

The following was written by Dan O'Halloran on Mar. 10, 1987, compiled from 20 pages of submitted remarks and a 15 page synopsis of a post-Ale discussion. Contributors included all of the core planners of the 1986 Midwest Morris Ale: Bob Borcharding, Ken Johnson, Kathy Leahy, John Long, Dan O'Halloran, and John Shewmaker as well as Leelee Shewmaker.

"Things Which We Wish We Had Known Better Jan. 1, 1986"

General Suggestions:

1. a. Keep it simple.
  - b. Do not strive for perfection. Plan in depth, not in breadth. Focus your goals.
  - c. Always work from a clear agenda of priorities.
  - d. Go with what you know.
  - e. No one has all of the answers. Listen.
  - f. Keep as much control as you can within your group--beware of capricious and/or inept bureaucrats.
2. Our Ale was:
  - a. Dreamed: requiring vision and enthusiasm to inspire people to want to make it happen in the first place.
  - b. Planned: requiring incisive decision making to focus limited energy.
  - c. Executed: requiring decisive and efficient action to take this talk and make it happen.

These draw on very different personal qualities. Know your strengths and weaknesses.
3. In retrospect, here is a suggested timetable, we might have done well to have followed, throwing our first Ale, with 4-5 people;
  - a. nail down the camp contract by the preceding summer;
  - b. nail down most touring sites by Jan. 1;
  - c. get letters of invitation out around Jan. 1 and start planning meetings once a week;
  - d. brainstorm and generate ideas through January;
  - e. do initial investigation of the feasibility of these ideas in February;
  - f. during the last week of February slash your way through this wish list and decide on the bare minimum of what constitutes an Ale for you--focus on these essentials;
  - g. start to pursue these in earnest in March, sending out a letter with the massed dances, keeping people abreast, and the Ale on their minds;
  - h. get registration letters out by mid-April; - No, earlier!!
  - i. get final letters of confirmation, with maps, out in early May;
  - j. get at least 5 additional people (total of 10) involved part-time for the last 3 weeks--there will always be much that must wait until all of your registration is completed.
  - k. get at least 5 people working full-time for the Thursday before the Ale, and at least 10 people working full-time the Friday before. This is where it all comes together. If you have done your homework, you can give people specific errands and limit the need for them to make major on-the-spot decisions in your place.
4. a. Delegate specific tasks with clear goals to dependable people; give them as much authority as you can and get out of their hair.



- b. Core positions of responsibility, however, can not be thrust on anyone, or handed out lightly. They must first be sought, just as teams must seek to host the Ale, and then worked out through some ephemeral group process.
- c. Keep responsibility commensurate with authority.
- d. Play to people's strengths and tastes in delegating tasks--have enough volunteers so that you don't have to coerce people into jobs they may not be temperamentally or otherwise suited for.
- e. Everything which needs to be done must have a live person ultimately specifically responsible for seeing that it get done.
- 5. When putting yourself in the hands of non-morris dancers, give them a thorough and realistic picture of what to expect, and what your needs are. Get specific. Discover any glitches ahead of time.
- 6. Your morris guests have some idea of what to expect--this is a major help to you. If, however, you decide to deviate from previous Ale practice, be sure to impress these changes sufficiently upon your guests in a timely manner.
- 7. Throwing an Ale is like throwing a party--not going to one. Assume that you might not be able to relax for four days straight, no matter how well prepared you are.
- 8. Food is very important to people. If everything beyond your control goes wrong, but people's tummies are happy, they will still enjoy themselves.
- 9. Try everthing which you have not done before, well in advance.
- 10. Be prepared strategically, emotionally, and equipment-wise for anything. Murphy's law prevails.

