

## EAST OF EAST BEACH:

### Fort DeSoto Park – the Next Haulover?

by John Palm, President, Tampa Area Naturists

Tampa Area Naturists (TAN), affiliate of The Naturist Society (TNS) and the American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR), has been committed for nearly a decade now to establishing a clothing-optional section of beach in the Tampa Bay area. There are few suitable beaches around the bay except for Fort DeSoto Park south of St. Petersburg. This park has remote sections on its seven miles of beaches facing both Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. TAN recently adopted one of these remote sections and liked it so much that we decided that it would be a good place to hold monthly “Beach Parties”. Prior to this past spring we had used three different strategies, none of which had led to the full fruition of our goal. This had caused some of TAN’s original members to be on the verge of giving up and considering it a lost cause, but just when we were at our lowest point and our hope very nearly lost, our luck made a turn for the better.

The big turn-around began this past April when some fresh blood joined TAN’s Board, with experience in Oregon’s Rooster Rock in the Northwest and New York’s Lighthouse Beach in the Northeast, followed by the formation of

*Article continues on page 10*



**TAN beach clean-up volunteers Bob & Pauline Dugan, Will Perras, Charles Shanks and John Palm at Ft. DeSoto Park July 17th.**



Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a city that is completely clothing-optional? To be able to dress however you’re comfortable is a freedom few of us have had the opportunity to enjoy. I’ve fantasized about it for many years, especially when I have to spend time looking in the closet to figure out what to wear to work, or out to dinner, or shopping, or to the beach. Every time we leave our abodes, we make decisions on how to adorn our bodies. We open closet doors and dresser drawers and hunt for an appropriate ensemble to make us feel acceptable to whom-ever we may happen to meet.

I recently returned from Black Rock City in northeast Nevada, which is the largest clothing optional community in North America (population approximately 35,000 souls). The decision on what to wear was based solely on the weather. I needed a hat to protect me from the sun, shoes to protect my feet and a fanny pack to hold a few necessities. Simple nudity in BRC is completely acceptable. Too bad the city only exists for one week a year when it becomes host to the **Burning Man** Art Festival. The culture of the city is based on art, gifting and freedom of expression. Costumes are the normal mode of attire and the bike is the standard means of transportation.

*Article continues on page 4*

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## HAULOVER BEACH SUN CLUB

We hope you were able to join us at the Naturist Society's **Southern Naturist Gathering** at Lake Como Resort or at the **Columbus Day Regatta** at the beginning of October.

**October 29:** Join the Sun Club contingent in the Captain Morgan **Fantasy Fest**® Parade in Key West... The annual weird and wonderful spectacle of **Fantasy Fest**® takes place this year from October 21st through 30th. Official website: [www.fantasyfest.net](http://www.fantasyfest.net)

Check our website for updated event announcements through the end of 2005: [www.sffb.com/events.html](http://www.sffb.com/events.html)

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"The affirmation of the person is nothing but acceptance of the gift [of self], which, by means of reciprocity, creates the communion of persons...created from within, it comprises also the whole "exteriority" of man, that is, everything that constitutes the pure and simple nakedness of the body in its masculinity and femininity."

—Pope John Paul II: January 16, 1980 audience

"Naturism is a way of life in harmony with nature...with the intention of encouraging self-respect, respect for others, and for the environment."

—International Naturist Federation

"Body acceptance is the goal –  
nude recreation is the way."

—Lee Baxandall, founder of The Naturist Society

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Richard Mason

### *A Report: Status of Issues Concerning Haulover's Naturist Beach*

As the creators and mentors of Haulover Parks's designated Naturist family beach, it falls upon our organization to protect the reputation of the beach and to also serve as the "homeowners' association" of beach users.

We have all witnessed the continued growth in the number of people visiting the clothing-optional beach. This has put a strain on the physical resources of the park and on South Florida Free Beaches and its Beach Ambassador Program as well as its Government Affairs Chairman.

Knowing that Miami-Dade County operates on a strict budget, and that the fiscal year starts on October 1, 2005, we set about in March 2005 trying to get placed in the 2005/2006 Budget year the monies for those few items that we need to meet our health and safety requirements.

