



FLORIDA GATOR TALE

Honda Sport Touring Association

July 2007



North Georgia Classic

Submitted By: Larry Fitch

With one last puff on my Toraño Especial and one more sip of Firehouse Syrah, I sit back in the overstuffed chair at my local cigar bar and look at my watch; 10:00PM. In six short hours I will need to be up and moving to make a planned 6:30AM rendezvous with fellow HSTA members just south of Jacksonville. Our destination: Helen Georgia and the 14th annual HSTA North Georgia Classic.

Six hours later and 4:00AM arrives much too early. I wearily pull myself out of bed and begin getting ready for the ride. I down a few Tylenol to help deaden the drumming in my head, make my way out to the bike, suit up, and hit the road.

If there are any positives to an early morning departure it is the fact that the roads are virtually deserted. And that includes the big I-95 super-slab that I am navigating for the first portion of the trip. The plan at this point is to meet up with Rob Medwed and Bob Fischer at a rest stop near St. Augustine and then make our way up to Folkston, GA, where we will meet up with Sam Ulbing, the Florida HSTA Co-director and our road captain for the day. I dial in the BBC World News on my XM radio and let the GPS count down the miles to the rest stop. Everything else is pretty much on autopilot.

That autopilot lasts for all of 10 miles of highway driving. As I crest the overpass in Cocoa I am able to see the swirl of activity, even in the dark, which lies ahead. At the next exit the northbound lanes of I-95 are completely shut down. Traffic is

being routed off the highway and onto the surface streets. Great! 15 minutes into my trip and I already have to detour. A few taps on the GPS screen to pick an alternate route and I navigate my way north and get back on the highway a couple of exits up the road. From here it truly is smooth sailing and I arrive at the rest stop with 15 minutes to spare.

6:30AM and a pair of Goldwings piloted by Rob and Bob are exiting the highway and coming to a stop behind me. I really admire punctuality and these two do not disappoint. A few greetings all the way around, a quick bio break and we are back on the interstate. Next stop: Folkston GA.

The ride from St. Augustine to Folkston takes us up I-95 to the 295 loop around the west side of Jacksonville. And, lucky us, its the start of the morning rush hour. This is tons of fun, especially where 295 and I-10 come together and all the traffic wants to be in the opposite lanes from where they have been content to be residing. They are also certainly are not going to let a little thing like three motorcycles prevent them from achieving their goal. So, Starbucks coffee and cell phones in hand, the traffic hoards quickly cut the three of us off from each other and make for some very thorny moments of braking and accelerating though this gauntlet. Happily, it was over sooner than later and we are able to exit the chaos and turn onto US1 north. This will be the end of highway driving for the day and for me it has not come fast enough.

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Welcome to the Club!

We would like to extend a hearty and sincere welcome to the following recent new members. Thank you for choosing to join our group. Many long lasting friendships have begun here and we hope your experience will be a satisfying one!

Name	Location	Ride	Introduced By
Paul Waters	Orlando	'98 VFR	Online Blog
Donald Williams	Boynton Beach	'04 Goldwing	Bill Royal
Patsy Williams	Boynton Beach	MOH	Bill Royal
Robert Clift	Tallahassee	ST1300	Online

This 2 time award winning newsletter is produced and edited by:

Bill Royal
HSTA Florida Newsletter
Editor

Web Addresses:

If you're "connected" be sure to check out the National HSTA Site at: www.ridehsta.com

And the Award Winning Florida HSTA Site at: www.flahsta.org

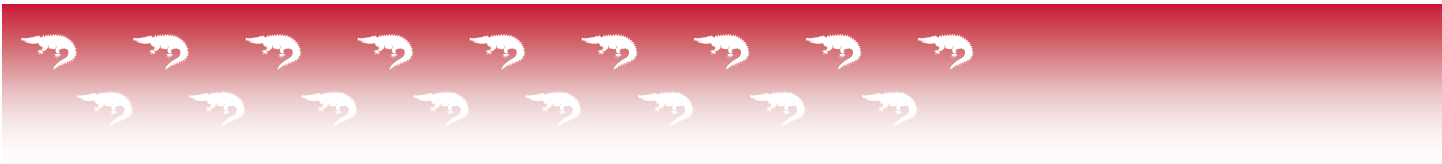
The Florida Chapter of the HSTA has two State Directors.

