

FLORIDA GATOR TALE

Honda Sport Touring Association

February 2004



How to Kick Off a New Year

Submitted By: Bill Royal

While many riders across the country were suffering from PMS (Parked Motorcycle Syndrome), and yet others were bravely(?) suffering extreme weather in order to put some miles on their rides on New Years Day, we here in Florida were very much luckier as you will read. But first, some background...

Though never an actually officially planned ride, for the last few years, some HSTA folks have habitually been getting together for a ride on New Years Day. It seems to be a tradition that a lot of riders try to practice, though it's a tough time of the year weather wise for most. This year, as in the past, no one had really planned anything until I got a call from a couple of non-members about doing a ride. I very much liked the idea, but time was short and the holiday festivities were getting in the way of plan making.

I knew of a destination I had been led to once, a few years back by some friends I made on the internet before I even moved here. It's a place called Ozello, located just south of Crystal River and North of Homosassa. It's sometimes re-



Jack & Jane Stafford - Two of our newest members on a matching pair of Honda PC800's.

ferred to as the "Deals Gap of Florida". OK, before you fall off your chair laughing, it really doesn't come close to measuring up to Deals Gap, BUT, it certainly does qualify as the twistiest section of road anywhere in the south and central parts of Florida. In fact, it is so popular with the sport bike squids that it has attracted the attention of local law enforcement so that should speak to how much fun it can be.

So, with limited time and a desire to get back to a favorite ride, I set about planning the ride. Since I do this regularly for HSTA Florida lunch rides, I do have a method I use to locate destinations, plan out routes, generate maps and route sheets, upload waypoints to my GPS and notify an email list of riders I know, both HSTA members and non-members alike.

That method starts with using Delorme's Street Atlas USA 2004 to locate the destination and plan the route. Unfortunately the software only showed three restaurants in the area and I could reach none of them by telephone. Undaunted, I planned the ride to the road as a destination,

(Continued on page 4)

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Special points of interest:

- *Daytona Bike Week Dinner - See pg. 5*
- *Lunch Ride with sight-seeing opportunities— See South Lunch Ride, pg. 6*

Web Addresses:

- ✓ If you're "connected" be sure to check out the National HSTA Site at: www.ridehsta.com
- ✓ And the Florida HSTA Site at: www.flahsta.org

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!

Charles Goodwin - High Springs - HD Roadking
Jack & Jane Stafford - Ruskin - matching pair of PC800's

Inside this issue:

How to Kick Off a New Year	1,4,5
Ramblin Around	2
Free Ads	2
Paid Ads	2
January Ride Recap	3
Daytona Bike Week Dinner	3
Rides/Events	6



Ramblin Around

Submitted By: Phil Ridgdill

Winter is here. Last year I don't think we even had a real cold day. Not so this year. On our lunch ride to Blackwater Inn, we were bloody cold. Only five riders from the Jacksonville area: Steve Smith, Sonny Gager, Maurice Avera, Joe Avera and myself. When we left Orangedale I don't remember what the temp was but I do remember looking at Sonny on that big Gold Wing. I was wishing I had as much windshield as Sonny had. Twenty-six people showed up at Blackwater for lunch, and considering the weather that was excellent. In February we will go to Crescent City, 3 Bananas, on 7 Feb 04, Lunch is at 12:00 noon.

Daytona Bike Week is just around the corner. Don't forget about the HSTA Dinner. It's on Friday night this year. As I told everyone at Blackwater, I had asked Clement Salvadori to be our speaker.

Clement will not be our speaker; he is now on his way to South Africa to test ride a new motorcycle. I've now asked Fred Rau if he would consider being our speaker. As of now I haven't received a reply from him, I'll try to keep everyone up to date on this. Having said this, I only have 2 paid reservations. So if you want this Social/Dinner for the HSTA members, we need to support it.

What's the greatest single factor of a motorcycles performance? Technique, Intelligence and Focus, its the Rider.

