

## MIDWEST MORRIS ALE 1991

### The Organization

The Ale was headed by a chair, who's responsibility is to order the pizza at the Ale meetings. (SEE: 1988 Ale notes) The chair sets the agenda and provide direction for the committee.

The committees were broken down by function, they were: food & drinks; finances; registration; transportation (buses & airport pick-up); publicity; entertainment (contra dance & skit night); workshops & mass dances and correspondence. Each of these 'tasks' were presented to the committee and individuals volunteered to be responsible for one or more of those functions. We had a small committee of eight people which worked very well at pre-Ale planning.

As chair, I reviewed the Ale book, photocopied committee reports from past Ales (1988 to 1990) and handed them to the appropriate committee chair. (All reports on food, went to the food chair, etc.) I suggested to each chair that they could use what recommendations/guidelines from the past Ales they liked, and disregard the rest.

As far as 'tips' on running a committee, this will depend on your people and how well they work together. Past Ales, had co-chairs, the chair selecting committee heads, individuals volunteering, etc. You will have to find what works best for you and your committee.

However, I did encourage that if anyone was having difficulties completing a job, to bring it up to the committee and ask for some help. This was to prevent anyone through 'business' or 'guilt' from burying a task. You don't want find out the day the job needs to be finished, that it has not been done. Remember, certain committees are busier at the pre-ale stage than others (correspondence, publicity).

Probably our major failing as a committee was that we needed more help at the Ale itself. We had some non-morris volunteers at the Ale, but could have used more help.

Two items from the Ale book that I think are very useful to remember are the K.I.S.S. method (Keep It Simple, Stupid) from the 1988 Ale and plagiarize when ever possible (1989 Ale). The later can be used for forms, tentative Ale schedules, etc.

### Budget/Finances

The first rule proposed and unanimously passed by our committee was: Thou shall not spend over \$100.00 on anything without consulting and gaining approval from the Ale

committee." This was to prevent any committee member from going " Hey I got this great deal on .... I need to be reimbursed for \$500.00" It was our check & balances system on the budget. We did this for every high dollar expense, the deposit on the campsite, buses, food, etc. went through a formal process and was recorded in the minutes.

Notes from the 1990 Ale budget broke down the cost per person from 1988-1990 Ale, which we used for guidelines. Certain items will be fixed costs, for example the campsite was a flat rate of \$3.00 per person, per day. The major variable is food & drink, those cost in 1990 Ale notes have increased on average of \$1-3 dollars per year. We choose to estimate at \$30.00 per person because we wanted to make sure that people had enough to eat at our Ale.

### Campsite

I agree with 1988 Ale statement that "the campsite determines much of what your Ale can and can't be."

Camp Shawnee boasted of nearly 300 beds, a large dinning area that could hold the same amount, nice tenting areas, lodges for workshops, good outdoor spaces for mass dance and workshops. Also, the campsite was approximately 30 minutes from downtown Kansas City, hence, desirable for short bus rides.

On the subject of assigning cabins vs pick your own space, we opted to assign. Our reason for this, is having driven 8 + hours to previous ales, the last thing I wanted to hear was "go find a place to sleep." This is especially true, if its dark, your not familiar with the camp, you may be interrupting other folks trying to sleep, while trying to find if there is bed space available.

However, there things you cannot anticipate on. We knew that a 'wet, rainy' Ale was a possibility. What we did not know was that the camp had plumbers tearing up the road to replace pipes the week before. The combination of a lot of rain and the work area on the road made it dangerous and impassable to one group of cabins. So on Friday, we had to figure out where to put 40 displaced persons. The craft cabin and lodge which we originally had plan for workshops and late night singing, were bumped in favor of giving people a dry place to sleep.

I would recommend that one week before the Ale, that a call is made to the camp to see if they had made any changes or have any problems that might not have been evident during your review of the camp.

Camp directions in general were good, except that we wrote exit 9 West to Parkville and the actual signs say 9



North to Parkville. Oops! our mistake, 9 is a road that travels east-west before shifting to south-north direction. Most people still manage to find the camp, in spite of our glitch.

### Food

Our food chair staffed the kitchen with family members who had experience with providing food for large groups of people. We had budgeted \$6,000.00 for food. Our food chair, wisely told his staff that they had \$5,000.00 to spend, of which our final cost ended up to approximately \$4,600.00.