FL North:
Sam Ulbing
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Free Ads

Motorcycle related items - wanted or for sale, riding buddies or room mates for events can be placed right here - for free! Just send them to arrive by the 15th for the next month's publication. Send to Bill Royal, (address on front page of newsletter) or email to ridefl@flahsta.org.

For Sale

Bikes

2003 Honda ST 1300ABS, @37K miles of faultless performance, all scheduled maintenance performed - synthetic oil only, 90% of fuel run through the bike has been Chevron Techron 93, new Bridgestone O20s in April; extras include: MC Cruise, running lights, heated grips, back-off brake light, custom Ventura pack bracket - Ventura pack, small grip bar and small Nelson pack part of package. 30 months remaining on Honda Factory Extended Warranty Metallic grey, with a few scratches. \$9,000.
Contact: Tom at 352.336.7294 (preferred) or t.kerkoff@att.net

2003 Honda VFR800VTEC Interceptor, 7500 mi., factory hard bags, Power Commander, Scorpion cans, sport touring windscreen, Heli Bars, Throttlemeister cruise, new Dunlop D220's, Silver. Sport Touring Ready! \$7500.00
Contact: Richard at 954.675.4728 or rpk2fla1@yahoo.com

Gear

KBC Helmet - FFR Flip Top silver and black. This helmet is brand new. I wore it twice and realized that I do not have a KBC head.
\$175.00

Givi T80 Tank Bag - Magnetic. The bag has a map case and a clear rain cover \$50.00

Kapa top trunk for the Suzuki VStrom - Silver color matched for the '02 Vstrom - \$100.00

Fenda Extenda for Vstrom - Brand new - never installed - \$20.00

Stock regular and Tall windshields for a DL1000 VStrom - \$50.00 and \$75.00 respectively
Contact: Larry Fitch at fitchle@hotmail.com or 321-266-8757

Garmin 478, includes power cord, software, pre-loaded maps and cover (does not include antenna). \$700

VTX 1300 Corbin seat (used one day only!) \$400
Contact John French 561-350-6177 (no email)

Other

Wells Cargo Cycle Wagon enclosed motorcycle trailer - Lightly used, probably less than 5,000 miles. 12.5' X 7' box, probably 16 to 17 feet overall. Tandem axle, electric brakes, aero nose cone, diamond plate aluminum fenders, black with chrome bottom trim, rear ramp door with spring assist, paneled inside with interior lights, wheel chocks and multiple floor and side tie down points, side door on front right side. This trailer cost over \$6,000 new, current models are about \$7,000. Buy mine for \$4,500. Will deliver up to 250 miles for cost of gas. I can E-mail photos upon request. Contact Jan Berryman, Tallahassee, Florida (850) 893-2253 or E-mail berryman15@comcast.net.

Florida News

Submitted By: Sam Ulbing & Bill Royal

People and riding is what HSTA is about and that was brought home again at STAR07. It was great renewing acquaintances with friends as far away as Utah and Washington State.

Dan Thomas of Washington rode 2860 miles to STAR, winning long distance rider to STAR) and also won the most miles for the year at 47,000 (can you believe it?). Florida did well in the miles category with Fanny Haine getting third place woman's at 14,000 and Eve Blazsur getting top honors with 20,000 miles. Watch out next year because the two of them are still out riding after STAR, and not expected home for another week! Also, the mileage contest rules have changed - now counting miles from all 12 months of the calendar year!

Bill Royal came in second place for Best Newsletter, Best Website, and most new members recruited! Jim Park and Bill both won STARBUCKS for recruiting. Did you know that ANY member can win STARBUCKS for recruiting new members? Each member recruited gets you a \$5 certificate to be used for any HSTA related expense (I

have applications or you can get them on the web at <http://www.ridehsta.com/membership.htm>).

Florida did come up just short for members attending, missing the top three places by just a couple. Maybe next year in Texas. There will be a lot more about STAR in next month's newsletter, including the adventures of our Knight - Sir Orvil - so stay tuned!

In the meantime, you can see some pictures of the event and associated trips to get there at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ridemyst/sets/72157600572995269/> (pictures from Jim Park)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/silverstreakst/sets/72157600585356377/> (pictures from Bill Royal)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/stinger01929/sets/72157600622720124/> (Photos from MN member Roger Ries)

North Georgia Classic!

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Get along Little Doggie

The ride to Folkston for the most part is uneventful with the possible exception of almost running over a dog that has taken up residence on the centerline of the road and will not move. Not when I brake, not when Bob passes me on the right because he did not see the dog or me braking, not when I rev the engine and not when I lean on the horn. In fact, the only thing that saves this dog and possibly me from oblivion is when he looks up at the last moment, notices me, and then casually moves out of the way. This is the first in a series of pucker factors that I will encounter over the weekend.

