

Setting The Date

by Edith Wagner

The question at hand is when to have a reunion. Of course, the answer is anytime but that said, it's not quite that simple.

A family reunion typically starts with one person who develops an idea and shares it with other family members. Joyfully, many families love the idea and respond instantly and enthusiastically. The idea either meets support or rejection. But don't let a few rejections slow you down. Proceed if there are enough positive responses and let the others catch up.

In reunion planning, a beginner is anyone who has never before been responsible for planning a reunion. You could be the originator of the idea in your family ... or this could be the first time you're in charge of planning an already established family reunion with pre existing traditions you must follow.

Choosing and setting the reunion date and place are crucial and important steps. Once the date is set, stick to it and establish a timetable to count down to your reunion. The importance of deadlines cannot be stressed enough.

Set your reunion date to attract as many people as possible. Advanced planning maximizes the number of people who can schedule vacations and make arrangements to attend.

Setting a reunion date is only simple when the reunion coincides with a milestone like your parent's 50th anniversary or grandma's 90th birthday or when you ancestors arrived in the US 150 years ago, in which case, the date is set for you. Many successful milestone reunions are such fun, families continue to have reunions.

We, at Reunions magazine, are always looking for ideas you've tested at your reunions. Feel free to email them to reunions@execpc.com or send them to Reunions magazine, PO Box 11727, Milwaukee WI 53212 or post them at our forum at <http://forums.reunionsmag.com>. If you've never seen Reunions magazine, you can request a free copy at www.reunionsmag.com.

Many reunions designate the same day year after year. The third weekend in July has been etched in stone for the Seideman family for over 74 years. The family is scattered around the world and never discusses the date of their reunion because it's fixed. Another family meets the Sunday closest to August 1st every other year in even years.

Having a consistent, fixed reunion date has bonuses for families for whom it is not easy to get everyone together. One family still meets for their long deceased parents' anniversary in October, which limits attendance to adults and suits them perfectly.

Holiday weekends are popular because most families have an automatic extra day but many extended families cannot get together so a separate reunion date can become a family holiday. By far the most popular reunion holiday is July 4th, when millions of Americans celebrate the nation and their families.

There's nothing sacred about summer reunions. But seasons matter — do you have skiers? campers? sun-seekers? school children? If you have family members whose occupations are tied to seasons, you'll have to take that into consideration as well. Plan accordingly.

Okay, so kids are out of school in summer but they have three- and four-day weekends in winter — perfect times to get away, reduce cabin fever and enjoy the company of family. There're lots of benefits to winter reunions. Off-season prices abound. Some resorts feature up to 50% rate reduction in winter, as well as free children's specials.

So if your reunion is not tied to a milestone or you haven't chosen one date annually to meet, you'll have to start somewhere. Start by doing some early exploration to determine dates that might conflict. Are there weddings, graduations or other celebrations coming up? You'll be asking about dates that can be as far away as a couple years if this is your first reunion ever.

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While you ask about dates that conflict, also ask for suggestions of dates. Also at this early stage you should use the occasion of this contact to start recruiting volunteers to help, which is also very important to the success of your reunion.

Give yourself plenty of time to plan your reunion so a year or two if you've never planned a reunion and you're thinking of a very large group is not a bad idea. But even small groups are hard to assemble with all of the obligations and responsibilities people have in their own, busy, everyday lives.

If there is no idea of a date for your first reunion, picking one may be harder than you expect. While surveying your group may seem the most democratic way to pick a date, do so with a plan in mind. The larger the group, the more structured the request must be. For example, pick several dates and include them in your request. Do you prefer date one, date two or date three? And before long their answers will guide decisions to fix a date.

If you want a popular place, you may need to start years ahead. In large, extended families it's rarely possible to accommodate everyone's schedule. Choose the best date possible. Then stick to it.

If reunion is a new idea, members who must travel need time to save both (vacation) time and money for the trip. Be sure the date you do finally set is as convenient as it can be to the most members of your reunion, then plan all the details that will excite and entice them to be there!

Then, once you're successful, you'll have to decide how often you should have reunions.