

Nudist Research Pays Off

My first nudist experience was an event that took almost twenty years to bring about. As a kid, like most of us, I splashed around nude in a wading pool in the backyard. I also lived in Ohio where the temperature often soared above 100 degrees. Sleeping nude was about survival! I remember it being so hot and sticky, at times, that anything touching my skin was annoying and made it difficult to sleep. Even the mattress was hot and I wished I had the power to levitate above it, suspended with nothing but the breeze from a fan blowing around me. But it wasn't until a fateful trip to the library that I thought of nudity as anything more than the absence of clothes.

In my house, when I was a kid, books were sacrosanct. Everybody read. All the time. Thus I had very good reading skills well above my grade and age. When it came time to get a library card, my mother neglected to request a "juvenile" card for me. Unlike my peers I was given an adult card, which meant I was free to take any book from the library. Now my mother believed that I would only read books that were of interest to me. If I could read it and understand it, then I was old enough to check it out. For the most part this was true and I spent much of my library time in the history section which was right next to sociology.

In the sociology section one finds books on culture and customs. And that is where I found one on Nudism. It was a dry tome that suggested people actually like to run around in the nude with other people. My 11 year old curiosity was piqued. So, I went to the card catalog to look up other books. Back then, I could surf the library card catalog as deftly as I can surf the internet today. And my search yielded on other book. But stamped on the card were the words: "Locked Case". Oh oh! I would have to ask for this one.

I filled out a request slip and handed it to the Librarian. She looked at the title and then at me and back to the title, which I remember as being: A History of Social Nudism. I flashed her my adult card and she sniffed and got up from her desk. A moment later she returned with a small, green, cloth covered book. She handed it to me silently and I retreated to a table.

There were a few pictures. All were black and white. Some had been edited but most were not. In the pictures, everyone was smiling and happy. People played volleyball or shuffleboard or enjoyed picnics and gardens. I was sold on it. Especially since it was a winter Saturday and I was shut up in a library when it was twenty below zero outside.

I took the book home where I had a month to read it. I learned that Nudism was social movement and had it's roots in nineteenth century Europe. Nudism was a philosophy of life and already well established in America in 1974. Unfortunately, the book had a California slant and seemed to discuss California clubs only. I didn't know at that time that any clubs existed in Ohio. But I distinctly remember the name of one club: Olive Dell Ranch.

I returned the book a month later vowing that some day I would visit a Nudist club, or colony, as the book insisted. If you had told me in January 1974 that I would someday be the president of a West Coast nudist club, I would not have laughed at you, but would have asked: How soon?

Many years it turns out. From the time I was 17 until I was 30 I was buried in school and work. For many years, I worked two jobs and rarely had weekends or holidays off to pursue hobbies or interests. It was only when I had just one good paying job with most weekends off that I pursued my first actual visit to a nudist park. Annoyingly, most had restrictive membership requirements and such. But I persisted and found one to visit from time to time.

When I moved out west, I found LARC.

This year, after waiting thirty-two years, I am finally going to visit Olive Dell Ranch.

Matt. R.