With this excitement out of the way, we meet Sam right on schedule and with drill-sergeant like precision he has us on the bikes and on our way quicker than you can say "Old Granddad." Sam has selected some excellent roads and Rob and I have downloaded the GPS files that he has sent for this route. This is where I experience my first issues with my new TomTom One GPS. The TomTom does not directly import from the source file that Sam gave me, so I have been using a 3rd party conversion tool to get the information. The conversion seemed to work OK, but I soon find that the route on my GPS is not keeping up with the one Sam is taking. I think I will need to get a little GPS 101 on navigating by waypoints before I attempt this again.

Sam's route takes us up the eastern side of Georgia and rarely, if ever, do we come into contact with any towns. However, I do manage to make contact with a squirrel that is unlucky enough to be in the way of my front tire and I send him spinning off and under Rob's bike where I am pretty sure he meets his fate. I think I may have to start marking the side of my ST with stickers designating my wildlife kills. Anyway, we ride on mostly deserted roads with nice sweepers and occasional hills to break up the ride. The day is shaping up nicely and other than a very brief rain shower that lasts less than five minutes, we are enjoying clear skies and mild temperatures.



*Rob Medwed, Sam Ulbing and the author posing with full stomachs
Photo by Bob Fischer*

He Ain't Heavy (Well Yeah, Actually He Is)

The only downside of Sam's route is that the desolation is also keeping us from finding anywhere overly appealing to eat. By the time early afternoon rolls around I am feeling a powerful need to find some food and that is when I smell it. BBQ smoke is thick in the air as we round a corner in the middle of nowhere and come upon Heavy's Bar-B-Q. As we drive past I think that there is no way I can pass this place up. After all, the nature of any good Long Distance Rider is to sample all the BBQ along the way. A quick U-turn and we head inside for what turns out to be an awesome meal. Heavy, behind the counter, takes our order and relays it to "Ma" in the kitchen. With his son helping out we are soon sinking our teeth into absolutely wonderful pulled pork sandwiches. The only person who does not seem overjoyed at this feast is Rob. It turns out that Rob is more of a golden arches man and seems to have a little trouble adjusting to this roadside BBQ paradise. Bob however, felt quite the opposite and makes his way back to the counter for one more sandwich before we leave. At one point Bob comments that this place was the type of joint that you might see Alton Brown stop into on his Food Network show "Feasting on Asphalt." I have to agree. I personally could have eaten a dozen of those things! After lunch we hit the road for the last leg of our journey into Helen and with the remainder of the ride just as good as the beginning we roll into the host hotel at roughly 4:30 in the afternoon with a respectable 584 miles showing on my trip meter.



*Trey Hall, Martha Hubble and Phil Kinneer Sr. Prepare for the onslaught
Photo by Eric Larsen*

Hey – You Gonna Eat That?

After the usual post-ride rituals I make my way through a parking lot becoming more and more choked with motorcycles. I check in with the HSTA for the event, receive all my goodies, and then head over to the recently fired up grill to get a hug from Martha Hubble and pay my respects to Trey Hall. You have to admire folks who are willing to spend their Friday evening standing over an open grill to feed 60-plus hungry riders. And cook they did. Brats and burgers

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North Georgia Classic!

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for all that cared to partake, along with all the fixings. Salads and chips rounded out the menu and it was not long before the dinner bell was ringing and the folks who were either lucky enough or smart enough to arrive early made their way through the line, including me. As the line died down, with some folks making more than one pass through it, I glance around the parking lot for any familiar faces. Before I could find any someone spots me. It is Mark Hanke, an ex-patriot from my town of Melbourne Florida now residing in Cleveland Georgia, a short 12 miles away from Helen or as he puts it "5 right hand turns." I have not seen Mark for quite some time and it was good to catch up and enjoy a nice cigar with him, the latter being something of an exchange program. For him I have brought a great 1924 Pedron, while I am the recipient of a La Gloria Cubana Series R. While this may not mean much to a lot of you reading this, if you DO enjoy a good cigar, then these two are definitely up there on the list. The fatty from Mark goes into my travel humidior for later consumption, which I enjoyed while writing this article. Thanks Mark!! I am also fortunate enough to run into the other usual suspects, The Kinneer's - Phil's, Sr. and Jr., Andre Hubble, Eric Larsen, Dave Brickner, Tosh Koyna, and a host of others that I am not sure I can recall by name.