South Florida Free Beaches has had a pro-active program of meeting with government officials to represent the issues that are specific to our bit of paradise. **In March 2005:**

**SFFB met with Miami-Dade County Fire Chief Dan Cuoco, Beach Safety Chief** and his staff to discuss the issue of lifeguards and their new job description. Their job excludes them from being pro-active in policing the beach. Further, the issue of beach crowding came up and they would like to see the Naturist Beach expanded to reduce density. We requested support for our effort to have police assigned to Haulover Beach Park through the budget.

**SFFB met with Miami-Dade County Police Major Glen Theobald** of the Intracoastal District and his staff and requested to have police stationed in Haulover Beach Park late afternoon and evenings. We were advised that the police department operating protocol is to respond to calls. They have a uniform policeman drive through the park on every shift. But they have no one stationed in the park, except on an occasional basis. This becomes a budget issue for the Park Department. Our issue is that if there are no police in the park when you call, we have to wait 30 minutes or more for an officer to arrive.

**SFFB met with Park Department Director Vivian Donnell Rodriguez and Chief of Operations Jack Kardys.** One purpose was to advance the implementation of items that SFFB lobbied for in 2001 and that **have already been approved by the County Commission since February 2002**, including a new rest room building and the extension of the Naturist beach area. We also requested budgeting of Miami-Dade Police for Haulover Park into the Park Department budget.

At that time, we were denied our request for funds to be budgeted for police in the Park Department Budget, because they claim not to have the funds. (But read on below under NASDAQ.) They were talking about restrooms in 2007. We informed them that this is unacceptable. The Miami-Dade County Park Department has been dragging its feet for over 8 years on the construction of the new restroom building and other needs in the park. Where's the Bond money?

**That was when SFFB initiated its Petition Drive for Haulover Park improvements and budgeted police protection.**

**SFFB has written to and contacted elected officials in the cities of Sunny Isles Beach, Bal Harbour, Bay Harbor Islands, North Miami, North Miami Beach, and Aventura**, seeking their support on the issues that were in our petition.

**SFFB has also had a representative at several Miami-Dade League of Cities meetings**, lobbying and educating officials from the 33 municipalities in Miami-Dade County.

I met with representatives of the Northeast Dade Coalition of Condominium Associations, as well as the principals of the Dezer-Trump organization, condominium developers in Sunny Isles, to educate and seek their support on Haulover Park safety issues.

The latest word from the Park Department is that the restroom should go out for bid at the end of 2005. (However, we were shown a design for the new restroom in Spring 2004! Granted, the design was critiqued and modified, but should this take more than a year?) Meanwhile, at least we got them to provide portables to help somewhat. It was suggested they might be able to budget \$40,000 annually for police. **This wouldn't buy much protection!** Haulover Beach Park is generating in excess of \$1.3 million dollars in parking revenue from the Naturist visitors each year, and we feel the visitors deserve better than this.

A public record request has shown that the two-week-long 2005 **NASDAQ Tennis Tournament** at Crandon Park – a privately-sponsored event – cost the county \$665,000: \$213,000 for Miami-Dade Police overtime to direct traffic – while we can't even get a cop to direct traffic weekends at the dangerous north parking lot exit – plus a loss of \$452,000 in the Park Department budget for the event. While this event is good for tourism, it should have been funded by the Resort Development Tax – money that the county is apparently now storing up to give to the Florida Marlins – a privately-held corporation – to build a baseball stadium.

*President's Message concludes on page 6*



## BURNING MAN 2005: FREEDOM TO SOAR ...continued from front page

Body parts are celebrated. For instance, I participated in the *Critical Tits Parade* with a thousand other women. We rode our bikes topless through the town and were cheered on by all, stopping for breaks and drinks at host camps along the way. The following day was the *Critical Dicks Parade* where the guys were applauded for their contribution to the propagation of the human race. Thousands participated in *The World's Largest Naked Bike Ride* in protest of high gasoline prices on August 31<sup>st</sup>. (This was actually a delayed participation in the **World Naked Bike Ride**, which otherwise took place in more than 50 cities across the world on June 11<sup>th</sup> – from Auckland, New Zealand to Zargoza, Spain, from St. Petersburg, Russia to St. Petersburg, Florida: [www.worldnakedbikeride.org](http://www.worldnakedbikeride.org) )

I went to seminars, dances, classes, bars, art exhibits and meals dressed only in my skin. I was not accosted, harassed or disrespected in any way. I was treated as just another member of the community, welcomed as I was with no comment on my choice of undress one way or another. What a treat!