Ride Safe & Smart

Phil Ridgdill

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, 1521 New Bedford Drive, Sun City Center, FL. 33573 or email to wgr@sprynet.com.

For Sale

1982 HONDA CB 900F - \$2,500 OBO
Rare bike in excellent condition with 11,955 original miles. Original owner – bike purchased new in 1986. Always garaged and adult-owned and maintained. All original parts (except seat) are included: bar, cables, peg holders, exhaust, shocks, Hondaline back rack & back rest. Engine is all stock. Honda Sport Kit was installed on date of purchase. Vance & Hines SS exhaust – sounds great, not too loud. Eclipse standard tank bag also included. Perfect bike for everyday ride or restoration project. Please call Van in Boynton Beach (S. Florida) at 561-386-2594.

2001 Kawasaki KLR 650 - 3400 miles, as new. Never down. Includes top box. \$3500 Firm.
Contact: John Watts at: (941) 722-0406

2002 BMW R1150R - Blue - 14,000 miles - sm BMW wind-screen - heated grips - accessory port - Warranty 'til 8/04 - exc cond - \$7,900 - Contact: Jim McClure at 352-324-0569 or jamcclur3@aol.com

Riders Wanted

STAR'04 - OK, the time for talk is nearly over! Some Florida members are planning the RIDE to CA for STAR04 and if you'd like to tag along now is the time to start planning! Eve and I (Bill Royal) are planning 5, 525 mile days each way to STAR04 and back. So far we have one other rider going. If you'd like to join us, please let me know so we can make the appropriate plans (hotel rooms and the like).

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Daytona Bike Week Dinner

Submitted By: Phil Ridgdill

The Daytona Dinner is scheduled for Friday March 5 2004 at 5:00pm. Same location as last year, INDIGO LAKES GOLF CLUB, 312 Indigo drive, Daytona Beach FL. We will have private Banquet Room and a buffet dinner, menu will be similar to last year. Food is good & there is plenty of it. There will be an Open Cash Bar in the Banquet Room. Price will be same as last year, Meal \$18.95 per person, with tax & service charge total will be \$23.70 per person, children under 12 1/2 total price. Dinner will be by Pre-paid Reservation. ALL CHECKS made out to the INDIGO LAKES GOLF CLUB (Please do not make the checks out to me). Mail to Phillip Ridgdill, 720 Opossum Lane, Switzerland FL 32259-8323 and last day to receive reservations will be 25 Feb 2004, all checks will be deposited with Indigo Lakes Golf Club. The Golf

Club Staff will have the reservation list at the Banquet Room. The Indigo Lakes Golf Club location: Indigo drive is the first intersection East of I-95 on International Speedway drive (US-92), Indigo Drive will pass in front of the Holiday INN, continue on Indigo Drive through a residential area until you come to the Golf Club. If you are coming from the Speedway, it's the last traffic light before I-95, turn right on to Indigo Drive. All the Racing Events at Daytona International Speedway have been changed. This is the reason for the HSTA Dinner change to Friday night. We will not have a lunch Ride this year. If you would like any further information contact Phil Ridgdill at 904 287 9654 or rfoxdrd@earthlink.net

January Lunch Ride Recap

Submitted By: Bill Royal

We had two more successful lunch rides this month. Phil's North ride at an old favorite destination—the Blackwater Inn was well attended in spite of the temps in the 40's across most of the state. 23

riders made the trip plus 2 more who came in the car. Long Distance kudos go, once again, to Gerry Stellwagon, who covered

208 miles, departing his home in Nokomis at 6:30 AM in order to make the noon lunch! Gerry met with me in Sun City and we left there just the two of us. But we picked up another pair of ST's in Clermont, and shortly thereafter, one more bike ridden 2-up by another pair of new members, Rob & Joan Medwed. They came on their '81 Honda CB900C from Sanford, FL to make their first lunch ride. Despite the chill of the day, we saw plenty of other riders out all along our route. I sure wish I'd stopped to get a picture of Lake Minneola as we rode around it's south-eastern shore. It looked more like the North Atlantic with the cold northwest wind blowing it into whitecaps and

frothy foam.