The rest of the evening progresses just the way I like it after a long ride. Along with Rob and Bob, we cruise the parking lot, checking out the bikes and all the various doodads that people add to personalize them. I have noticed lately that electronic accessories have really come into vogue amongst the motorcycling community and that is heavily represented within the 60 or so motorcycles that are gathered here. Radio and GPS mounts are evident on the majority of the bikes present. As usual, once the sun goes down along with four or five beers the day begins catching up with me and I say my good evenings and retire for the evening.

We'll be Comin' Round the Mountain

Early (but not too) the next morning Rob, Bob and I head out after a quick breakfast. The temperatures are in the mid 50's and the skies are crystal clear. Everywhere you look the views are spectacular. Our plan today is to ride a short 127 mile route that has been prepared by Eric Larsen and delivered in our pack of goodies at the registration the evening before. As we slowly make our way through downtown Helen I glance around at the various facades of this Alpine-inspired town. After our ride today I will be coming back to explore the shops and enjoy the views but for now, with a

flick of the throttle, we head North on Route 17 to our first destination, Brasstown Bald.

Rising 4,784 feet above sea level, Brasstown Bald is Georgia's highest mountain. The trip from the hotel to the entrance of the park takes us less than 30 minutes, and the ride to get there along Route 180 is as great as the place itself. On the way up to the summit, the road has its moments and in one of these moments I encounter my second pucker factor. Leaning into a hairpin I downshift from what I thought was third to second. My mistake!! I am in second and my downshift has left me in the precarious state of neutral, with Bob's Gold Wing approaching quickly from behind. That feeling in my stomach is most certainly not caused by the bacon and eggs from earlier, and I spend the rest of the ride to the top chastising myself for not paying more attention to what gear I am in.



Bob Fischer (R) and the author enjoy the view from the summit

From the parking lot there is a shuttle that will take you on to the summit for a nominal fee of \$2.00, or you can be brave and walk up the steep half mile paved trail. Guess which one we opt for? Once at the summit, the views are spectacular with a 360-degree view of four different states.

While it is windy, the sun is warm and there is no haze to spoil the view. We linger here for quite some time, taking in the views and enjoying the exhibits inside the visitor's center. Finally, with our senses sufficiently placated, we make our way down the paved trail by foot (downhill is MUCH easier) and head on to our next destination.

T.W.O Burgers Please, with Everything

After departing the Bald we make our way along the route prepared by Eric: Route 180, to Route 129, to Owl Town Road and what we think will be a back door into Suches. Once again the roads are amazing, with nice sweepers but nothing overly technical. I am

finally starting to relax as we motor along past farmland and rolling pastures. This is where pucker factor number three makes its appearance. As a truck passes heading in the other direction a BIG dog on our side of the street decides he would like to chase it. This of course means that he runs out in front of my bike. As I start to lean back into the seat and grab a handful of brake, the dog comes to his senses and makes an about-face out of my path.



T.W.O. That little old shack in the mountains
Photo by Rob Medwed

A bit farther down the road we are greeted by a disagreeable change in road surfaces. Our nice paved road has suddenly ended, replaced by a hard-packed dirt surface. Back in the day when I owned a V-Strom this probably

would not have fazed me, but the ST is just not cut out for this type

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of thing, and the pair of gold Wings following me most certainly are not cut out for this type of surface. It appears that we missed a turn some where back so we are forced to double back and try again. The morning is waning and my stomach is growling again so I re-trace our path back to Route 129 and head south to the continuation of Route 180, Wolf Pen Gap Road. I have not been on this road in probably five years but I remember it well. It was one of the first mountain roads that I ever traversed, back when my Kawasaki Concours was still new and Suches was as far as I had ever been from home on a motorcycle. Today, I am in the lead and although I am a bit more experienced, I am careful not to ride beyond my means. The road up and over the gap is just great and we roll into Suches a short time later and make our stop at that Mecca of motorcycling in the North Georgia Mountains: T.W.O.

