

DMFTCampers:

As I write this, Austin is wilting under a heat advisory, which can mean only one thing: It’s time to get out of Dodge. Luckily, our cool camp in the Davis Mountains is only a month away. Here for your mid-July reading pleasure is our annual guide of what to expect at Prude Ranch during Camp 2016.

Returning campers are free to scan the information while multi-tasking or watching Wimbledon, however, this is your warning that there are some **BIG IMPORTANT CHANGES** that you’ll want to know about (which I’ve helpfully highlighted in yellow), so skip reading this letter at your peril.

As always, if you have questions not answered here, please feel free to ask me, or any of our board members and/or staff. Safe travels to West Texas, and see you soon.

Eric Dexheimer

President and Chief Word Wrangler

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**Activity Book & Schedule:** For the past several decades (give or take) we have provided you with a folder containing a printed schedule and activity description book. We will still provide this service for rookies, HOWEVER, if you are a returning camper this year we have finally decided to enter the modern(-ish) age. That means that as much as possible we will be going paperless. This means that veteran campers will be responsible for bringing their own schedules. The simplest way to do this is electronically – on your device of choice. If you decide to do this, we strongly recommend downloading it (fitnesscamp.org, click “schedule”) before you arrive because of the spotty wireless service at Prude Ranch. If you prefer paper, you may of course print out your own schedule. And for those of you who either forget or want to strike a note of protest, we will have a handful of copies strategically placed around the ranch for you to consult. You will still receive a hard-copy packet of some other important documents when you register (see ‘**Checking In**,’ below).

**Bicycling:**(see ‘**Cycling**,’ below. Also, read the attachment about how to prepare you and your bike for camp.)

**Board of Directors**: DMFTC is overseen by this august 9-member body, readily identifiable by their bespoke fitness apparel. Each year three positions come up for election to a three-year term. The future of our camp depends on new energy and fresh perspectives, so please consider contributing your time to continuing This Thing of Ours by serving a term (or two, or six).

**Book,** for lively Thursday night discussion**:** “Empire of the Summer Moon”, by S.C. Gwynne. The biography of the great Comanche chief Quanah Parker, who was the son of a white Texas settler abducted by the tribe. But it is much more than that: the (occasionally myth-busting) story of Texas’s brutal pioneer days surrounding the Civil War – particularly in and around familiar locations in Central and West Texas; a history of the Rangers; and a vivid accounting of the final frontier wars that defined the state. Among other fascinating themes.

**Carpooling:** Let me know via email if you can’t find a ride to or from camp, or would prefer company. We will post requests on the website.

**Cell phones**: Imperfect reception. Best bet is to drive to Fort Davis. Better yet, resolve to take an old-timey artisanal vacation and leave your cell phone at home.

**Checking in:**Registration is Sunday, August 7, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. Get with the Registrar, pick up your name tag, t-shirt and slightly smaller orientation folder; see “Activity Book & Schedule” above; grab your room assignment; and, finally, touch base with Liz, our fabulous camp nurse. Cruise the activity fair. Unkink your Interstate 10 knots at 4 p.m yoga.

**Clothing:** Camp dress code is Casual/Sweaty, function over form. Surprisingly, most campers manage to clean up pretty well for dinner. Don’t forget a lightweight jacket or sweatshirt, as evenings and mornings are delightfully cool. Fort Davis has **laundry** facilities, but how fun is that? Some campers wash their clothes in their sink and hang them to dry (BYOClothesline). A recommended packing list can be found on our website’s FAQ.

**Cycling:**If you read Mark’s enclosed preparation letter you’ll know most everything. The Activities description (did I mention you need to print/download this yourself this year?) has detailed info on individual rides and clinics. If you have a DMFTC jersey, bring it to wear on Balmorhea day, Wednesday. We’ll have water stops, however, you are encouraged to BYOBike snacks. Go to DrivekindRidekind.org for a refresher on bike safety.

**Dance:** Held Friday night after the camp meeting and board elections. Please email your top five songs in order of importance to Sandy Raphel: ***telecomchik@yahoo.com******.***Write “DMFTC Dance Music” in the subject line.