#### Specific Suggestions:

- 1. Read the "Ale Book".
- 2.a. Have structured planning meetings. As much as we hate to admit it, when meetings are informal:
  - things drag on;
  - points are left to hang;
  - it is often not clear what, if anything, has been decided, and that these decisions are binding;
- b. Have your meetings at a time other than your regular rehearsals so that there is enough time, they don't interfere with your rehearsals, and you get input from people who have enough committment to make it to a separate meeting.
- c. Keep the rest of your group and anyone associated with it abreast of your planning progress, out of basic consideration and so that as needs arise, people know to step forward to help.
- 3. Use a registration form that you can put directly into a binder that will serve as the registration book. Do not transfer all of the information off of the forms into a computer--this requires at least a double handling of a lot of material at a point when your time is at a premium. Design the form to allow you to tabulate from it the specific information you need(e.g. # of T-shirts and sizes) and to enter any at a later date(e.g. has this person paid? Arrived? etc.). Keep it simple or it will scare people into not filling it out at all; have your team fill out the form themselves



before you mail it. If you would like to work up a directory of participants from your registration information, do so as a parallel operation, secondary to your registration efforts.

4. If you decide to pursue outside funding, try for contractual arrangements with private business(e.g. dancing at a public opening)--public grant type funding can be a nightmare. If your quest is not 100% nailed down by Jan. 1, drop it so that you can clear your minds and procede with all of your other planning. You can do a lot with \$35-\$40 per person and a lot of volunteer help.
5. Every money transaction must pass through one independant and accountable person.
6. Verbosity in mailings is counterproductive; generate enthusiasm by presenting the general picture of your Ale--people trust you to attend to the minutiae. Strive to limit cuteness and inside jokes.
- 7.a. Have a viable plan to get at least 20 people to work on the final clean-up of the camp on Monday. Your crew will be exhausted and everyone else is hitting the road.
- b. Have a full-time "volunteer finder" to get participants to help clean up the hall, empty trash cans, slop dishes, slop pans, serve food, and prepare and cook food. A thankless job.
- c. Participants' willingness-to-help peaks very sharply around Sunday dinner.
- d. Impress upon your guests that it is their Ale, not yours, and that their continual help is fundamental. It ain't "Club Med".
- e. The vast majority of your volunteers will work out extremely well and will be a joy to work with--once you get them.
8. Non-morris dancer volunteers are great--they don't mind as much missing out on the Ale activities to perform essential jobs.
9. Scope out your camp area extremely thoroughly. Note on your map of the camp all of the bathroom locations. *Good idea!*
10. Have someone manning a phone all day on Friday, at least, to coordinate everyone as they run the myriad of errands.
- 11.a. Leave particular groups together throughout the course of a day of touring; this is much easier for you to plan, for them to undergo, and it develops a closer camaraderie between the groups who share tours. Groups can mix and see all the other groups at the massed dances.
- b. Try to limit time on the buses.
12. Have a squire's meeting at least on Saturday morning to give an overview of the weekend.
13. Talented and eager photographers are plentiful; supply them with film, videotape, and schedules so that you have one less concern.
14. Establish a plan for participants to be taken to a local hospital for non-emergency care by their own teammates. Two or three of your core people tied up for 4-10 hours at the hospital could be disastrous.
15. Tell people to wear their hats when they arrive at the airport--it really helps you spot them.
16. Fill out the buttons by hand as the registration forms arrive.
17. Make sleeping arrangements for yourselves that allow you to be at the camp early and rested.
18. You will need lots of ace bandages, cold packs, and bags of ice--



especially after the massed dances.

19. Your group leaders should have copies of every confirmation letter or site permit conceivably applicable--your contacts might not talk with their co-workers.

FINALLY: It will all turn out, no matter what you do.  
Your guests will be eager, happy and good troopers.  
It will all seem clear afterwards.

One of my responsibilities in the 1986 Ale was the food; here are some specific notes and suggestions which you might find useful.

