

Well folks, this is it: your last correspondance from before we meet in the wilds of West Virginia. I trust your winter and springs has been cold and warm respectively. I also hope that you don't mind that I'm not going all out for this newsletter, but I need to leave some room for improvement for next year's organizer.

We're all set for this year's trip. For those of you who have been on this trip before, there's really nothing new to report: same river (probably) same campground; but each year is its own new experience. The following newsletter attempts to answer your most common questions about the raft trip.

Who's going this year?

I've got 59 people signed up as of this writing, with a few more considering it. We should stabilize at around 60. I've included a list a people with their point of origin and phone numbers so that people can make travel arrangements. We're low on RVs this year, and I hope the gods won't mind.

Where are we going?

We're heading for Hico, West Virginia. We'll be staying at the scenic MRT campgrounds. Camping at MRT is \$4/night and needs to be paid on arrival. I'm assuming that anyone interested in hotels has already contacted me, if not give me a call and I'll give you the list of local hotels. The MRT campground is located on the south side of ROUTE 60 just east (or south because of the way the road curves) of the intersection of 60 and 19. (MRT headquarters is on the other side of 19 on route 60) The included map has the campgrounds marked. The MRT campground is one big field and in years past the people who arrived early have staked out space for our group. We try to get one of the back corners, so if you get there early spread out. For you newcomers: MRT campground has flush toilets and showers, and there is a payphone also.

What is a Chazzerie?

Chazzerie (pronounced khah-zer-EYE; the kh is a guttural sound made in the back of the throat) Yiddish from the Yiddish word chazzer meaning pig; 1. noun: pig feed 2. noun: junk 3: adjective (chazerishe) unpalatable. (From Dictionary Shmichtionary) The word seemed to fit us pretty well.

How can I get there?

Driving is the most common means of transportation although some people will be flying to nearby airports where other friendly GSPs will shuttle them to the campground (depending on

the kind of beer they brought). Scot Aurenz has volunteered to coordinate the travel from the Northeast, so if that includes you feel free to contact him. The list of attendees should help you find possible travel companions if you need them. (If I am missing a phone number in the list you can call me and I'll tell you who the most likely person to have it is).

As for the travel route: from the mid-west I like to take I-65 south to I-74 east around Cincinnati to I-75 south to I-64 east to Route 60. The trick is not to get onto Route 60 until you have gone completely through Charleston, otherwise you will be spending time seeing all of Charleston's neighborhoods. I tell you this from experience. Route 60 is a winding 2 lane highway and some people prefer alternate routes. In any case, watch for speed traps in the town of Ansted and on Route 19 through Summersville.

What should I bring?

One thing to count on is the weather; there will be some. Rain, sun, clouds, wind, snow, well maybe not snow, are all par for the course. It will be hot. It will be cold. Pack accordingly. For the rafting itself you will need a bathing suit (well everyone except Paul Carlisle) and river shoes i.e. old sneakers you are willing to sacrifice, wet suit booties, or the equivalent. Make sure the shoes you select can't fall off and will protect your feet. You will also probably want to wear a pair of nylon shorts (they dry faster) over your swim suit since bare skin on rubber rafts for a few hours is not very comfortable. Lycra also works well. MRT will supply helmets and life jackets. If you have a tendency to get cold, bring along a polypropylene shirt; T-shirts can prevent a sun burn but will only keep you cold. MRT also rents wetsuits and paddle jackets. I always wear/bring a paddle jacket because after a few hours of being wet, unless it is very hot out, I get chilled. You can change clothes before and after the trip at MRT headquarters so you can make last minute decisions on this. MRT also has hot showers for after the trip.

Can I wear my contact lenses down the river?

This has been an on-going debate. Some people feel uncomfortable wearing their contact lenses for fear they will lose them. I have worn my contact lenses while rafting (even while swimming Sweet's Falls) without any problems. I also wear them kayaking and on occasion have opened my eyes underwater to see if anyone was planning on rescuing me, and have never lost one (not on the river at least). The decision is yours. If you are planning on wearing glasses, be sure to strap them on with croakies or some other restraining device.

When will we be rafting?

Saturday, July 6 is the big day. Our rafting time is 9:45 am so you can sleep in a bit Saturday morning. We will be rafting the lower New River, the oldest blah blah blah. I have heard that the river has been running between +3-+8 feet. And although things can change in a month, I think the prospects are good for an excellent ride.

What else will we be doing?

We will be going many things. Camping, rafting and drinking beer are only a small part of the adventure. The area sports many attractions, a few of which are listed below:

Canyon Rim Visitor Center: an information center run by the National Park Service for the entire New River Gorge area. Questions about history, geology, and wildlife can be answered here. They also offer slide shows and other programs and maintain two overlooks of the New River Gorge Bridge. Located just north of the bridge on US 19.