**Dehydration**: A genuine risk due to the high altitude and dry conditions in the Davis Mountains. Here is some helpful reading: <http://www.peoplespharmacy.com/2015/06/08/dehydration-can-be-deadly-if-not-corrected-promptly/>

**Flies:** There are typically quite a few. A swatter provides relief and a fun happy hour activity.

**Games**: Back by popular demand! Tuesday evening. While we will have some games available, you are encouraged to bring your favorites, as well. This includes indoor (Scrabble is a good one) as well as lawn (anyone have an old Jarts set?).

**Ice:** The solid state of water, and an essential component to keeping one’s beverage of choice chilled. While there is usually a small amount of ice in the dining hall for filling water bottles, and water stops typically have replacement cubes, ice generally is the camper’s responsibility. There is an ice machine at the lodge, but it tends to empty out early. More reliable is the bagged version available at Porter’s grocery store just down the hill in Fort Davis, which is open daily until 7 p.m.

**Internet:**The good news? Prude Ranch has installed fiber optic lines, so you can better use phones and computers. The bad news? Prude Ranch has installed fiber optic lines so you can better use phones and computers. Resist the urge; allow the world to turn without you for five days.

**Lodging:** Ranges from charmingly rustic to delightfully beat up. No TVs, phones, etc. Feel free to bring your own stuffie or special pillow if that’s what you need to sleep comfortably. You’ll receive information about housekeeping services at registration. If you have room or maintenance needs/complaints/raves, report them to the Ranch office.

**Massage:** Available @ $65/session. Sign up early (Sunday’s activity fair is a good time) because the schedule fills up quickly, particularly toward the end of the week as aches turn to pains. Bring a set of sheets—both top and bottom—or pay an extra $5 if you prefer that the massage therapist supply them. Don’t use the sheets from your ranch beds. Or else.

**Meals:**To review: The food is very good. Also, there is plenty of it, and it is served at predictable times (check your schedule – which, BTW, you must print/download on your own this year – for details). While there are always vegetarian options, please note that those with special dietary needs (e.g., vegan, gluten-free) should plan to supplement the dining room food with their own edibles. If you forget, Ft. Davis has a surprisingly good natural food store, Stone Village.

Also: BYO ice chest to chill your personal beverages. (If you were to bring a bottle or two of wine to dinner, you wouldn’t be alone.) Don’t forget to thank DMFTCzar of Food Diane Weidner and, especially, the Prude Ranch kitchen staff, who toil like galley slaves to meet our outlandish caloric demands.

**Meal Times:**They vary somewhat with daily activities; serving times and locations will be posted on the schedule (did I mention…never mind). After dinner, feel free to linger and brag about your awesome athletic achievements and/or fascinating sports injuries, however, we ask that you please clear your dishes and trays by 7:30 p.m. so staff can wash and rest up to repeat the drill the following day.

**Orientation:** for everyone is at 5:30 p.m. Sunday, in the gym. Rookie orientation is at 8:00 p.m. – also in the gym -- and is mandatory for new campers. Don’t make us come find you.

**Skits:** A camp tradition, performed at the camp-end meeting Friday night. Often identifiable by ridiculous costumes and gentle mocking of staff members. All are welcome to plan/execute this art form; what other chance to have to perform in front of such a forgiving group of people?

**Strength Training Classes:**Bring those muscle-mashing rollers if you have them. There will be some equipment on hand, but if the class is large, sharing will be necessary.

**T-shirts**: Your fees cover one (1) of these unique and hand-designed collector’s items. Leftover DMFTC t-shirts will be available at attractive prices this year. So pack light and prepare to up your wardrobe game.

**Water bottles**: BYOWB

**Yoga/Pilates:** Classes for different levels, from Gumby to cedar plank; check your self-printed/already downloaded schedule book for details. Some equipment is provided, but our instructors strongly encourage you to bring your own mat if you have one, as well as any props you have (blankets, blocks, straps, painkillers, etc.).

**Volunteering*:***There is ample opportunity to help out during camp. Biking activities, in particular, depend on the kindness of campers. Track down our bike-meister, Mark Weidner, or activity manager, Tonya “TJ” Green, if you’re interested in helping out.