For the South Lunch Ride, temp's were predicted to be 45 ish or so, but it never got quite down there and it warmed up way quick in the morning sun. My group found us all peeling layers at our break



North Lunch Riders at the Blackwater Inn - Note the gray sky!

stop in Zolfo Springs. Our new location, The Landing Strip, at the Okeechobee Airport turned out to be a great place. Though we filled it to capacity along with the regulars, they had ample servers in place and the service was excellent. Everyone got their



South Lunch Ride attendees (some were out of camera angle) MUCH nicer day!

food, be it breakfast or lunch in short order. We did have to sit at booths of 4 but that didn't keep anyone from kibitzing. Afterwards, as we were all preparing to mount up, an old WWII fighter plane made a sharp left banked turn directly overhead and at something under 1000 feet. Don't know if it was to impress us or the other airplane fans

but I am sure it did both.



How to Kick Off a New Year

Continued...

(Continued from page 1)

relying on being able to find something local once we got there.

Now, if you've ever ridden in Florida, and been fortunate enough to find any "twisties" at all, you know that it's best described as riding miles of straight roads, punctuated by the occasional turn. Well, over my 3 years of riding here, I have managed to find many of the "better" alternatives and string them together into halfway decent rides. This one was to turn out to be one of my best combinations yet! I published the ride plan to my email list and one recently added non-HSTA member replied from Miami that he not only knew of Ozello as a great road to ride, but also highly recommended an establishment that was said to have the BEST BBQ in the area! What luck! I now had solved the final destination issue. So I mapped out the route, loaded my GPS with the waypoints, and emailed the plan to a sub-set of my mailing list that I felt were close enough by to possibly be interested in making the ride.

I had a lot of telephone interest, but much of it was from folks who really didn't want to leave at the planned 9:30 AM departure. Sheesh - what do you want - a real ride or just to say you were on the bike? I ride because I love it. Any ride is OK; any ride over 100 miles really begins to make me smile. The plan had us doing 113 miles to get there, and NONE of it on any interstate so it was a planned 2 1/2 hour ride to boot. Whatever. The plan was the plan and whoever would show up would make it. The rest would be on their own. As it turned out, 6 or seven expected riders bailed out, but 10 riders on 9 bikes showed up for the ride. That was perfect. Not too large a group as to be hard to manage and big enough to feel like the planning effort was appreciated! Thanks Gang.

Here's the "hand": Almost 4 pairs. We had a matched pair of Silver '91 ST1100's, another matched pair of the ST's "sister bike" '96 Pacific Coasts, another pair- though not matched, a '97 and a '99 Magna, and yet another close pair, two '03 GL1800 Gold Wings, one of them having been converted to a trike. And last but by no means least the only non-Honda of the group an '02 Yamaha 650 cruiser. Exactly half the group were HSTA members, and all had ridden on rides with me before. One rider, Tom on the 2nd ST was to meet up with us en-route since he lives almost half way to the destination.

So off we went at 9:30 as we'd planned. It was a clear day, temp about 66 degrees, with a forecast high to be in the mid to high 70s. The initial 25 miles or so led us through the suburbs of Tampa along the east side, on US301 - a fairly heavily traveled road with more than a few stoplights. But it would lead us to some nicer back roads in a round about route towards our destination. The traffic turned out to be fairly light since it was a holiday. We made most of the lights so we didn't have to stop too much either. This was turning out to be a nice ride already. By the time we turned out of the urban Tampa area onto Morris Bridge Rd. it was warming up nicely. This 20-mile stretch of the route is a nice meandering 2 lane county route that rolls through largely undeveloped land. It's popular with bicyclists as much of it has bike lanes and it is lined in a few places with entrances to parks that have hiking trails and canoe launches. Nice easy riding. It ends

up amid some large orange groves where we jog off west bound to catch SR52 that will bring us back across I-75 and to the start of the "fun roads".