This year we decided to join the *HeeBeeGeeBee Healers*, a group of people mostly from Colorado whose mission was to offer the community their services as healers. They had classes in meditation, offered Reiki, massage, energy work, spiritual counseling, yoga sessions, etc. Our job was to work in the kitchen and feed the healers. When we applied to be part of this group I told them we were nudists and would like to feel free to dress comfortably. They said, "No problem!" So we took them at their word and felt accepted and respected. We also met an old friend from Haulover, Sugandha Landman, at the HeeBeeGeeBee village.

Everyone is expected to be self-sufficient in regard to shelter, food and water, so all become precious. Because water is at a premium (they hauled enough in for 100 people for a whole week), showering is a luxury. They built a community shower where sun shower bags were warmed in the sun and people were encouraged to shower

with a friend. For those modest few, there were shower curtains for privacy, but in general body acceptance abounded.

The alternative was to go to the *Human Carcass Wash Camp* a couple blocks away. At scheduled times they would wash your bod' using their water and elbow grease – you supplied your own soap, shampoo, towel, etc. This group of people took the responsibility of gathering the "gray" water and dumping it into evaporation pools that they constructed. Because it is a Leave No Trace camping environment, no foreign matter may be left behind, including soapy, dirty water. It took a lot of work to set up the Human Carcass Wash and man it for the benefit of the unwashed masses of BRC. They set up a large community tent and hauled in all the water, not to mention their own shelters, food and water. Volunteer washers were recruited from those that had been washed to wash the next in line. I heard no mention of any inappropriate behavior, and a lot of comments on what fun it was.

On my way to some event one day, I happened upon a camp that offered free rides on a contraption they built. They erected a platform out of scaffolding and plywood about 30 feet high from which a brave soul could hang onto a T-bar attached to a pulley which rode a cable about 200 feet ending at a mattress on a wall to cushion their landing. This is not for the faint hearted. As I approached, I saw a young woman at the edge of the platform poised for the trip. She was nude. A small group of passers-by had stopped to watch and were cheering her bravery. The fact that she was doing it naked only added to their admiration. She made the trip without incident and landed safely and bowed for the spectators. Can you imagine the uproar of righteous citizens if that were to happen anywhere else? She would have been hauled to jail and charged with indecent exposure (if she was lucky) or lewd and lascivious behavior, with her name appearing on child predator lists in her hometown – if she happened to live in Daytona Beach, for example. In Black Rock City she was extolled for her feat.

MoMo and Norma



Doug Mitchell and MoMo



Sugandha and Doug



## BURNING MAN 2005 ...conclusion

The standard mores of our conventional life were present in the form of “do no harm to others.” Peace was encouraged by volunteer *Black Rock Rangers* who have been trained in mediation, negotiation and defusing volatile situations. These are the weapons used to preserve the peace. There were federal officers around to enforce any environmental infractions because we were on government land. There were state police officers to handle any incidents the Rangers referred to them, but I personally didn’t notice their presence. I felt safe at all times.

I didn’t go to Burning Man because it’s clothing optional. That was just an unexpected benefit. I went for the art and the experience of living in a non-commercial community where freedom of expression is not only allowed but encouraged.



**Sugandha & Norma at a roadside reggae party**

It was an exercise in self-sufficiency and tolerance. Even though the environment is extremely harsh, with temperatures from the upper 90’s in the day to lower 40’s at night, and with dangerous white-out conditions from dust storms, 35,000 people found it worthwhile to be there. Freedom is a strong motivator, especially now when our civil rights and many of the freedoms we’ve taken for granted are being denied us in the name of homeland security and eminent domain (just to name a couple).

Take a look at [www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com) to find out what it takes to participate in this event. You’ll find a survival guide for first timers and the philosophy of Burning Man. The event has been growing for 17 years, starting on a beach in San Francisco, and it’s still going strong. You get out of it what you put into it and every citizen is expected to volunteer some of their time for the support of the community. It’s so far removed from our world that it feels like being either on Mars or in a Mad Max movie. For those of you who are experience freaks, don’t miss it. And you can do it naked!





