

The Florida MSTA Grapevine

You heard it through the Grapevine...

Volume 4 Issue 11

Events in November

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Feature Article Introduction

Riding the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Georgia

by Tom Blake

God, how I love mountain motorcycling! And for a person so afflicted, life just doesn't get much better than riding in north Georgia's Blue Ridge.

Rose and I just spent a week in Blairsville. We were pleased to have our friend, Ken, who is now a North Carolinian, come over and join us for most of the week. We shared a lot of motorcycling memories, a few bottles of local wine, some good music, lots of laughs and a bunch of, you know, tall tales. And we left a week's worth of rubber on those beautiful mountain roads.

Our first day-ride was east from Blairsville on US76 through the tiny Methodist-affiliated college town of Young Harris and over to Hiawassee, a thriving but small community which lies at the southern extreme of the very large (130 mile coastline) Chatuge Lake. Both of the latter get their names from the Cherokee. US76 is

Editor's Monthly Note: Newsletter Changes! A NEW EDITOR!

Everyone, we will have a new Grapevine Editor beginning with the February 2012 issue. Don Moe has graciously accepted the position, and I understand with only minimal arm-twisting from Van and Bill! Please see his introduction in this month's Newsletter.

Unfortunately, you won't be entirely rid of me at that point. Sorry. The Group Leadership has asked me to stay on-board as the safety guy, so each month I'll continue to hound you with thoughts on staying safe while out riding our Sunshine State highways! :) - ed.

a pleasurable stretch of meandering and hilly 2 and 4-lane ideal for a Florida rider to get his or her “mountain legs” back on.

Then we headed south on the considerably more challenging SR17 toward Helen. After about 9 miles we turned back west on SR180 -- a narrower 2-lane and therefore even more fun. The 180-spur takes you nearly to the top of Brasstown (once a Cherokee town) Bald, which at 4784 feet is the highest natural point in the state. This 180-spur is only about 2 ½ miles long but it’s very steep and twisty and in mid-October, when the trees are at their peak, the ones along this road seemed to be the most colorful of all. Coming down required 2nd gear and lots of brake.



Brasstown Bald observation tower: You hike the final ½ mile to the top. It’s said You can see the tops of tall buildings in Atlanta from here on a clear day.

Once back down, we took 180 west all the way to Suches. The 2nd half of this route between Vogel State Park and Suches is sort of the US129 “Dragon” of Georgia. With its many blind curves, ups and downs, hidden driveways, bicyclists and other traffic, a wise rider will not out run his or her line of sight. But even at a sane velocity, this road is a workout.

Sadly, Two Wheels Only (TWO) at Suches is closed. The land owner died this past year and his heirs have the property up for sale. Another legendary establishment resides only in our fond memories.

From Suches, we rode a rollercoaster SR60 down the mountain then on to the US19 bi-pass to the old gold rush town of Dahlonega. There are certain times of year to avoid downtown and this was one of them. It's their festival time. The city square is blocked off and folks are parked everywhere else. Fortunately we were able to negotiate this easily enough and found our way to Black Mountain Cycles (BMC) which is up on Rider's Hill along US19 in the north-northeast edge of the town (not the 19 bi—pass road).

BMC carries new Aprilias, MV Agustas (drool) and Moto Guzzis and features a wide selection of brands on consignment. They also have rentals. One large building houses the bikes, apparel and "Six Gap Café". Another has tires, lubricants and other on-bike parts. And a 3rd contains an immaculate service bay. And they were open on Sunday! There's usually a good crowd of motorcyclists there to chat with. This is an impressive enterprise and a really nice place to visit. They deserve our support. There must have been a Harley event there when the picture below was taken. Usually there are a variety of bike brands and models to ogle..



Black Mountain Cycles main store



Relaxing area in front of the store

The final stretch for the day was routes 19 and then 129 over Blood Mountain back to Blairsville. Blood Mountain is a steep sucker with all sorts of sweepers and switchbacks going up one side and down the other. Even at legal speeds it's a challenge. (We may have been a just touch over in places!) But the cops were keeping things pretty much in check.



Neel's Gap store at the summit of Blood Mountain: the parking lot is usually filled with cars, motorcycles, bicycles and hikers. The Appalachian Trail also passes thru here.

When we got back to the cabin, my ST13 smelled like something was overheated. I found out later in the week it was my tires. At 13,000 miles on this set of Pilot Road 2's, the front was worn nearly flat from center to both edges. I'm told that only happens riding a long, heavy bike aggressively on these types of roads. And then it would not hold a line in a turn without heaps of constant steering input which is a real confidence-buster. It got so bad that when Ken was in the lead, he would pull away in the tighter corners with his '09 Wing. But hey, that guy's no slouch when it comes to mountain riding.