As expected, the parking lot is teeming with bikes of all kinds and riders to match them. A lot of folks are lazing about in the Adirondack chairs or around the picnic tables outside as we park and head inside for lunch. I have heard for quite some time about the hamburgers served here and I am looking forward to trying one out for myself. The line is long but the service is great, and my experience is made even better when Rob offers to pick up the check. Glancing around, the motorcycle vibe is everywhere, attacking your senses. The walls are filled with posters, T-shirts and other motorcycle memorabilia while the 2 television sets hanging from the ceiling offer an endless barrage of racing and riding videos. For those lucky enough to snag a reservation, there is a bunkhouse of sorts upstairs for riders who want to make T.W.O. their base camp while they are in the mountains. The smell of the grill is in the air and after a few moments Rob's name ("Bear"?) is called out and we are able to enjoy what really is one of the top 20 hamburgers that I have ever had the pleasure of eating. I am a little reluctant to want leave here after lunch. This place has a very down home welcome feeling and I could easily settle into one of the couches, put up my feet and let the rest of the day wind down. But we still have a couple of things left on the itinerary for the day so I say my goodbyes to T.W.O. and we three amigos head back towards darkening skies as we start the return trip to Helen.

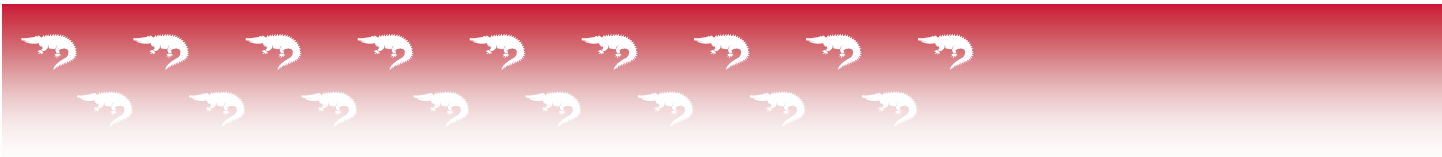
The ride back takes us over Wolf Pen Gap Road once again and after lunch I am feeling very relaxed and after a day and a half in the saddle I am starting to get in tune with the ST and the road. It seems like every time I do this something unexpected happens and this time is no exception. We round a right hand turn which is in the shade and as I lean into the turn I suddenly notice that I am moving toward the outside of the turn. This is not at all what I am expecting. It only lasts a couple of seconds but it is long enough for me to realize that I have rolled through gravel that has been kicked up out of the shoulder of the turn. I am able to recover and a short distance later I have to pull over for a few seconds to give myself time to get over this latest pucker factor. Bob, who was behind me at the time, tells me that my back tire kicked out about a foot on the loose rock! After composing myself and making sure I did not need to change my shorts, we finish negotiating Wolf Pen Gap and then return to Helen via the Richard Russell Scenic Highway. The dark skies never give way to any precipitation, but I am just a little spooked by my recent experience and my mood seems to reflect

the sullen skies. I tend to ride over-cautiously the rest of the way back.

Willkommen zu Helen

Helen, Georgia is located along the Chattahoochee River, and is a re-creation of an Alpine village complete with cobblestone alleys and old-world towers. The downtown itself is not very large but the term "Tourist Trap" is certainly the first thing that comes to mind. After returning to the hotel and cleaning up we walk into the downtown and I am determined to explore all of the various trinket shops and tourist exhibits. Fortunately, Rob and Bob are great about obliging me in this respect. It does not take long to go through all these stores and we are soon settled under a covered patio and ordering cold drinks and watching the crowds walk by. Our timing is great – the skies finally open up and bring the first real rain we have seen all weekend. The rain passes quickly and the skies are clear and blue once again and the people-watching can recommence. For me, this is the most relaxing part of the weekend and it has been my plan from the beginning to spend some time doing exactly this. I have a very hectic work life with a lot of business travel so to be able to sit and do nothing is actually what the doctor ordered. The only distraction to this rather idyllic afternoon is the totally disruptive Harley and Harley wanna-be's that feel it is necessary to not only run with obnoxiously loud pipes, but when pulling in or out of the parking in front of our patio, they seem unable to do so without cracking the throttle over and over again. "Look at me, I'm compensating," seems to be the message conveyed through this action. After a couple of cold libations and some really good chicken wings we make our way back through town and into a great Mexican place that Bob is recommending. Truth is, we ate here last night as well after the cookout because apparently Bob just cannot eat enough. I wish I had his metabolism! The food here is good and there is plenty of it. Too much for me to finish, but Bob does not seem to have that problem. From dinner it is on to the hotel for the Saturday night drawings and giveaways. The HSTA events always seem to do a great job with this and everyone walks away with something. In my case this evening it is a new bottle of shaft lube that will come in handy during my next service. Another great part of the evening was the 50/50 drawing. This year the give-away is a new riding jacket but the best part is the fact that the proceeds from the raffle go to the Ride for Kids Foundation. One thing I can say about the HSTA folks that I meet is that they are not afraid to part with well-earned money in the name of charity and close to \$300.00 dollars is raised from our small group this evening.