Summersville Lake and Dam. This 10,000 acre lake and recreation area is excellent for boating, fishing, swimming, and picnicking. Drive north on U.S. 19 from Hico, then west on WV 129.

Carnifax Ferry. The site of a Civil War Battle, Carnifax Ferry is now a state park. Within the park are hiking trails and several overlooks of Pillow Rapids on the Upper Gauley River. Drive west on WV 129 past Summersville Dam.

State Parks. There are several State Parks nearby with a wide variety of facilities. Babcock is fun for rock hopping. Located off US19.

Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine. A former working coal mine, now converted to an exhibit of coal mining and its history.

Plane Rides. Get a different view of the New River Gorge and listen to the stories of the area. Based out of the Fayette Airport, south of Fayetteville on U.S. 19. Be sure to ask for "Heart Attack Frank".

Horseback rides. Stables are located within 20 minutes of MRT headquarters: Fraley's Stables: 304-574-0017, or Babcock State Park: 304-438-6438.

In the past people have also hiked down to the Keeny's to watch rafts or headed for Fayette Station to watch the rafts at the end of the day. The Fayette Station rapid is located directly under the New River Gorge Bridge. Or run the rapid yourself in inner-tubes, kayaks, or canoes. Also, Rich Kulawiec is organizing a ducky/kayak/canoe trip for July 4 for people who are interested.

What about food?

Except for Saturday, you're on your own for food. Saturday lunch is included in the raft trip cost, and while breakfast is officially on your own, MRT always has bread and coffee at their headquarters while we are checking in. As for dinner, now that I made all the arrangements for various dinners for Saturday night, it ends up that MRT will cook us dinner Saturday for free, so I've canceled the plans for Ray to cook us dinner. MRT will be providing both ribs and chicken, but

us veggies will have to fend for ourselves.

For the other nights and days, it's up to you. Don will be bringing his rambo grill again for a communal barbeque. There are two food stores fairly close to the campground also, so you don't need to schlep everything with you: Foodland is 1 mile west of 60 and a nice Krogers south on 19. There are also some restaurants which are listed in the appendix.

Ice is available at the campground so you'll be able to keep your food cool too. There has been no official chicken wings night, but feel free to improvise once you get there.

What about beer?

If you really have to ask, you're on the wrong trip. In years past we have prided ourselves in providing a large assortment of beers, some fairly difficult to obtain. The idea is to have beers from all parts of the country, and quality is important. Ed Bronson is hoping for an impromptu beer tasting of homebrew, pale ales, and/or Belgin ales depending on how many samples of each show up. If you are interested in this possibility you may want to try to bring some beers from any or all of these categories.

Why are we doing this?

48

Did you find hot tubs for the campground yet?

This has been a problem. The truth is that after doing the raft assignments the thought of doing hot tub assignments was too much. I leave it for the next organizer to work out.

What were the answers to the extra credit questions?

That incredible handsome, studdly man in the funyak in MRT's newsletter this year was none other than Dr. Edward Bronson. And yours truly was on Car Talk on NPR this past winter. For those concerned, my car works fine now, though I'm still fighting the bozo's in Memphis who charged my \$400 for not fixing something that was diagnosed correctly over the phone by the Car Talk guys. Am I ranting here? Sorry, I'll shut up now.

Did you say Dr. Edward Bronson? Does this mean what I think it means?

Not knowing your exact thoughts, it is hard to say. But I'll venture a guess: yes.

What about lawn ornaments?

These are of course essential for any successful rafttrip If they can be attached to your raft, even better. The lawn ornament contest is on, although I may need to have a little discussion with my official type-setter as to the prizes.

What about day care:

I do have a tentative day care provider lined up. I assume the parents will want to deal with this issue themselves when we arrive in WV.

Is there anything else I should know?

At any given time there are more people in the air above the USA than live in the largest cities in Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota combined. (thanks to Don Wegeng for that important information.)

I've included a packing list here too of the things I like to bring. That's all I can think of. I look forward to seeing all of you soon. please call if you have any questions.

Eileen Gelblat RTG

List of Restaurants near MRT:

- Blakes, Holiday Inn, US 19, Oak Hill
- Elliott's Comfort Inn U.S> 19, Fayetteville
- Hawk's Nest Lofdge, UIS. 60 Ansted
- Shad's Lauel Crrek Road off UISl 19 Fayetteville
- Fiesta Grande, E. Main St. Oak Hill
- Gino's Pizza MainST (UISL 60) Ansted, Fayettevill and Oak hill
- Pizza Hut, U.S. 19, Oyler Ave Exit, Oak Hill
- Golden Corral, E. Main St, Oak Hill
- RAX, U.S. 19 Oak Hill
- McDonalds's UIS. 19 Summersville, E. Main St, Oak Hill
- Burger King U.S. 19 Oak Hill
- Western Steer, U.S> 19, SUMmersville