 heading toward [Raton Pass, New Mexico](#) late that afternoon, the sky directly ahead was black, layered and roiling. It looked alive, menacing and evilly foreboding. And then as I dreaded the worst, the highway would veer left or right toward daylight. This happened several times. But as I neared Raton, I knew that my luck had run out. I checked into a hotel. It started to rain lightly as I unpacked and covered the bike. By the time I got to my 2nd floor room, it turned into a gully-washer. That was a close call. Severe hailstorms were reported east of Raton that night. I was thankful for my good fortune.



*Approaching Eagles Nest, NM
between Raton Pass and Taos.*

Below Raton, I turned west on US 64 which passed through the picturesque town of [Eagle's Nest](#) on the way to Taos and then Chama before switching over to US 84 into southwestern Colorado. At Durango, I turned north on [US 550, the million-dollar highway](#). On the way over the mountain to Silverton it got really chilly and began to sleet! After a warm-up in Silverton, I put on the rain suit for added insulation and continued north over the Red Mountain toward Ouray. At higher elevations it sleeted again, and it was packing onto my windscreen! My dash temperature gauge read as low as 36°F at higher elevations. Absolutely a great motorcycle road even if I did have to slow down for weather conditions.

Over in Utah, I still wanted to see several of the parks that I missed in 2009. Southwest of Moab lays the widely spread out [Canyonlands National Park](#). In it, among many other interesting sights, the Green River, originating in the Wind River Mountains of western Wyoming, winds its way quite dramatically through the park's deep ravines. Smaller by comparison, the Colorado River also winds through the park from a more northeasterly direction and joins the Green. The combined river is then called – no, the Colorado? One would think the larger river would dictate the combined name. Turns out, the Colorado River was known as the Grand River prior to 1921. Thanks to a U.S. House Joint Resolution proposed by a Colorado representative that year, the Grand and the combined river were renamed the Colorado.



*Green River overlook in
Canyonlands NP, Utah*

I next rode through [Capitol Reef National Park](#) a little further west. It was interesting, but I didn't find it particularly remarkable. As it was getting dark, I located a hotel with a restaurant just west the park. In the dining room that evening, I talked to a guy in a nearby booth who recommended heading down [Utah 12](#) to the [Grand Staircase – Escalade National Monument](#). Well, it was on my list for the 2009 trip until frigid weather forced me down to Arizona. So now I had a plan to start the next day. **Stay tuned for Part 2.**

Tom Blake



Recent Florida Rides

A Fine Way to Spend an August Morning

By Carl Swofford



A pleasant ride in comfortable temps (for Florida)

This morning dawned clear, bright, calm and comfortable, for Florida, at 76° F. Four of us left my house at 7:30 am for a **Central Florida MSTA Brunch Ride** to the **Grills Riverside Deck and Tiki Bar in Melbourne**. It was a pleasant 68-mile ride for us. Two other riders joined us for a delicious brunch.

Grills is located on the Indian River, and the view over the water is lovely and peaceful. As always, the camaraderie was great. The food was tasty.

The ride back home was considerably warmer, but not unbearable. It was a fine way to spend an August morning!



This is the menu. You capture this with your smart phone camera, and it downloads the menu to your phone. Pretty cool.



(l-r) Carl, Alan, Claude & Hal

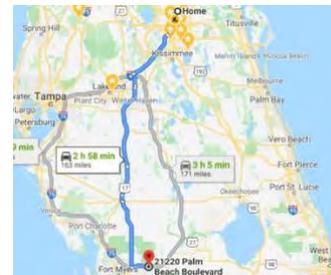
Nice Ride...New Place...New Friend

By Carl Swofford



Our new friend, MSTA rider, Jackie

Dark and early this morning, three of us left my house at 5:15 am to ride to Alva for a **South Florida MSTA Brunch**. The temp was 73° F, and it was a very pleasant ride all of the way. Leaving that early, even riding through Orlando on I4 was a breeze. Once we left I4, we took back roads to pick up US17 in Lake Alfred and stayed on US 17 all the way to Arcadia where we took FL 31. Traffic was minimal, and it was so nice to ride through the countryside.



We elected to have our brunch at the Alva Diner instead of going to the park as other MSTA riders did. Van stopped in to greet us and introduced us to Jackie, an MSTA rider who I had never

met. This delightful lady is from Fort Lauderdale, and she is very impressive. We had a good brunch with fantastic comradery.

After brunch, the three of us saddled up and headed back to Central Florida. We had a good ride back and only hit a few sprinkles. We rode a total of 331 miles. My two riding buddies, Alan and Claude, had never ridden in that part of Florida. My thanks to Van for organizing this fine MSTA outing. Looking forward to the next ride!



(l-r) Jackie, Alan, Carl & Claude

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 February 2014 edition of The Florida MSTA Gator Tale.]

The Differences Between Bikers and Motorcyclists

By Doug Westly



How about some (hopefully) humorous thoughts about safety, bikers and motorcyclists:



Biker: Thinks a helmet is not necessary, and if forced to wear it, uses it as a place to put inane little stickers with rude sayings. Very grown up...

Motorcyclist: Knows the value of “wearing whatever your brain is worth.”

Biker: Wears fingerless gloves to show everyone he’s “cool.” Really?

Motorcyclist: Considers gloves based on comfort, protection and flexibility for controls input. OK, color coordination is allowed.

Biker: Checks tire pressure whenever tires start looking like squashed bagels.

Motorcyclist: Not only checks tire pressure before a ride, but even knows the differences between stick and oil-filled gauges. Oh, and has an air compressor in the garage or carries one on the bike.