We recommend that you keep the menu simple, but filling. Lunch is the biggest problem due to time constraints. We went with soup and sandwiches, something fairly easy and moves people through the line faster. Depending on your facilities, if you can have two food lines, do it! It is a time saver. Essentially we saved the fancier foods for the evening meals, when people could relax and take more time.

The 1991 Ale consumed 4 kegs of beer. We opted for getting beer from a local microbrewery, rather than a national brand. The first keg was tapped late Friday afternoon (take people's mind off the rain) and the last keg ran out about 11:30 Sunday Night. So I think we got it down just about right.

In regards, to kitchen & clean up crew, what ever number of volunteers you decide on, double it! At the Ale, the kitchen is the biggest job. Every one in our committee was putting time in the kitchen, that was why our committee looked so tired, (we were!).

### Buses

Most of the buses companies had quoted similar prices. Our biggest problem was that we thought we had an agreement with one company, who in turn really did not want our business. We found this out when they did not send out the contract they promised, nor did they return our phone calls. So we started from scratch and contracted the Mayflower company. This company was very good, came on time and took us to our destination with little fuss and bother. Also when one of their buses accidentally broke the water main, Monday morning (hence, no water for the camp), the company paid for the damages without giving us any problems.

### Registration & Mailings

We used the plagiarism method for this area. We copied the format & information covered from the previous Ale correspondence. I recommend that you set deadlines and stick to them. So if your mailing has to go out on May 1st,

letters, forms, etc has to be in final form (typos corrected, etc.) no later than one week prior to mailing date.

I would not recommend mailing to all teams listed in the American Morris Newsletter-Directory for your first mailing. First, it is too costly, and you know not all the teams will be able to make to the Midwest Morris Ale. We sent notices to those teams who have attended before and to those teams that we thought might come, because Kansas City was within driving range. Hence, Winfrey Belles out of Texas attended the Midwest Morris Ale for the first time. We also invited teams via the American Morris Newsletter and CDSS newsletter. Also to cover all our basis, our second letter asked teams to pass our name, address & phone number to teams that we might have missed, or got lost in the mail somewhere.

At the Ale registration, t-shirt orders & buttons were bagged together by team names. We thought this was easier than digging through sizes and buttons individually. Name and size and number of t-shirt(s) ordered were also listed on the bag. Some people can't remember if they ordered a t-shirt, or what size they ordered, this helped a lot.

It has become standard to do a pre-order on t-shirts. I would recommend this rather than making extras to sell at the Ale. Remember, you have enough to do at the Ale without extra duties. We had a few left over at the Ale, this is because our t-shirts came in a set number of batches, rather than by individual count. If there is an interest at the Ale in buying more t-shirts, I would do like the 1990 Ale and sell them in the post ale letter.

### Tours

As promised, there were no long bus rides at our Ale, (we are very proud of that accomplishment). We tried to pick good flat surfaces, near areas that would attract an audience. We used the same areas for both Saturday's and Sunday's tours. We had four tours arranged for six buses. The childrens' team took up one bus. We tried dividing the teams up on the tour by registration count, which had some problems we were not aware of until tour time. For example, Saturday tour had schedule Oak Apple with MTM. What we did not know was that some of MTM decided to tour with their wives and significant others. (Nobody told us!) On Sunday, we found out by accident, that half of Ravenswood was leaving on Sunday afternoon. In order to prevent that tour from being short of dancers, I moved Grand Rapids to that tour. Needless, to say Grand Rapids was not happy cause they wanted to tour with someone else.

Bottom line is this: What ever you plan on the tours, some one will not be happy. I tried to be flexible, and accommodated when ever I could. But eventually you have to



tell some one NO CHANGES. They won't be happy, but at least you can get the buses moving.

### Publicity

We put up flyers when ever possible (ask permission first) and sent out publicity notices to local papers, radio and TV stations. We actually got a TV spot on a local cable network. When ever possible, work with parks and recreation department, historical places, etc. to get in their newsletter. Those that were on the Nelson Art Gallery tour had the largest audience, because the gallery had published the event in their newsletter.