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ...conclusion

During the week of August 28, we faxed and mailed a letter to each county commissioner requesting support for our Petition requests and specifically requesting \$240,000 be placed in the budget for police at Haulover. On September 6, 2005, we delivered a set of 800 petitions to each county commissioner along with a cover letter requesting their support for the issues outlined in the petition. The printing of the petition copies cost us \$680 and a tremendous amount of pro-bono time. Further, on Sept. 6, I spoke before the Board of County Commissioners at their budget hearing on the same issues, requesting they fund the police and set up a committee of the Board to review the infrastructure of Haulover Beach Park.

South Florida Free Beaches is a 25 years old non-profit Florida corporation, and its creation, Haulover's Naturist Beach, is 14 years old. While we maintain a paid lobbyist in Tallahassee to represent our issue and to keep us from being blind-sided with another anti-nudity bill, we don't have a paid lobbyist in Miami-Dade County. Miami-Dade County functions to please special interests based on the power of the lobbyist representing those interests. Unfortunately, that's the reality, and why in the allocation of funds between NASDAQ and Haulover Beach users, the score stands at forty-love.

It is time we get more aggressive in demanding those basic services and amenities that we as citizens and tourists deserve. This will require SFFB hiring a local lobbyist. This will take a lot of money. However, this will enable us to stay on top of the Park Department, in making sure that improvements and basic needs are met.

In the meantime BEACHES Foundation has been quietly raising funds and getting amenities for the health, safety and convenience of the beach-going public: electric beach wheelchairs, chickee huts, and soon showers on the beach.

All special interest groups are only as strong as their membership size and the financial support they get from those whose interest they represent.

If you are not now a member, we are asking you to consider becoming a member of South Florida Free Beaches or a financial supporter of our association. You will find an application/donor form on the facing page.

**With a membership donation of \$35.00 we are giving as a free gift, a 18 can soft-side insulated beach cooler. The same gift goes with any minimum donation of \$35.00 to our Legal Defense & Political Action Fund.**

Copies of our correspondence to local officials can be seen by visiting [www.sffb.com/petition.html](http://www.sffb.com/petition.html).



**Park Department Region 3 Manager Tim Byrnes tests the Beach Cruzr® wheelchair on the sand at Haulover Park's naturist beach**

## ELECTRIC BEACH WHEELCHAIRS

For several years, a manual push-type beach wheelchair has been available at lifeguard stand 27.

**Disabled users of Haulover Beach now have access to two electric beach wheelchairs that may be driven on the sand.** The wheelchairs are stored next to the lifeguard headquarters off the walk path just south of the naturist beach area, and their use is managed by the Park Department on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Call the park office to use a chair: 305-947-3525.**

*If you have any difficulties in obtaining a chair, call:*  
Jim Hoover, Park Manager: 305-394-9127 or  
Andrew Clarke, Asst. Park Manager: 786-457-2854

The electric beach wheelchairs were obtained by B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation, with funding assistance by the taxpayers of Miami-Dade County through a Park Department Capital Improvement Grant. In Spring 2004, B.E.A.C.H.E.S. volunteers assembled the chairs and storage cabinet, but availability had to await a review by the Park Department ADA official (although the identical chairs had been tested for six months and approved by the City of San Diego Risk Management Office for disabled use several years ago), and a decision by the Park Department on how the chairs would be managed. It had been originally planned to have the lifeguards handle the chairs, but this was before the lifeguards were transferred from the Park Department to the Fire Department.

Beach Cruzr® info: [www.hotshotproducts.org](http://www.hotshotproducts.org)