It is there, at the intersection of SR52 and CR581 (Bellamy Bros. Rd) that we pick up Tom, arriving exactly as planned at 10:44 AM. It still amazes me that through the power of computers and mapping software that I can predict with such accuracy an arrival at a location without having ridden and timed it previously. Cool stuff. We stopped only long enough to add Tom into the group and he eagerly took up 2nd slot so as to assure he'd not be held up in the turns. While this road looks pretty straight on the map, it really has some sweet twists. Most of the road is posted 45 or 55, but there are several bends where the post drops to 35 (but are really sweet staying at 55!) and a few sharper 90 degree turns that are posted at 20. The good news with those 90's is that they don't generally have the sand/gravel build-up that is often the case and at least one of them has outstanding line of sight to any oncoming traffic as you approach the turn. There are a few genuine "esses" that just beg for speed, and even a nice pair of steep hills near the Brooksville end to boot. I never fail to come off that road with a smile and I heard from more than one of my co-riders that this was their favorite road too.

At the end of CR581 we're in Brooksville, actually the outskirts, and we weave our way around avoiding the downtown traffic, lights and one way streets. A short stop is in order for a couple of the gas tank capacity challenged cruisers and it gives us all a chance to stretch the legs before we're off again. Here I try a piece of road I've never taken before, Fort Dade Ave which though straight is very pretty with its canopy tree lining as it skirts what I believe to be a rock mining area. Then we intersect with CR491 which turns northward and though some rough pavement and a bridge under construction hamper it a bit, it turns out to have a couple of nice sweepers in it before turning pretty straight for the duration up to SR44 in Lecanto. This stretch of 25 miles is gently rolling with a few sweeping turns and fairly light traffic. Lots of farms and one large state forest (the Withlacoochee) line its sides. Plenty of passing opportunities though few are needed and just terrific scenery along the way, especially if you're at all interested in wildlife.

Once in Lecanto, we head onto SR44, and here it gets interesting. Just west of us is US98. It is where we need to get to for the entrance road to Ozello, but this stretch of US98 (actually US19 all the way from St. Pete to Homosassa where it changes name to US98 and on to Crystal River) is very heavily developed and traveled. Some of its lower stretches are renowned in the state as the most dangerous for pedestrians. I try to avoid it like the plague! On previous versions of my mapping software it appeared that there was no direct way over to US98, I had to jog either south or north and then come back on 98 to where I wanted to be. The latest version however showed a road through a development, that if correct, would lead us into US98 just 1/8th of a mile from where we wanted to be! I say if correct, because as good as this mapping stuff can be, there ARE errors. Roads that dead end or

(Continued on page 5)



How to Kick Off a New Year

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(Continued from page 4)

turn to sand where they show as paved or through and the like. So it was with great anticipation that I took the left off SR44 and slowed for the 35 MPH wend through the community. Lo and behold though, there we come to the intersection that assures me we will make it through and minutes later we pop out onto US98 exactly as planned. Hurray! Thank You Mr. Delorme :-)

We turn south and then pull into a gas station at the intersection of US98 and Ozello Trail where I take a minute to remind everyone of the following - speed limits, police presence, twisty roads, water on both sides in places (don't go swimming!), ride your own

pace, be safe, have fun, meet you at the end. That's it and off we go. At first it seems straighter than I remember (it's been 4 years), but that's only near the beginning. Quickly it starts to kink up and before long I'm carving back and forth and having to pay close attention to the radius of the curves. I say "I" because at this point Tom and I, on the lead ST's, have

passed a couple of slower cars and left the group behind them. Now we fall behind two more even slower cars that even at the posted speed of 35 are having difficulty staying on the road and within the lines. The nice part here is even though there are no passing zones, at that speed they are easy pickings for an ST in 2nd, 3rd or even 4th gear to be by in a flash, and that's exactly what Tom and I do. No unsafe or daring riding here, just paying attention, lining up the opportunity and then executing the maneuver. And the reward is a few more un-encumbered twists and turns before we reach the end where we park and await the rest of the riders. They show up in short order, every one wearing broad smiles. We stop for a few pictures and then head back to the BBQ place for lunch.