One thing that we did do for publicity that was very popular was to hand out flyers with the tours schedule that listed the time and location of our tours. We handed them out to local contra and folk dances and meetings, friends, family, co-workers, churches, class mates (no body was safe!). I also told people that if they could not use them, to pass them on to somebody else. Also remember to bring some of your business cards (something with contact name, etc.) on the tours to attract potential new dancers or new gigs.

### Entertainment

A band was hired for Saturday Night for \$150.00 which included the sound equipment. Callers were solicited from attendees.

Sunday night has become a traditional skit night, all voluntary. I thought that putting up a sign up sheet and going by the order of sign up would make sense. However we had a few problems, for example we had requests from team members with young children for an earlier time slot for their skits. Also there were individuals in multiple skits that needed a skit or two between each one they participated in. So you may want to try and straighten it out right before the skits and post a new list. The other option is to announce " Oak Apple is next, followed by Ann Arbor..." or something to that effect to give people a little warning.

### Workshops & Mass Dances

Mass dances are selected by combination of teams surveyed and what your committee decides which dances to select. Notes and music are great to have, make sure they are the correct ones.

We had several workshop suggestions from our mailings. The trick is to get volunteers to lead the workshops that were suggested (ie. matchmaking). We found that people not only suggested workshop ideas, but suggested names of

possible teachers, (very helpful). The workshops varied from 1 to 2 hours length. The workshops for the 1991 Ale were: fooling, ducklington, fieldtown hankies, rapper sword, and a preventive injury course.

Assignment of workshop space was based on needs and sized of the workshop. If it had rained on Sunday morning, we would have been in trouble, because our original workshop space had been converted to bed space due to rain.

### Attendance

For the record the following teams attended the 1991 Midwest Morris Ale:

Ann Arbor Morris & Sword (MI)  
Bells of the North (MN)  
Bloomington Quarry (IN)  
Capering Roisters (MO)  
Castlewood Morris (KY)  
Grand Rapids Reformed Morris (MI)  
Maroon Bells (CO)  
Merry Heymakers (MO) - Host Team  
MTM (MN)  
Moonwood (MN)  
Oak Apple (WI)  
Olentangy Motley Morris (OH)  
Prairie Waves (NE)  
Pierremont Morris (MO) - Children's Side  
Ravenswood (IL)  
Up Town on Calhoun (MN)  
Winfrey Belles (TX)

### Evaluations

Using the KISS method, we created evaluation forms so people could tell us how well we did on the ale. Essentially, I asked people what they liked, did not like and suggestions for improvements. Remember to keep evaluations questions short, otherwise people won't take time to answer them. The following are comments from our attendees.

### Like Best:

- The tours were great. We spent little time on the buses.
- Thanks, it was fun.
- Camp nice, hot showers. good food & timing in receiving it.
- Camp site - beautiful, good job on workshops.
- Food, Friday night seemed to be appreciated by many.
- South Australia as a mass dance.
- Campsite was close to dancing sites. Once we unloaded from the bus there wasn't a lot of other travel required.
- Beautiful campsite.

- Friendly, efficient people in charge who worked extremely hard.
- Meals ready when buses arrived back on site.

#### Like Least:

- Noise at night when trying to sleep.
- Touring the same place two days in a row.
- Saturday tour much too big (Tour C) and locations all on grass, were not good. Attention to dancing surface would have been appreciated.
- Cabins not well cleaned and full of insects.
- Food was marginal, but adequate.
- Too much rain - This made thing more difficult for everyone. Next time, I suggest pre-ale "no rain" dances.
- I'm not against kids sides coming, but there were too many of the little buggers.
- Too much dancing only on grass.
- We went to the same places both days, and Sunday mass site was too sloping.
- Really needed two indoor places for singers & dancers
- Friday night mass dance practice was not too well organized.

#### Suggestions & Comments

- You did a "super" job. thank you.
- The host team looked a bit overworked.
- Many dance weekends put together a job book, and everyone has to sign up for a job. Usually a lot, at least one more person than needed to each job. (in case of no shows) In the case of the Ale, almost all the jobs are at the mess hall. Kitchen help or cleaning & re-arranging hall before and after meals.
- Bask for a while in the radiance of a job extremely well done.