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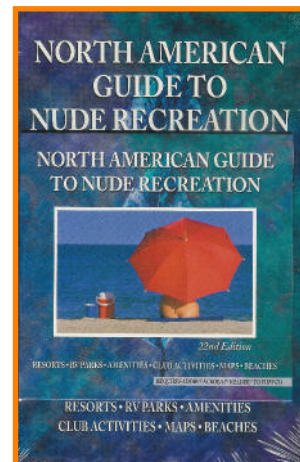
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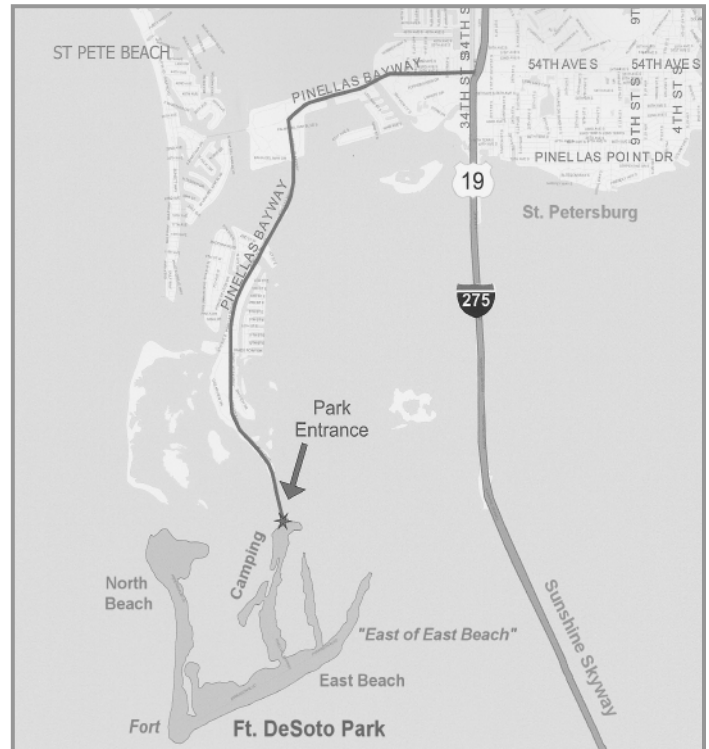


## Fort DeSoto Park ...continued from front page

a new coalition called the **Tampa Area Clothing Optional Beach Alliance** (or TACOBA). Reading like a “Who’s Who of American Naturism”, this coalition is comprised of a distinguished list of Naturist leaders representing the country’s premiere Naturist organizations. In addition to the individual Board Members of TAN, this list includes such heavyweights as Morley Schloss (Board Member of the Naturist Action Committee), Richard Mason (President of South Florida Free Beaches), Erich Schuttauf (Executive Director of AANR) and Patricia Orner (Coordinator of the AANR Government Affairs Team). Through the expert guidance of these hugely talented individuals, TAN has been given newfound hope.

The restoration of TAN’s hope came by way of being taught a tried-and-true formula that has worked repeatedly for establishing clothing-optional beaches around the country. TAN, needless to say, eagerly adopted this strategy after extensive consultation with the Naturist leaders of TACOBA. This strategy entails: (1) adopting a more remote beach location, (2) performing regular beach clean-ups, and (3) using a start-up policy of *Cover For Rangers, Cover For Strangers* with the goal of maintaining a *Zero Complaint Policy*. Morley Schloss reports that “This strategy has consistently worked well” at beaches such as Cape Cod National Seashore and Cape Canaveral National Seashore. Schloss also states that picking a remote location with low user conflict is “important in establishing a Naturist beach”. Richard Mason describes the reasoning behind covering as “action, reaction”. Mason explains, “You must protect the ranger from the following question: ‘Have you seen anyone nude in the park?’ ” and goes on to say “You want them to be able to be truthful and say ‘No.’ Because if they answer ‘Yes’ then the questions following can create problems for them” – and for TAN. You see, just like Cape Cod and Cape Canaveral’s Playalinda Beach, Fort DeSoto also currently has a rule against nudity in the park, but in Mason’s words, “As long as the rangers know that you are playing the game of ‘cover-up’ they will most likely leave you alone.” Similarly, Schloss adds, “Naturist beaches, whether or not they are in areas where they are legal, are established by being used (becoming traditional) and by maintaining positive relationships with rangers and others directly responsible for the beaches.” He continues: “If Naturists are seen as helpful, making beaches safer and cleaner for all, rangers will likely avoid conflict.”

TAN’s ultimate goal is to have just five words added to the Pinellas County Park Code and these words would be to exempt “areas designated as clothing-optional”. Yet TAN realizes that, just as the famous Haulover Beach in North Miami required about ten years of clothing-optional use to obtain official recognition by the County Commission, so



too will Fort DeSoto likely require nearly ten years of clothing-optional use before these five words can be added and official county signage can be posted.

