

# GROUP THERAPY

Mark Welch — Safety Officer



One of the benefits of being a member of the Tallahassee HOG chapter is the opportunity to ride with a great group of people. Some of the best therapy for relieving the stress of the day to day grind is riding with friends to a predetermined destination

for good food and great fellowship. Think about it, have you ever seen Fred in a bad mood? Our captains do a great job of preparing everyone for a ride but here are a few reminders to brush up on before your next excursion with the group.

An important rule to follow, don't hit the bike in front of you! Remember the two second following distance and apply it while riding. Find an object along the roadway, such as tree or mailbox and when the bike in front of passes the object, start counting "one Mississippi, two Mississippi". You should be done counting before you pass the same object. If you are not done counting by the time you pass the object, increase your following distance. There will be times when the two second rule should be increased, such as fog, rain, or snow. Yes, it has snowed in Florida before. You won't have to worry about me riding in it, though! I will be home in front of a toasty fire!

Don't lag behind when on a group ride. When you lag behind, the leader will lose sight of you and those behind you and begin to stress. Or they may adjust their speed to allow the rest of the group to close the gap and when you catch up, they will resume their normal speed. The end result is the whole group becomes a large, moving yo-yo. Our captains will let you know what speed the group will be travelling before the ride begins. It is your opportunity to voice your concern if you are not comfortable with the speed or any other aspect of the ride.

Maintain the formation you start off in for the duration of the ride. Don't try to pass other riders or weave your

way through the group. I was on a group ride once and a rider in the rear wanted to get to the front so he got in the bicycle lane and he began to pass everyone! I took the first available right and left the group. FYI, it was not a HOG ride. But it did make me appreciate the responsibility level of our members!

A great way to ensure everyone has an enjoyable ride is to make certain hand signals are passed back so that all riders are aware of what is going on ahead of them even if they cannot see the lead bike. While we are on this topic, a hand signal can originate from anyone on the ride. If you notice a slowdown behind the road captain, you can certainly signal the rest of the group. The only exception to this rule is that only the road captain should originate the hand signal to speed up.

Last, but certainly not least, is the gunner. The gunner is responsible for securing lanes prior to the group making a lane change. The gunner will be the first bike to change lanes, then the road captain will change lanes and then the rest of the group. But do not be lulled into a false sense of security, you are still responsible for making certain the path is clear before changing lanes. The gunner will also pull over with any member who falls out of the formation and stay with them to make certain they are okay. When that happens, the last bike in the formation becomes the gunner!

Jan and Fred do an excellent job coordinating our road captains. Make certain you shake their hand or buy them a drink on the next ride you enjoy. Non-alcoholic, of course.

Head and eyes!

Mark