That evening we all piled into Rose's PT Cruiser and headed to the *Hole in the Wall*, a restaurant on the

square in Blairsville, for some good eats. Then it was back to the cabin to reminisce and listen to classical music – you know -- Led Zeppelin, Santana, Queen and the like. But we're non-denominational We also enjoyed a variety of country and old standards available in the rental.



Home sweet home for the week: The driveway is a steep descent from the road and required close attention coming and going.

This was a great first day in the mountains. And the weather was just about perfect to boot.



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Your Next Newsletter Editor!

Greetings! My name is Don Moe and I reside in Jupiter, Florida. Since 1974 I have been an enthusiastic long-distance motorcycle rider. Here is a brief history of my motorcycling experience.



Back in the fall of 1974 at the age of 27, I bought my first motorcycle, a used 1973 Kawasaki H1 with its 500cc, two-cycle, three-cylinder engine. I proceeded to ride it extensively over four months, putting nearly 8,000 miles on it. I discovered that I really enjoyed motorcycle riding, since it was in some ways similar to flying a private aircraft, which I had done for nine years and earning my Private Pilots license.

After negotiating a trade-in with the Fort Pierce Kawasaki dealer in early 1974, I became the proud owner of a 1974 Kawasaki Z-1, with its 903cc, four-cycle, four-cylinder engine. Although I didn't buy it because it was the fastest street bike at that time, that fact and the very positive reviews convinced me that it would be a good, reliable motorcycle for my intended travels. I equipped it with a Vetter Windjammer-II fairing and saddlebags. Over the next two years, I travelled from Florida to Colorado on it twice, relocating there in 1975, and rode it extensively around Colorado during the five years I lived there. When I sold that motorcycle after six years to buy a newer model, it had nearly 56,000 miles on the odometer.



Ready to depart in 1982 on a tour of the Pacific Northwest on my Kawasaki KZ1000

By this time I was living in southern California. The next motorcycle was the 1981 Kawasaki 1000cc KZ1000. This bike was nearly identical to my Z-1 with one important difference: Shaft drive instead of chain! I equipped it likewise with a Vetter Windjammer-III fairing and Krauser saddlebags. Over the period from 1981 to 1984, I rode this bike nearly 60,000 miles and travelled three times from southern California to British Columbia. Living in the Los Angeles area, my commute to work was quite long and riding the motorcycle to work saved significant time and fuel. I sold this bike in the spring of 1984 prior to my relocation to Germany.

Upon arriving in Germany, I determined that owning a motorcycle was too expensive and the riding season much too short. During my ten-year sojourn in Germany, I therefore traveled around Europe by car, a 1984 VW Passat. In 1994 I returned to the US.

Family obligations kept me from returning to motorcycling until 2010. Once those were resolved, I located a dealer in Stuart with a slightly used 2008 Kawasaki Concours 14 with only 3,352 miles on the odometer. I bought it in lieu of a newer model in order to discover whether enthusiasm for motorcycling was still part of

me. Over the next six months, I put nearly 4,400 miles on it and started learning more about the modern generation of motorcycles, even trying out a couple different brands. I also briefly owned a BMW R1150RT to determine whether the two-cylinder BMW model would feel right for me. After a couple months of alternatively riding the Concours or the RT, I decided that the Kawasaki was definitely the one for me, but the newer 2010 or 2011 model year would have such important improvements to be worth the extra cost.

In early 2011, I happened to stop by the Stuart Kawasaki dealer on other business and found a very slightly used 2010 Kawasaki Concours 14 ABS motorcycle on the showroom floor, in dark blue, with only 1,447 miles on the odometer. After mulling it over for two days, I negotiated a trade-in of my 2008 for the used 2010 model. Over the next several months, I proceeded to outfit the bike with the necessary accessories for me to undertake a lengthy road trip comfortably, safely and easily across the United States during the summer of 2011.

In the spring of 2011, I made two trips to the Appalachian Mountains area of Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina and attended [MSTA](#) motorcycle rallies for owners of similar sport-touring motorcycles. These trips reinforced my confidence in the motorcycle as well as my riding abilities and stamina. Then on June 21st, I embarked on my cross-country tour, with STAR2011 as the kick-off event.