TAN is calling the chosen clothing-option area **East of East Beach** – starting at Fort DeSoto’s East Beach, one turns left (east) and walks about 2 blocks. We adopted this section on July 17<sup>th</sup> for our future hopes of a Naturist sanctuary and performed a beach clean-up there, collecting eight bags of garbage totaling an estimated 100 pounds. This beach faces south towards Tampa Bay with a picture-perfect view of the Sunshine Skyway. If you’re lucky, you might even be there in time to spot a cruise ship setting out on its way out into the Gulf of Mexico.

This area is an absolutely beautiful beach with a wide expanse of soft sand and some Australian Pines that provide a very nice shady picnic area, with the most fascinating ecosystem at Fort DeSoto. There are sea grasses just off shore that are home to snails, crabs and fish and this sea life attracts wading birds like Great Blue Herons and predatory birds like Osprey – *and Naturists too*. I’ve seen Dolphins feeding just offshore here several times. Bring a raft, and a mask and snorkel to enjoy up-close viewing of the underwater sea life.

TAN is developing a Beach Ambassador Program tailored after the highly successful Haulover (South Florida Free Beaches) model. A handbook for Beach Ambassadors adapted from SFFB’s original manual is nearly complete. Beach Ambassadors will serve as the eyes and ears of the

## Fort DeSoto Park ...conclusion – See Beach Party pictures on page 12

beach to ensure that Naturist Etiquette shows Naturist beach users in the best possible shining light. TAN Board Member Ken Kushman writes, "Soon there will be a Beach Ambassador present each weekend day to provide guidance and help gain acceptance for c/o use of this BEACH." TAN also has plans to have the Beach Ambassadors attend a Crime Watch workshop conducted by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. TAN has been keeping the section of roadway leading into Fort DeSoto clean for several years through the Adopt-A-Highway program as well and has plans for demonstrating further good will by organizing volunteers to help with the eradication of invasive Brazilian Pepper trees through the program called "Pepper Busters". What's more, it is also a corporate sponsor of the Friends of Fort DeSoto.

TAN has scheduled its monthly "Beach Parties" for the fourth Sunday of every month, and we held our first ever such event on Sunday, August 28<sup>th</sup>. We had eight Naturists in attendance that day for what turned out to be a wonderful day at the beach. As far as dress code, TAN's policy neither encourages nor discourages nude use, but remains neutral. We say, "Beach attire (or the lack thereof) is a matter of personal choice and personal responsibility". We were able to enjoy the beach au naturel all day long during this first Beach Party with only a brief episode of needing to cover up when a ranger drove by once. Kushman reported that "The Rangers have observed us covering up when they approach, and have been happy to pass us by without incident". TAN plans to hold monthly Ft. DeSoto Beach Parties, and expects a gradually increasing number of participants as the word gets out. As the crowds grow, TAN is expecting the fulfillment of Schloss' prediction that "rangers will likely become aware and tolerant of the clothes-free use".

TAN's East of East Beach will be highlighted during the TNS Southern Naturist Gathering's feature Beach Trip departing from Lake Como Nudist Resort on Sunday,

October 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM. TAN will be providing maps and directions (and possibly rides) for all who want to be among the first to see what we hope will become America's next great Naturist beach. Come on out and see it for yourself. You'll like what you see!

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## Tampa Area Naturists Ft. DeSoto Park Beach Party – August 28, 2005



*Above right:*

Claire Lester, Art Umberger, Ken Kushman & Marion Hagans of TAN & guests Catalina and Peter at the TAN-designated naturist beach.

*Left :*

TAN President & NAC area rep. John Palm with Sunshine Skyway in background (*above*) and with TAN beach party group (*below*).



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## **Editorial: WHERE'S THE BEACH?**

Where are the clothing-optional beaches on the gulf coast? Why isn't there a naturist beach where I live? Questions like these are among the most frequent we hear at Haulover.

**Really!** Do you actually think that any government agency in this country is going to choose a beach area and put up a **Welcome! Naturist Beach** sign on its own? In France or Germany, yes, but not here, at least not yet.