Biker: Thinks “safety” means wearing a high-vis T-shirt, shorts and sandals. Sigh...

Motorcyclist: Understands safety gear means to think about both abrasion and impact factors. Don’t get me started about jeans...

Biker: Spends his (or her) spare change on chrome farkles. Perhaps it is to see reflection while preening at bike night.

Motorcyclist: Can’t wait to save enough spare change to take another safety course!

Biker: “Had to lay ‘er down to save it.” I heard this one again just last week. Where do I even start?

Motorcyclist: Knows the bike’s emergency braking capabilities and how to use them!

...and finally:

Biker: The bike is the price of entry to the weekend warrior lifestyle.

Motorcyclist: The ride is the lifestyle.

Which one are you?

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 few 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. For now, our monthly plans will continue as they have for the foreseeable future. Unless new or revived restrictions are announced over the next few weeks...

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 Brunch ride this month!! The **Central** event to **Grills Riverside in Melbourne** drew members mostly from the eastern half of Florida. Most of the attendees enjoyed a hearty brunch outdoors, just a stone's throw from the Indian River. Check out Carl's report and photos... And there was at least one rider who hung out at Wickham Park. Just a lovely place to take in a little bit of nature under shady trees.



The **South Brunch Ride to the Alva Country Diner in Alva** (go figure!) was also well attended. We had six riders meet at the 7-11 and picked up one more at the Love's rendezvous! New member Bob Summers got a very early head start, leaving from Marathon in the Keys, and met us at the 7-11. Jacky Bair came up from Ft. Lauderdale to double our female contingent, as Ellen Kocher ventured out alongside Buck Jones, Jim Park and yours truly. We were joined by Don Mroczenski at Love's. As the others made their way to **Caloosahatchee Regional Park**, Jacky and I rode to the restaurant to see who else made the ride. I left Jacky in the good company of Carl and friends. Yes, they rode their tails off. Catch Carl's report and pics above.

I caught up with the others at the park for BYO refreshments and comfortable distancing. Another wonderful place to hang out, chat and marvel at all of the bird sounds!! The park alternatives continue to gender rave reviews. It's a way to ride and be social under conditions that you control. As the clouds shifted, we departed and managed to make it home over damp roads but few raindrops.



During a few of our rides, I learned that some of the riders did not recognize one another, and therefore thought the ride was undersubscribed. Here's the take-away from this scenario. I'll make sure the restaurant knows that MSTA members and riders will be announcing their arrival so the staff can direct you to the gathering group. And, in our event announcements, I'll emphasize the importance of checking in with the staff and to ask about where the other MSTA attendees are sitting. After all, if you make the ride and want to dine with fellow members and riders, we need to ensure that you find one another!!

We chose to repeat a Safety article (see above) that is both timely and a reminder of what's makes the MSTA stand out among the multitude of motorcycle clubs.

What's Next??

Ok, *just like last month*, 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!!* I will contact the restaurants to 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, *just like last month*, we have been exercising the option to 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, on **Saturday, September 19th, the South LUNCH Ride heads to Woody's River Roo Pub & Grill in Ellenton**. A distant "southern" location, on-the-water views, shaded alfresco dining and great food. Look for a confirmation email a week before the ride with the latest info.

A week later, **Saturday, September 26th, the Central LUNCH Ride returns to Don Jose Mexican Restaurant in Sebring**. Great location for nearly everybody, Lake Jackson water views, shaded patio dining and great food. Look for a confirmation email a week before the ride with the latest info. As this is written, both places are open and have 50% or more occupancy for indoor dining. Their dilemma is whether 10-15 riders might take over their available tables if we want to distance ourselves. We will also continue to promote park locations as alternatives to restaurant dining.

STAR PROMO - The new date (June 13-17, 2021) and location (Davis, WV) for STAR 2021 is now on our calendar. We have left the various regional MSTAs rides, and the Just For Fun rides, on our calendar. Check out the RIDES calendar for all the details and events through December at 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 new Florida riders who have joined the MSTA recently:

Bob Summers Alan Hartzog Carlos Albuerne

We thank these Florida members for recently renewing their memberships:

Dennis & Dorothy Anderson Ellen Kocher Bill McDaniel Ed Palmer

Tulio Suarez Thillet

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

David & Diana Cassell John Gilreath Don Later



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!!

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 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!!



Florida Rides This Month

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

Important Note

We're back to lunch rides in September. 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, **September 19th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Where: **Woody's River Roo Pub & Grill**, 5717 18th St E, Ellenton, FL 34222 ☎ (941) 722-2391
([map](#))

Description: The Southies head way west again. We shouldn't have as much competition for chairs and tables in September verses the winter snowbird season! Join us for some riverside grub and gab!

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

MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **September 26th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Where: **Don Jose Mexican Restaurant**, 4731 Lakeview Dr, Sebring, FL 33870 ☎ (863) 385-9326 ([map](#))

Description: The southern-most excursion for a Central ride and accessible from coast to coast. This place opens at noon and fills quickly. They offer an extensive menu of delicious Mexican food in very colorful surroundings. We'll try for the patio overlooking Lake Jackson.

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

Future Florida Rides

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

MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride

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

Where: **Lake Harris Hideaway**, 11912 Lane Park Rd, Tavares, FL 32778 ☎ (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 PM – 2 PM

Where: **Dock 633**, 633 Lake June Rd, Lake Placid, FL 33852 ☎ (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



Regional Events

Fall Colors Rally / MSTA – **CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

When: Thurs.-Sun., September 24th – 27th

Location: Lewisburg, WV

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!