After returning home in late September, thereby completing my *Summer Tour 2011* motorcycle journey around the country, I decided in early October 2011 to start a blog in order to share my travelogue writings and photos more easily than by e-mail. On future trips I expect to post directly to this blog.

If anyone wishes to contact me or checkout my blog, please see my website at <http://www.donmoe.com> .



Quick Trip Notes

(Generated by an email forwarded from Jim Park!)

This has a lot of good information on Texas riding – ed.

I tweaked my 2007 trip to Texas to set your routes. Note that the route starts from my house but basically I just took a Point A to Point B approach to get to Texas.

When I went there was a MSTA rally based out of the YO Ranch Resort in Kerrville, TX. It's a great location to ride the Hill Country. I checked the rates and it appears that it is still in the \$60 price range. The loops were published for the event and I'd say I had time to ride only about 75% of them. I'd recommend riding the southwesterly loops as that is the hilly section known as the "Three Twisted Sisters." Those three roads are sort of the Texas rider's motorcycle meca like our Deals Gap. Be sure to buy the tee shirt!

Note the waypoints in the Mapsource file. They are points of interest that are worth stopping at and taking a few photos. Unfortunately, Alamo Village has closed (an old John Wayne movie set) so don't ride out of the way for that one.

You can see a reconstruction of Stone Henge (they must not have much to do it Texas), the Lilly Langtry saloon and the Pecos River bridge to name a few.

I made the Big Bend loop begin and end on my YO to Eureka route so you will need to load that route when you reach the terminus point.

If you have time and weather permitting, I recommend taking the northerly route through Arkansas. I've incorporated the Telimena Highway (Oklahoma/Arkansas version of the Blue Ridge Parkway), the infamous Pig Trail and Arkansas Scenic 7 Highway, all great roads.

Also note that the return route will take you past the Barber Museum.

Below I have the links for sights along the way and my photo album of my trip.

If you have questions just give me a shout! -JEP-

REFERENCES:

<http://www.navalaviationmuseum.org/>
<http://www.yoresort.com/>
<http://www.hillcountrycruising.com/>
<http://www.lobo-texas.com/lobohome/en/langtrygal-1.php>
<http://www.nps.gov/bibe/index.htm>
<http://www.talimenascenicdrive.com/>
<http://byways.org/explore/byways/2156>
<http://www.eurekasprings.com/>

My Texas trip photo album:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ridemyst/sets/72157604611308063/>

SAFETY TALK

IMPORTANT NOTICE: 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 own actions and safety.

Florida Winter Riding

OK, so we're not going to be mounting up snow tires and shoveling a path from the garage to the street. That's why we live in Florida! We're coming upon the best riding time of the year here in the Sunshine State, where we can swap our mesh armored gear for leather, go out and truly enjoy the roads. Nevertheless, there are some thoughts for safe winter riding, even here in our sub-tropical environment:

- First off, remember that you can develop hypothermia even in mild temperatures. DRESS for the temperature and don't forget to factor in the wind chill. You'll lose a lot of body heat through your hands, so make sure you've got warm gloves. Bare skin is like wide open radiator flow. It will dump body heat faster than you can make it, so cover up. Your neck area is particularly vulnerable, as the blood vessels run close to the surface. Make sure you've got a good neck covering. You know the rest. By the time you start to shiver, you're already in the first stages. Dress and ride smart.
- Cold tires mean less grip on the road surface. Since you probably aren't using tire warmers in your garage before a ride, remember on those cold days to give your rubber some time to warm up once you get underway. Radical maneuvering immediately outside your driveway is not recommended!
- Oh, and don't forget the cold pavement while you're at it. It works the same way. Once the Florida sun hits the asphalt, it warms up pretty quick, but in the shade everything stays cool. Know your traction limits. Tire pressure, tire pressure, tire pressure...be religious about it.
- Its easy to get dehydrated in cooler weather, as you're not sweating as much or feeling thirsty. Make sure you stay hydrated.
- Your bike doesn't warm up as quick, either. Give it a little time to wake up on those cold morning rides.
- Expect temperature changes as the day goes on. A sunny warm day can get cold quick when cloud cover sets in and the wind starts to blow. Dress in layers that you can remove and add, as needed.
- Important Tip: Don't forget that your rain gear can become a final added layer of insulation. It will really trap radiating body heat. You do always pack your rain gear here in Florida, don't you? !!

Finally, take solace in the fact that while you may have to layer up, give your bike a few more minutes of warm-up time and watch for gators (the real ones) trying to build up body heat in the winter by laying out on the roads (yes, they really do this...), at least you're not like our northern riding cousins. They are staring wistfully out the windows at their winter wonderland, sighing because their favorite two-wheeled steed is tucked away for the season. It's Florida! Let's go Ride!