Every public clothing-optional beach area in the U.S. was pioneered by citizens: forty years ago, a small group might just claim a remote area, try to keep a low profile, and hope no one would hassle them. Encroaching development, image-driven politicians, anti-nudity activists and user inaction (and sometimes ill-advised actions) have led to the elimination of most of these informal naturist areas that once dotted states like Florida, Hawaii and California..

Do naturists deserve to have clothing-optional beaches? Do snowmobilers deserve access to pristine national parks? Does a sports franchise deserve millions of taxpayer dollars to build a stadium for its fans (and its own profit)? Forget the philosophical questions—it's a matter of clout, lobbying, determination—and a plan.

Today, it's necessary to be armed with legal information, crime statistics, studies, polls, petitions, and financial benefit analyses. It's necessary to be ready to address concerns, to prepare for contingencies, and to influence local leaders positively. That's why Haulover's clothing-optional beach exists: because South Florida Free Beaches designated it in 1991; because SFFB fought arrests in 1992; because SFFB lobbied the county until it finally permitted us to erect signs in 1993; because SFFB hired a lobbyist when anti-nudity legislation was proposed in Tallahassee in 1994; because SFFB fought the annexation and commercialization of Haulover by Sunny Isles when it incorporated—now a dormant, but still lurking threat.

Popular existing naturist beaches like Haulover, Playalinda (FL), Mazo Beach (WI), and Wreck Beach (Canada) have one thing in common – an active local naturist group.

So, if you'd like to have a clothing-optional beach in your community, you can do one of two things: You can bitch because no one else is doing anything to start one, and do nothing yourself...

Or, you can get active! Join one of the naturist groups working to establish new, or preserve existing, public clothing-optional use areas. Support those naturist organizations that lobby to keep our rights, like SFFB/FNA and NAC ([www.naturistsociety.com/NAC](http://www.naturistsociety.com/NAC)).

For more information on local naturist groups, see the listings at [www.sffb.com/links.html](http://www.sffb.com/links.html). Or talk to one of our Beach Ambassadors at the beach.

## **The Naked Truth on Family Nudity: Our expert resolves one mom and dad's disagreement about being naked in front of their kids.**

**by Holly Robinson**

[MSN Family online – <http://family.msn.com>]

**Q.** My wife thinks there's nothing wrong with taking a bath naked with our two boys, even though they are now 1 and 3. Frankly, this makes me uncomfortable. I say it's time she covered up in front of our children, but she thinks I'm being a prude. How can we resolve this difference without arguing about it anymore?

**A.** You'd probably never see this question in a European magazine, muses sex therapist Dennis Sugrue, PhD, clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan Medical School and coauthor of **Sex Matters for Women** (Guilford Press, 2002). Despite our culture's constant barrage of sexy media images, "here in the United States, we get pretty uptight when it comes to baring it all," he observes.

"Yet, the truth is that nudity in the home, when handled in a respectful, matter-of-fact way, is perfectly natural and certainly not harmful." In fact, research suggests\* that children who have seen their parents nude do not grow up to be emotionally scarred, but instead are more likely to be accepting of their own bodies and comfortable with their own sexuality.

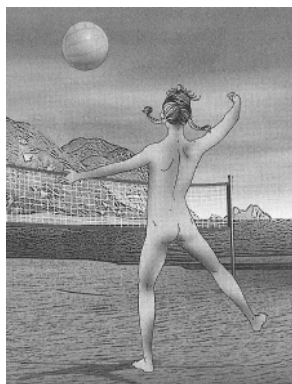
If your wife is fine being naked around your sons, they won't think anything of it, other than showing some natural curiosity about body differences. ("Hey, why do only boys have penises?") Nudity is not the same thing as sexuality. However, if you're uncomfortable about her nudity, your sons will pick up on that, and may start feeling shame or increased curiosity.

Use this issue as a springboard for clarifying your values and how you and your wife will teach them to your children. What is it about your wife's nudity in front of the kids that bothers you most? For instance, if seeing her naked makes you lusty, then of course you'll feel weird having those feelings around your children. Alternatively, why does she feel so relaxed about it? Sharing your own most formative sexual experiences – both good and bad – will help you both think things through.