As we dismount and I look the place over, I begin to panic that it might not be open or large enough to accommodate us. It's a combination convenience store, video rental place and restaurant. The store is open and the smell of BBQ is strong so that's a good sign. I walk in to check it out and am greeted by the owner John. I ask is he open for lunch and can they handle a group of

10 and he replies no problem. I start to tell him how we found him and he replies - "let me guess - Paul sent you". What a riot - He is absolutely correct that Paul from Miami, has referred us from Tampa to his establishment in Ozello (260 miles from Miami as the crow flies). So we file in and get comfortable, in great anticipation of a nice BBQ feast when John informs us that here's the menu, but sorry, we're OUT of BBQ! Turns out they've been very busy leading up to the holiday depleting his supply of pork and chicken, and with the New Year's eve celebration the evening before he was just a tad late getting the smoker fired up that morning so the BBQ won't be ready 'till around 3:00 PM... Oh well. At least he's got some steak and other fare such that everyone

finds something to eat. I got the cheese steak and it was among the best I've had in a long time. We all ate up and chatted a bit and then paid the tabs and mounted up. As we were in line to pay the tabs I couldn't resist jabbing John, the owner - He's got a big sign over his indoor grill that says Plan Ahead - you know - with the lead part trailing off the side due to lack

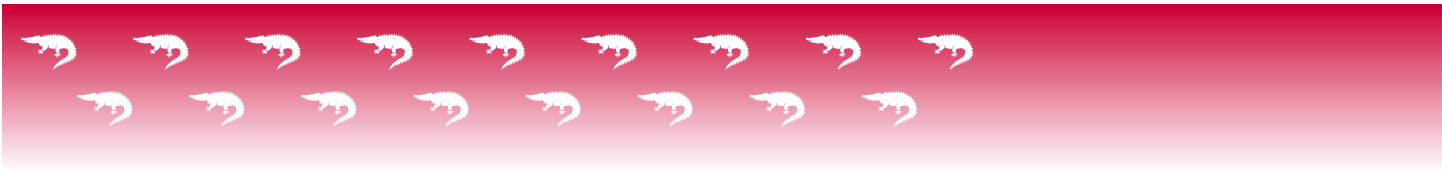


Jack & Jane on their matching '97 PC800's, Ed & Ann - two-up on their '99 Magna, Tom on his '91 ST1100 with Bill's ST1100 next to him (Bill's the one taking the picture), then Fannie next to her '03 Gold Wing, then Eve (my better half) next to her '97 Magna, then Sue on her '03 Gold Wing Trike, and finally, way in the shade astride her '02 Yamaha 650 is Willie.

of planning :-). We "ribbed" him about it and the BBQ situation and he took it in the way it was intended with everyone roaring laughing.

The trip back home was essentially the same route as coming up, only now it was in the mid to high 70s and we shed any warmers we were wearing. I was perfectly comfortable in my Joe Rocket Phoenix pants and jacket with just a t-shirt and jeans underneath. I can't fail to mention how many bikes we saw. All day long, all along the route, and especially on Ozello Trail and on Bellamy Bros Rd, just bike after bike. Almost enough to make the waving arm tired. We dropped Tom off where we picked him up at the southern end of Bellamy Bros and headed home. It was 4:30 by the time we pulled into the garage. 233 miles, 4 Hrs, 58 minutes of riding time and everyone home safe and sound and still smiling no doubt. Can't think of a more perfect way to start off the new year of 2004. I hope all of you had an equally enjoyable day and wish everyone out there a safe and happy New Year!