1. The "Food Czar" is first a manager, second a cook, and third a weight lifter.
- 2.a. For the food budget I made what I expected to be my most expensive meal(Sat. night dinner), figured up the cost per serving, about \$1.89, rounded it up to \$2.50 and multiplied by the number of meals for the weekend.
- b. Portion control is extremely important; impress it upon your servers.
- c. Plan on having food left over(which you paid for) and plan on having to go out and buy additional food during the weekend as people's tastes begin to show.
3. Give much thought to your menu. Cook through your whole menu at least once, making measurements that can be multiplied 20 or 30 times.
- 4.a. Have many non-dancing volunteers lined up to help in the kitchen during the day when all of the dancers have vanished.
- b. Figure on needing at least 6 cooks at any time, peaking to as many as 12, especially around meal-time.
- c. It would have been nice to have had a full-time assistant manager/head cook to help manage during peak periods, provide more continuity among the volunteer cooks, and to give me an occasional break. (In fact, by the end of the weekend, a couple people did fall into this role.)
- d. You will need one person full time in the slop room cleaning pots, knives, cutting boards, mixing bowls, burnt on food etc. and a second around meal time.
- e. If you are not using paper products, I would guess that you would need an additional 6-8 people for 3 hours around each meal, in the slop room; an additional 2-3 people for an hour to set up all of the china and silverware before the meal; plus someone to supervise the clean-up of the hall by, hopefully, very cooperative participants.
- f. Try to find time to give your crews an overview of what they are all doing.
- g. Morale is crucial. Show your appreciation to your helpers. Keep enough people involved so that none of them feels overworked. Do not have anyone help full-time with two meals in a row. There is no reason for it not to be fun. You might even set up a sign-out sheet for people to make a note of who they are, where they are

from and what they did--I wish I had.

5. If someone else is cooking the food for you, try out their cooking ahead of time.
6. With big batches of food, put in 80% of each ingredient according to the scaled-up version of your recipe and then adjust to taste, feel etc.
7. Give much thought to how you organize your serving line--a group of 250 hungry people is not to be treated lightly.
8. Try to get your food picked up and into your kitchen on Thursday, so that you can start to cook etc. on Friday morning.
9. We were very happy that we decided at the last minute to go entirely with paper products--we couldn't have managed without them. Bring with you many good sharp knives and plastic cutting boards.
10. If you are providing food for the tours, it is much safer to send each group off with its own food, rather than trying to have them meet up with their food somewhere.
11. Rolling carts help provide temporary work and storage space where you need it.
12. Fruit salad. It is extremely popular, and easy to make.
13. Our Friday night snack was well appreciated.
14. People are very prompt about meal time.

would be delighted to answer any other questions you may have.

Don't worry-- be happy.

Your former Food Czar,



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Menu of the 1986 Midwest Morris Ale

- Friday Night Snack: Bagels and cream cheese; bread, peanut butter and jelly; sliced fruit and popcorn.
- Saturday Breakfast: French toast(syrup and powdered sugar); yogurt and granola; coffee, milk, orange juice, hot tea.
- Saturday Lunch: Sandwiches on regular and whole wheat: turkey, cheddar and swiss, ham cheddar and swiss, roast beef, cheddar and swiss, and double cheddar and swiss; lettuce, tomatoes, onions, sliced, separate; mustard, mayonaise; bulk potatoe chips; bar cookies; apples, bananas, oranges; coke, sprite, diet coke.
- Saturday Snack on bus: bulk pretzels.
- Saturday Supper: Ground beef spaghetti sauce; tofu spaghetti sauce; parmessan cheese; regular and whole wheat spaghetti; salad; rolls, regular and whole wheat, butter; carrot cake; coffee, orange juice, hot and cold tea, milk.
- Saturday Night: One keg of Budweiser.
- Sunday Breakfast: Whole wheat and regular pancakes; fruit salad; yogurt and granola; coffee, hot tea, orange juice and milk.
- Sunday Lunch: Same as Saturday's except left-over carrot cake instead of cookies, extra cheese and meat on sandwiches, and taboulli.
- Sunday Snack on bus: some bulk pretzels, spotty.
- Sunday Supper: Barbequed chicken quarters; baked potatoes; lentil soup and corn bread; salad; marinated asparagus; rolls and butter; fruit salad; brownies and ice cream; coffee, milk, hot and cold tea, orange juice, chocoalate milk.
- Sunday Night Dance: 1 and a quarter kegs of Budweiser; juice; tea; misc. leftovers.
- Monday Breakfast: Baked/scrambled eggs/omelettes of various styles; oven-baked cinnamon toast; from left-over ingredients: whole wheat pancakes, hash browns, fruit salad; yogurt and granola; coffee, hot tea, milk, and orange juice.

N.B. Everything except the bread and dinner rolls was made from scratch on site.

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