\*Story, M.D. (1979) *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 108, 49-56 is one often cited empirical study. For a review of research on this issue see Okami (1995) *The Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 32, no. 1, 51-64. [the editor]



## BOOK REVIEW *by Michael Kush*



### **NAKEDNESS** *In an Historical, Hygienic, Moral and Artistic Light*

*by*  
**Richard Ungewitter**

*"It is a disgrace that things have gone so far [in your country] that a sunbath in open nature is considered shameful and can be punished by the police. Here in Sweden, these unnatural conditions do not exist; even in city pools in our country town both sexes swim without bathing suits...Whoever comes here can simply leave his bathing suit at home, they are not appropriate here and would only arouse unpleasant attention."*

A contemporary letter from a European visitor complaining about prudish American attitudes and customs? No: this letter (quoted by Ungewitter) was written as a comment on conditions prevailing in Germany in 1905.

Now, a century after its original German publication, Ungewitter's **Die Nacktheit** has finally been translated into English. It's a short work of 83 pages; the balance of the new edition is filled out by Cec Cinder's informative 65-page introduction and newly-commissioned drawings. The latter are of marginal interest, and it's unfortunate that the original 1905 illustrations, to which Ungewitter sometimes refers, couldn't be reproduced here.

So, is "The First Nudist Book" and "The Old Testament of Nudism" – as it is touted on the cover of the current edition – still worth reading today? The reader should be warned: There is some nonsense in Ungewitter's book, such as his chauvinistic Nordic theory of man's origin, and some uncomfortable almost proto-Nazi comments on eugenics. It is, however, far more important to place the nudism of Ungewitter within the broader social milieu of his time: the industrial age, when many had been forced to turn from farming and other open-air work to the often stifling conditions of the city factory, living in packed tenements and working long hours under poor artificial light, forced by society to wear heavy and uncomfortable clothing both summer and winter, and seldom seeing the sun.

Nudism was a broad cultural movement for liberation, self-improvement, and a more natural life: *Nacktkultur* (nude culture), or *Freikörperkultur* (free body culture). It

condemned unhealthy lifestyles. (Ungewitter explains how he gradually gave up tobacco, alcohol, coffee, and animal food.) It encouraged outdoor exercise. It recommended clothing reform (this was the time of tight-laced corsets) and open-air sunbathing for physical health. It advocated an honest and open discussion of our sexuality. And it promoted nudism for psychological health.

It's interesting that today many of these *ur*-nudist priorities have been realized and co-opted into the mainstream of society. At least in word if not always in deed, we pay more attention to nutrition and exercise. We can dress much more comfortably. We can sunbathe and swim in costumes that expose more than just our forearms and calves. Sex is no longer a taboo subject.

Yet the fig leaf of shame and false modesty still remains. Ungewitter describes people of his time as disembodied faces enveloped by voluminous textile cocoons – one seldom saw a bare arm or leg; no wonder the contemplation of a naked calf could be arousing! Today, the fig leaf has shrunk considerably. Yet the taboo still works to the same powerful effect. "Decency" activists lobby legislators to keep our beachwear options confined to respectable shorts and modest bikinis – beachwear that would have been considered indecent in many places a century ago! That we are born with genitals is an embarrassment. Artists who depict the whole natural human form still risk the wrath of the sensitive, and puerile reporters can yet be found to sensationalize nudist resorts and clothing-optional beaches.

Naturists still tout the psychological and social benefits of nudism: it's not nudity that's indecent, it's the fig-leaf mentality that insists on making obscene what is only natural. And prudery doesn't even equal safety: In more European nations (where sexual violence and teen pregnancy are typically lower than in the U.S.), the presence of families with children at naturist beaches is unexceptional, unproblematic, and expected. Yet many Americans now seem to view nudism as an "adult" activity – a fun but slightly naughty recreational alternative. (Just don't tell the kids you enjoy it.)

This is an interesting attitude reversal from the days, not so long ago, when Norman Rockwell could illustrate skinny-dipping children on a *Saturday Evening Post* cover, and when American grandmothers could proudly display their treasured photos of naked infant grandchildren, without being judged to be perverts by the self-righteous.

---

**Nakedness (*Die Nacktheit*)** by Richard Ungewitter

*Translation: Tessa Wilson; Introduction: Cec Cinder;*

*Illustrations: Bill Turner*

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