

FAMILY REUNIONS: SUMMER FUN FOR GENEALOGISTS

by Rhonda McClure <rhonda@thegenealogist.com>

OK -- so family reunions don't always conjure up the best of memories. For some of us they bring back traumatic memories of having our cheeks pinched by Aunt Bertha. For others they may bring back memories of foods never before seen and never seen again (thankfully).

For genealogists though, family reunions are a chance to come together and share what they have been working on since the last gathering. Some groups have reunions each year. Others have them less frequently. They can be and should be fun. However, planning them requires preparation, delegation, and a little dedication too.

Usually a successful reunion is the result of the work of many committees, each with its own responsibility. Since no one can do it all, it works well to have committees for the following:

- * Accommodations
- * Activities
- * Clean-Up
- * Family History
- * Food
- * Money (both for expenses and fund-raising)
- * Photos
- * Setup
- * Signup
- * Welcoming

Each committee should concentrate solely on its portion of the reunion. By doing this, the jobs are evenly distributed.

You will also want to decide what type of reunion you are going to have. Will it be a highly scheduled reunion similar to a genealogy conference? Or will it be more laid back, just good friends getting together for food and fun. When deciding what type of a reunion to have, be sure to keep in mind the weather of the locale in which you will have the gathering. If you are in the summer in Florida, plan some indoor activity for the afternoon (it will either be way too hot outside or it will be raining). Also keep in mind the mix of people who will be coming. There should be activities that will appeal to all age groups.

Decide who is to attend. Is this the Descendants of John AYER reunion or is it the AYER Family Reunion? Will you have information of interest to spouses and descendants of all the AYERs? What types of reports and other research aids will you have available? Being in the high-tech world now, see if someone can put together a computerized slide show of old pictures and sound bites.

When planning the accommodations, keep these things in mind:

- * What tourist spots might be close by?
- * Can the hotel handle some of your indoor activities?
- * What is the nightly cost for the rooms?
- * What is the cost for food?
- * Is the hotel or meeting place easy to find?

Planning the food can be difficult. People have their own favorites. You may find that certain foods are harder to come by in one area than in another. So while technically not necessarily a consideration when looking for the hotel, it might be good to keep it in the back of your mind. It is also a good idea to plan ahead for possible dietary restrictions of those who will be attending. Allergies and diseases can limit the types of foods some people can enjoy. You don't want their fun to be spoiled by not being able to enjoy the food (at least a large portion of it).

Some excellent books to help you plan your upcoming reunion are:

Beasley, Donna and Donna Carter. THE FAMILY REUNION PLANNER. New York: Macmillan General Reference, 1997.

Crichton, Jennifer. FAMILY REUNION. Workman Publishing, 1998.

Flock, Shari. FAMILY REUNIONS & CLAN GATHERINGS. Yreka, California: Coyote Publishing, 1991.

Heaton, Alma. WAYS TO ENJOY REUNIONS.

Mehew, Randall K. ORGANIZING FAMILIES & REUNIONS. Orem, Utah: Keepsake Paperbacks, 1990.

And on the Web, visit these sites:

Family-Reunion.com
<<http://family-reunion.com>>

Guide to Planning a Successful Family Reunion
<<http://genforum.genealogy.com/canada/messages/6884.html>>

Reuniontips.com
<<http://www.reuniontips.com>>