The MSTA Group Leadership

Florida News

North Director's Report

We returned to our traditional lunch schedule this month, and the weather almost cooperated...

The Central ride on the 6th to the Shamrock Bar & Grill held high hopes, though as the date drew near a front developed off the west coast and blew across south Florida before wrapping its way up the east coast. I almost called it, but the weather here in Tampa was nice and sunny, and a check of the radar just before departure showed a "hook" in the front that appeared as it might just barely get to the venue, so I went. Mind you, there were NO other riders leaving with me, but I hoped maybe a few other adventurous souls would meet me there. I actually had a really NICE ride all the way up around Lakeland and as I headed east on Deen Still Rd, I thought I might just make it to the place dry. Alas, as I approached the intersection with SR 33, it began to sputter a bit, and by the time I got to 3 miles west of US 27, it started raining in earnest. I didn't stop for a gear change and made it to the Shamrock a bit damp. I was a half hour early so not surprised to see no other riders there, but even after the half hour passed by still nobody else showed. I later learned that several of our regulars were away at Barber Motorsports for the weekend so that explains why I didn't see even a single other rider... By now it was coming down in buckets. I had a nice little lunch and hung out for a while waiting for it to let up a bit. Eventually it did, and I made my way out to I-4 and within 10 minutes I was back out of the front and in the dry once again. It's too bad nobody else could make it. The place was pretty nice. Plenty of parking, seating both indoors and out, and easy to get to by super-slab OR back roads. We'll try to queue this one up again in the future.

Fortunately, the South ride on the 22nd was an entirely different story. The fall swept in and this Saturday was as good weather as it ever gets here in Florida. In the high 50s to low 60's in the morning, sunny and bright with just a few fair weather clouds here and there. I had 6 other bikes join me in Sun City to make our way over the Jaxson's in Lake Placid. We took some of my very favorite twisty roads - Grange Hall/Taylor Grade Rds (AKA "Tail of the Ghecko"), Duette Rd, Brownsville Rd, Sweetwater/Crewsville Rds and we had nary any traffic messing them up for us either! Despite a mix of ST's, a Gold Wing, a cruiser and a scooter, everyone managed their rides well and we managed a sweet pace, lopping over 20 minutes off the GPS ETA prediction. That left us looking for an unplanned extension to the route so as not to get in too early. That didn't go quite as I planned, but we did get to explore the eastern shore of Lake Istokpoga a bit and then

made it back to Jaxson's with 15 minutes to spare. There was a good crowd of bikes already there and a few minutes after the West Palm crew rolled in. We ended up with something over 34 in attendance. That did overwhelm the kitchen a bit, but it made for plenty of time for chatting and mingling. As an added treat, after the lunch, Roger Spice - who lives nearby and has a nice collection of bikes invited us over to peruse his collection! I don't know how he manages to ride them all but all are roadworthy and he does manage keep them all ridden. Must be tough having a choice of an FJR, and FZ1, an Aprilia Tuono, a BMW GS to name just a few... Way to go Roger!



West Coast Crew Shows Up!

In case you haven't checked the MSTA Florida Events page lately be sure to do so as Phil Ridgdill is running his Alachua weekend non-event again this year the weekend of Nov 11-13th. Detail are on the schedule. I made this event last year and it was a BLAST.

Hope to see you all out on the road now that OUR riding season has really begun!

Bill Royal - MSTA Florida State Co-Director & Webmaster

South Director's Report

Greetings Members and Friends! "Something's in the air tonight..." Or rather what's not in the air...Humidity! Let our riding season commence! Do offer a prayer for our northern-state members, as the frost is on the pumpkin, and snow is on the ground in Colorado!!

As Bill said so well in his report, the Southern Lunch ride was a HUGE hit!! With 34 riders and passengers, and some of Jim Park's family and friends thrown in for good measure, we had 40 hungry mouths to be fed. We did guess at 15-20 attendees, but... We had loads of time to talk and catch up. Several members had great stories about their summer adventures. And we all began to plan for Phil's and Kevin's weekend Just For Fun events. You can get the details elsewhere in the newsletter and at our local and national sites.