Another evening of cruising the parking lot and swapping stories and lies with friends, and another fine cigar, along with a few more beverages, and my evening is coming to a close. It is here that my riding compadres and I are parting company. They are planning to head out very early for home while I have a slower two-day route planned. I will be stopping in Alpharetta in the morning to see some friends and then taking the back roads through Georgia to an overnight stop in Brunswick. From there it is an easy ride home on Monday. The weekend has been excellent, but as usual, too short when reflected upon. This is my first trip to Helen and my first experience with the North Georgia Classic but it certainly will not be my last. But for now I need to do some laundry, pack my bags, and head to the airport for a business trip. Too bad I cannot go on the bike; it might just make the travel more palatable.



Upcoming Rides/Events

Ride/Events are compiled for your convenience from a variety of sources. HSTA sponsored rides are indicated with the "♦" symbol. If you are considering making any of the rides we suggest you call the contact ahead of time to confirm the ride is still on as listed.

♦ **HSTA Florida North Brunch Ride - Jul 14th - Floyd's Diner, High Springs, FL. Brunch at 9:00 AM.** Located on US 41 in High Springs. GPS: N29 50.134 W82 35.992. This is a favorite lunch spot so lets see how they do for breakfasts. This is totally informal- first come first serve. Contact: Contact: Sam Ulbing n4uau@cox.net or 352-262-6221

Future North Rides/Dates: Aug. 11th - Brunch in Floral City

♦ **HSTA Florida South Brunch Ride - July 14th - Main Street America, Lake Placid, FL - Brunch at 9:30 AM** - Located at 22 South Main St., Lake Placid, FL. 863-465-7733. We are trying an earlier event so as to avoid the heat and showers of the Florida summer. We need to let the restaurant know a headcount so please call the contact to advise if you plan to attend. GPS Loc: N27 17.817 W81 22.001

Future South Rides/Dates: Aug. 18th - TBD Sep. 8th. - TBD

♦ And all the rest of the HSTA National schedule...

NOTES: Event schedule is subject to change without notice. Please be sure to check with the listed contact before making your plans!

For non-HSTA members reading this on the internet, be advised that attendance at these National Events requires HSTA membership. You can join at the event and your event fee gets waived (one time only)!

Date	Event	Location	Contact	Web Address/E-mail
August 3-4-5	Nolichucky Valley Rally	Holiday Inn Express Erwin, TN 1-800-304-7958	Richard Giddish 423-245-5558 (hm)	http://tinyurl.com/873z7 rickandnick@hartern.net
August 24-25-26	Mail Pouch Fly By	Best Value Inn Marietta, OH 1-800-526-5947	Jon Campbell 513-932-3341 (hm)	
September 7-8-9	Ozarks BS Rally	Theodosia Marina & Resort Highway 160 Theodosia, MO	Ed & Linda Young 417-926-3075 (hm) magna@fidnet.com	http://come.to/The_Ozarks_BS_Rally
September 14-15-16	River City Ride	Vevay, Indiana (hotel not yet determined)	Don Moose Parish 317-936-5818 (hm)	mparish@hrtc.net
September 21-22-23	SE Star	Holiday Inn Express 64 White Oak Lane Dillard, Georgia 706-746-3585	Trey Hall 615-367-6495 (hm)	http://tinyurl.com/8de29 Strey1100@aol.com
October 5-6-7	Friends of Freddie's	Rosener's Resort Park Hills, MO 1-800-888-4241	Bob LaMear 636-938-3788 (hm)	racerboy@fms4u.com
October 19-20-21	AR By Way Boogie	Paris Inn 2010 E. Walnut Paris, AR 72855 479-963-2400	Mario Caruso 501-318-5233 - office 501-622-0987 (cell) Hot Springs AR 71901	quinzomoto@arkansasrider.com
November 2-3-4	Texas Hill Country Ride	YO Ranch Resort 2033 Sidney Baker Kerrville, TX 78028 877-967-3767	Ken Bowen & Dave and Connie Schluter	http://www.geocities.com/jfpoulos/THC2007.html TXHillCountryRally@gmail.com