

Getaway weekend gets applause from writer!

BY KATHLEEN KING

The bags are packed and loaded in the trunk of the car. The kids are safely delivered to Grandma with kisses and hugs. The gas tank is full and the road beckons.

It's early, early, Saturday morning and the air is still crisp this March day. There is a can of soda and a bag of pretzels to munch on and the map is carefully marked with directions. The camera is in the glove compartment and it's time to go!

Finally, it's here. The "Weekend Away."

That one special, once a year, that you give to each other as a gift — maybe at a birthday, maybe at an anniversary, maybe just for the heck of it, but it's yours, all yours.

And if you don't go, you deserve to. It gives you breathing space from the stringent farm work, from the cows and the bills.

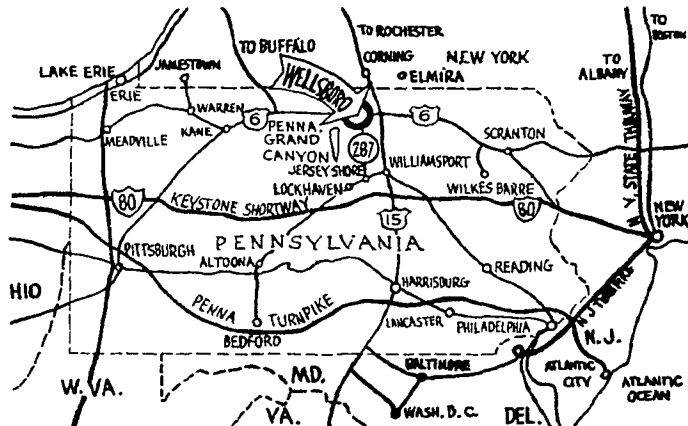
Ah, you might say, but who can afford it? Maybe, just maybe, you can spare the time away from the house, farm, business or job, but can you spare the dollars? Because of course it has to be expensive. Right?

Wrong.

This year's trek (we do it as an annual anniversary celebration each March) took my husband, Dana, and I to the perfect place for a weekend getaway. And for the night in the hotel, Saturday night buffet, Sunday morning brunch, it cost us only \$49.90, plus tax and gratuities.

And this is no flea-bitten hotel,

HOW TO REACH WELLSBORO



nor a half-hearted attempt at cooking. This is the finest that Tioga County has to offer — Wellsboro, and The Penn Wells Hotel.

Here is a town and accommodations that offer you everything you need for a quiet, relaxing weekend away.

There's a small town with a hotel originally built in 1869 that offers comfortable, modern accommodations. Downstairs is the dining room with crisp white tablecloths and softened light, that features a Saturday evening smorgasbord that will bust your britches.

And outside — well, there's the outdoors, all of it, right there — Pennsylvania scenery and outdoor living at its finest, and something for every season.

In the fall there's a show of spectacle and color that would but the Rockettes to shame — the changing of the "guard" at the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon with its 40-mile view of the Pine Creek. There's hunting, fishing, hiking, boating, snowmobiling, skiing, all depending on the season and your inclination.

And within another hour's drive is the Corning Glass Works Factory in Corning, NY, and a major wine producing area with wine testing tours if you so choose.

The trip itself is half the fun. It takes approximately four hours from the Lancaster area, where we came from. Above Harrisburg, on Routes 11/15 you travel beside the winding Susquehanna, visualizing the barges that traveled on the canal just beside your road.



Lost in the hills of Tioga County is Wellsboro, the county seat. Here, the stately white courthouse, still in operation, stands as a reminder of yesteryear.

Then west of Williamsport on Route 6, you catch Route 287, winding through the hills and valleys of Little Pine Creek Forest. It's a refreshing introduction to Tioga County. The forests on either side muffle the sound of your engine, a tiny, bubbling creek takes the turns and twists with you, an occasional iron bridge sings to you as this last hour of the four-hour drive whizzes by.

Then the countryside opens up and stretches out and there's Wellsboro. A tiny county seat founded in 1808, it still maintains

the nursery rhyme figures Winkin' Blinkin' and Nod.

A white courthouse flanks the common on one side and a dignified stone Episcopal church sits opposite — its red door an invitation to take a peek inside.

Along the boulevard dividing the main street are gas lights — burning by special permission of the PUC, long after other gas lights have been extinguished in other small Pennsylvania towns.

And on the street are a surprising number of shops and stores offering a wide variety of goods and merchandise for purchase or perusal.

But one of the nicest surprises about Wellsboro is your accommodations in the Penn-Wells Hotel.

The hotel is over a hundred years old and its lobby reflects the taste and glory of what a hotel used to be, in the age of elegance and coiffured ladies. The dark wood and red carpet invite you in and the Victorian aura entices you to stay.

But in spite of its age, the hotel is modern in every sense of the word. The rooms are spacious and comfortable, with closets that make you wish you could transplant them in your house. The bathrooms are clean, private, and well supplied. There's still one or two down the hall though if you want to look to see how the old time hotel guests had to wait their turn.



Across the street from the courthouse, this dignified, stone Episcopal Church beckons tourists to peer through its bright red doors.



The Penn Wells Hotel, host for the weekend getaway, offers guests a step into the Victorian era with its red carpets and simple elegance.

And then there's the food.

One of the best things about a getaway weekend is not having to cook or not having your wife beg you to take you out to dinner for a change. And here, there's no dishes to wash, no potatoes to peel and no lack of seconds.

You can eat anything you want and as much as you want on the buffet dinner laid out before you. There's salads of every description and breads and vegetables and meat. You can choose scallops, ham, chicken, or roast beef, sliced to your specification. Then, if you desire, go to the dessert table and forget you ever made a promise to loose ten pounds by your high school reunion.

And, if by some quirk, you are still hungry, go back for more.

The waitress will come and take away your plate between trips so you never feel guilty about how much you're eating, because you can't remember.

But don't forget, breakfast is more of the same. An array that would entice even your seven-year-old picky eater (if you take him or her along): french toast, eggs, creamed chipped beef, sausage, bacon, muffins, toast, coffee cake, juice, fresh fruit to name a few items and coffee, lots of coffee.

And it's all included in the bill. The only extras are tips and tax and beverages from the bar. If you take your children, (if you can't leave them behind) they stay free in your room if they're under 18. The cost for their meals is \$3.95 for Saturday dinner and \$2.50 for brunch if they're under 12. Over twelve they pay adult prices — \$3.95 for dinner and \$4.95 for brunch.

Not every moment is spent in the dining room, though.

Right in Wellsboro and the surrounding area, there's plenty to do to work off the inches gained at the table.

The major feature is the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon. Pine Creek has cut a 1,000-foot deep

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Homestead Notes



Here the writer's husband Dana is caught by the camera as he stands where so many thousands have stood through the years — at the overlook of Pennsylvania's Grand Canyon.