I'd like to thank a bunch of people who made the Lunch ride a GREAT success. With two departure times for the Eastsiders, we had two groups able to have a blast making their way to Jaxson's. Our group left early AM, and met up with two other riders at the second rendezvous. From there, Jim Park, the Lake Placid guru, guided our motley group to the fun roads literally ALL around Lake Placid. We even had time to stop in at Sebring to try to catch fellow member Dell running his Corvette at a "tune and practice" session at the track. Alas, we missed his grouping, but enjoyed watching a classic Mini and VW Bug (and others) chase each other around the near hairpin turn at the Chateau Élan. Jim even found some roads he hadn't taken me down before!! Thanks for the curves, man!!

And a HUGE THANK YOU to Roger and Sandy Spice for inviting nearly 30 of us over to gawk and drool at his pride of bikes, and their awesome landscaping abilities!! As the lunch went long, we were able to space out our arrivals to reduce our impact on them. Even so, they did play host to us all for nearly two and half hours, and were most gracious to everybody who paid them a visit. Even on her third or fourth trip around the property, Sandy was both informative and entertaining!! Our small group was the last to leave, and they looked as fresh as when they started! Good Times, Thanks a Bunch you two!!

We have lots of riding coming up in the next two months. Check into the websites. Talk to your friends and fellow members. Make riding plans. Leave the shopping to the last minute, and GET OUT AND RIDE!!

ATGATT Van

Florida Rides This Month

MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride

When: Sat, November 5, 12pm – 1pm

Where: The Perfect Spot - 1600 Flight Line Blvd, DeLand, FL 32724 ([map](#))

Description: Now that we're back to lunch time we can make some further north venues like this one. Been here before but it's been a long time. Decent food and great vantage point for watching the skydivers doing their thing! Phone: (386) 734-0088 GPS: N29 03.734 W81 16.840 Contact: Bill Royal RideFL@flahsta.org or 813-633-8155

MSTA Non-Event !

When: Nov 11-12, 2011

Where: Quality Inn, I-75 x U.S. 41, Alachua, FL

Description: A non-event ride gathering. Join us for plain old riding and fun! This Inn is on the choicehotels.com, we all have a card that you can use to book your hotel and should get some sort of a discount. The quoted price is \$59.99 per room, and sharing can bring the price down a bit. When you call to book your room be sure to mention you are with the MSTA group. There are quite a few restaurants close by. Contact: Phil Ridgill, 904-699-2447 or rfoxrdr@bellsouth.net

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat, November 19, 12pm – 1pm

Where: Captain Hiram's Inn, 1580 US Hwy 1, Sebastian, FL ([map](#))

Description: I know we were here back in March, but everybody had such a great time, we deserve to repeat the fun!! A tip for you all--you can park across the street from the restaurant, in the grass. They actually put small paver bricks in the sod for your kickstand!! And they have signage that the grass area is ONLY FOR BIKERS! Contact: Van at 561-386-2594 or busavan@flahsta.org

For additional Florida events and information, [click here](#) to see Florida MSTA web site Events page.

MSTA web site information on "Just For Fun Events": [click here](#).

National MSTA www.sporttouring.us

Florida MSTA www.flahsta.org

Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

In case you ever wondered about the racing pinnacle of our sport, here are some words and video from a World Champion. Thanks to Bill Royal for supplying this one!

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

C L A S S I F I E D A D S

(Ed's Notes: We've got a couple of GREAT bikes up for sale this month!)

BIKES FOR SALE

FOR SALE: 2011 Suzuki DL650A V-STROM \$7250 - ABS, white, 2200 conservative adult miles, perfect condition. Better than new with initial service completed, stock & Sargent saddles, front fender extender and stock as well as tall Givi windscreens. List including extras - \$8635. Suggested retail for average condition: ~\$6900 per NADA & KBB. No issues, just doesn't fit me ergonomically. 321-723-2857 Melbourne area.

FOR SALE: 2005 Honda ST1300. This motorcycle has been garage kept and never dropped. Additional accessories included with the sale of the motorcycle include J&M CB, Garmin 2720 GPS w/ XM Satellite Radio, Helibar handlebar risers, Kuryaken grips, Air Hawk seat cushion, Alaska Leather sheepskin seat cover made specifically for the ST1300 (pictured on seat), and Honda saddlebag luggage (fits inside attached hard saddlebags). Recent maintenance just completed on the motorcycle includes a new battery, new tires (Metzeler RoadTec Z6 Interacts), new air filter, new spark plugs (iridium), oil change (Honda Synthetic), and gear oil change (Honda gear oil). The current mileage is 40,373, is touring ready, and is in fantastic shape both cosmetically and mechanically. I am asking for \$6,500 / or best offer. If interested please call 863-214-2187 or e-mail me at deshazo133@yahoo.com to make an appointment. Photos available!