To see maps of the ride route, point your browser to:
http://www.silverstreakst.net/new_years_day Ride.htm



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 Lunch Ride - Saturday, February 7th - 3 Bananas - Crescent City, FL.** Lunch at 12:00 Noon. Neat place, food is good and reasonable priced. Maybe by this time we will know who our speaker will be for the Daytona dinner. Easy place to find, at the one & only Traffic Light, go east to the Lake, you can't miss it. See you all there on Feb 7. If you need any further information contact Phil Ridgdill, 904 287 9654 or rfoxrdr@earthlink.net.

♦ **HSTA Florida South Lunch Ride - Saturday, February 21st - City Seafood - Everglades City FL.** Lunch at 12:00 Noon. Located at 702 Begonia St (CR29 after it forks just north of Everglades City). This is a new destination, the furthest south ever for us, scouted and planned by Van (Paul VanSteelant) out of Boynton Beach. In addition to lunch, there are various boat tours of the Everglades National Park, 10,000 islands and mangroves in the area if you want to make a day of it. If you are interested, I have more details on these items. Contact: Bill Royal - RideFL@flahsta.org or (813)633-8155

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

NOTES: Schedule now updated with 2004 events. Events highlighted in gray are still tentative. For those and other events marked as unconfirmed, 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
Feb 20-22	Ride the Rio: El Duodécimo	Chisos Mining Co. Motel - Terlingua, TX (432) 371-2254	Dave Gorham (281)996-5043 cycledog@sbcglobal.net
April 16-18	T-16	Queen Wilhelmina Lodge - Mena, AR (800)264-2477	Danny Gordon (903) 463-4973
April 23-25	Road and Track Rally	The Brass Door Motel - Gassville AR (870)435-2288	Tim Bailey (901) 737-7210 Biking2gether@aol.com Kathy Mellembakken (870) 322-7777 peeweewette@yahoo.com Peter Pietz (870) 435-6777 pggeitz@cox-internet.com
Apr 30-May 2	Helen 2004	Location unconfirmed	Eric Larsen (770) 805- 0607 enlarsen@bellsouth.net
May 22-23	Twistar 2004	Spring Green Motel - Spring Green, WI (608) 588-2141	John Perkins (608) 280-8204 john@cs.wisc.edu
May 28-31 (Memorial Day W/E)	Tri-Star	Allegheny Inn - Sparta, NC (888)372- 2501 (mention HSTA when you call)	Galen Diehl (276)647-3162 gdiehl@kimbanet.com
June 20-23	STAR '04	Sierra Nevada Rodeway Inn - Mammoth Lakes, CA	Jim Alexander (925) 458-4596
August 27-29	Mail Pouch Fly-by	Knights Inn - 506 Pike Street Marietta, Ohio (800) 526 5947	Jon Campbell (513) 932-3341
September 10-12	Ozarks BS Rally	Theodosia Marina & Resort - Highway 160 Theodosia, Missouri (417)273 4444	Ed & Linda Young (417) 926-3075 magna@fidnet.com
September 17-19	SE-Star	Holiday Inn Express64 White Oak Lane Dillard, Georgia (706)746 3585	Trey Hall (615) 574-9927 strey1100@aol.com
September 24-26	Byway Boogie	Location unconfirmed	Robert Bashaw (870) 460-9570 Robert.Bashaw@ocse.state.ar.us
Oct 1-3	River City Ride	Baymont Inn - 2495 Landmark Avenue Corydon, Indiana (812) 738 1500	Don "Moose" Parish (317) 936-5818 mparish@hrtc.net
Oct 8-10	FOF - XII	Tradition Inn - Farmington, MO (877)355-6205	Bob LaMear (636)938-3788 racerboy@fms4u.com
Nov 4-7	Texas Hill Country Ride	YO Ranch Resort - 2033 Sidney Baker Kerrville, Texas 78028(877)967-3767	Joe Paolili (830) 537-5552 joep@beecreek.net