

Experience and Guidelines for Pioneers of Stealth Reunion Organizers

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The following is the kind of information I would like to have had available as I set up our October 2009 reunion in Colorado Springs.

1. **Timeline** – Most important is setting the date of the reunion. This should be completed at least 1 year in advance of the reunion itself so people have ample time to make it firm in their schedules. We didn't finalize the Colorado Springs reunion date until about 7 months prior to the event. Some were already otherwise committed by that time.
2. **Room-Night Guarantees** – Resorts need to have some guarantee of the number of rooms our group will occupy and for how many nights during the reunion period. For our 2009 reunion at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort, we guaranteed 25 rooms would be occupied for each of the 2 core nights during the event, for a total of 50 room-nights. From that total, the resort did allow that reservations for up to 10% of each of the 2 nights could be cancelled without penalty. That meant we could go as low as 23 room nights actually being occupied on each of the 2 core nights IF people who had made reservations had to cancel out. With the 50 total reunion attendees occupying 23 rooms the first night and 27 the second night, I'm very glad we did NOT guarantee any more room nights than we did!
3. **Room Rates** – The poor economy helped us. I negotiated a flat rate of \$129 plus tax per night for their standard room with 2 queen beds. They also dropped their "standard resort fee" of \$10 per night for wireless internet access and use of many facilities on the resort grounds.
4. **Extra Nights** – Cheyenne Mountain Resort agreed that attendees could add up to 3 nights before the event and/or up to 3 nights after the event to their stay and receive the same favorable room rate for all nights. Quite a few folks took advantage of this.
5. **Banquet** – The lowest priced "standard" banquet buffet menu the resort came to \$70 per person including Hors D'Oeuvres, taxes, gratuity, bartender and 2 bottles of wine per table of 8. I asked our resort's reunion coordinator to get creative and get the cost down below \$65 per person. She did. Friday evenings at the resort feature a seafood buffet in their dining room. By piggy-backing on their standard fare the price dropped to what we needed.

6. **Hospitality Room** – I think this was a major reason for what I assess was a very successful reunion, and I think it is mandatory for ALL future reunions regardless of locations. The room was approximately 1,000 square feet with a sofa, 2 overstuffed chairs, about 8 comfortable dining chairs, 3 bar stools, a large dining table, a credenza, a bar-kitchen area, and a restroom. The room was elegantly western casual and allowed folks to kind of split up into small groups for catch-up conversation and lies. When it was pleasant enough outside, folks went out on the patio, too. The dining table served as a place for the many photo albums brought in by Tim Sweeney as well as a few other mementos and keepsakes. The credenza held my computer, printer, and an extra flat-panel display. We ran a continuous slide show of digital aircraft pix and pix taken at previous PoS and other gatherings that seemed to be a hit with most attendees. We kept the room open nearly all the time except during the banquet, the football game, the Saturday evening meal at the Blue Star, and when Carolyn and I went for meals or were sleeping. It would have been quite crowded if all 50 attendees were there at the same time, but that didn't happen. People were in the room almost the entire time it was open, but never so many that it felt crowded. One thing I did wrong regarding our hospitality room was that I failed to tell folks prior to the event that they should report in at the hospitality room as soon as possible after arrival. My bad. The front desk was to advise our members of this upon arrival, but that was just partially successful and some were not so advised.

Our hospitality room was part of a “Presidential Suite” with the other parts being an entry foyer and a sleeping room with bath across the foyer from the hospitality room. Carolyn and I used the sleeping room/bath which was the same as the resorts standard guest room with a king size bed. Our contract specified the rental price for the suite as \$129 plus tax per night – same as our cost for their standard guest room. Pioneers of Stealth paid for 3 nights and Carolyn and I paid for the 4th night.

7. **Hospitality Room Refreshments** – The day prior to the reunion start, Carolyn and I went to the Fort Carson Army Base Class 6 (liquor) Store and Commissary. We purchased 1.5 liter Sutter Home red and white wines, regular and lite beers, soft drinks, bottled water, coffee, individually packaged snack items (chips, peanuts, pretzels, etc.), and necessary plastic beer cups, wine glasses, napkins, etc. We chose canned beer and soda so we wouldn't have to mess with bottles. Our suite had only 2 small refrigerators and we could not have fit nearly as much in them had we used bottled beverages. We forgot a corkscrew from home and had to purchase one. Here are the beverage items that were actually consumed by our 50 attendees during the approximately 2 ½ days we had the hospitality room open:

White Wine (1 ½ liter bottles) – 5 bottles
Red Wine (1 ½ liter bottles) – 4 bottles
Craft Brewed Beer (Fat Tire) 12 oz. cans – 23 cans
Regular Beer (Coors Banquet) 12 oz. cans – 7 cans
Lite Beer (Coors Lite) 12 oz. cans – 5 cans

Mix of Coke, Diet Coke, 7Up 12 oz. cans – 18 cans
Bottled Water 12 oz. bottles – 24 bottles

8. **Our resort** – The Cheyenne Mountain Resort was pretty much flawless. Good food at mostly reasonable prices served to promote people congregating in the spacious and comfortable restaurant. We even received comments about the beds being quite comfortable. We heard nothing but complements about the Friday evening banquet buffet. The golf outing at the adjoining Country Club of Colorado went without a hitch as far as I know. My experiences with the staff prior to our reunion were almost all very good, and any problems were all resolved to my satisfaction.
9. **AFAcademy vs. Wyoming football game** – Preparations were painless and AFA won the game. Very successful event. The Academy set aside a block of 50-yard line seats close to the sidelines for us, and attendees purchased tickets directly from their web-based online “Box Office”. I chartered a 21 passenger bus from the local Gray Line operation at a total cost of \$510 that got us to and from the game. I charged each rider \$25 and gave the driver a \$50 tip. The driver showed up on time with a 48 passenger bus (at no extra cost) so everyone was very comfortable.
10. **Saturday Evening Meal** – We did this at the Blue Star Restaurant - one of the top rated restaurants in Colorado Springs and only about 2 ½ miles from our resort. We did have to guarantee that our group would spend at least \$1,200 total on food and beverages in order to reserve a room for 30. Exactly 30 showed up and we probably averaged about \$50 per person so we easily met the minimum spending commitment. Folks car pooled. The restaurant did separate checks which worked very well and was a true blessing to Carolyn and me not having to deal with splitting costs somehow.
11. **Other** – In addition to the hospitality room promoting togetherness, I think everyone staying at the same location was another key to this reunion’s success. It promoted our folks getting together for meals, golf, sightseeing, and congregating in the hospitality room. I highly recommend that this be a feature - along with a hospitality room - for all future reunions, even those we might do in the Dayton area.
12. **Reunion Financial Summary** – Total cost to the Pioneers of Stealth treasury was \$1,274.03. Following is a breakout of receipts and expenses:

2009 Pioneers of Stealth Reunion Financial Summary

Receipts

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Paid by Rick Abell | | \$3,000.00 |
| Member payments for Banquet | | \$2,976.00 |
| Dues from Steve Smith | | \$50.00 |
| Dues from Fred Green | | \$45.00 |
| Shirt - sold to Bernie Ellrod | | \$35.00 |
| Shirt - sold to John Cashen | | \$35.00 |
| 5 PoS coffee cups sold @ \$5 each | | \$25.00 |
| <u>Total Receipts</u> | | <u>\$6,166.00</u> |

Expenses

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Resort Billings | | |
| Hors D'Oeuvres | \$425.85 | |
| Buffet, Wine, Bartender | \$2,836.07 | |
| Business Meeting Breakfast | \$275.16 | |
| Audio-Visual Equipment | \$19.65 | |
| Total Resort Billings | | \$3,556.73 |
| Hospitality Suite | | |
| 3 days @ \$141.13 per day | | \$423.39 |
| Refreshments for Hospitality Suite | | |
| Beer & Wine | | \$169.01 |
| Snacks, cups, misc. | | \$67.92 |
| Incidental Expenses | | |
| White Board | \$7.38 | |
| Poster Board | \$4.25 | |
| Paper & Printing | \$13.05 | |
| Name Tags (shipping only) | \$8.30 | |
| Total Incidental Expenses | | \$32.98 |
| <u>Total Expenses</u> | | <u>\$4,250.03</u> |
| <u>Returned to PoS Treasury</u> | | <u>\$1,915.97</u> |