

GRASSROOTS NATURISM

A Guide For the TNS Volunteer



Updated 2010

Grassroots Naturism: A Guide for the TNS Volunteer

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INTRODUCTION:

THE NATURIST VOLUNTEER

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Naturism has always been a grassroots affair. Indeed, without volunteers at the local and regional levels, naturism as we know it would not exist. There might be such a thing as nude recreation, but it would not be informed by the community spirit that is central to the naturist ethos.

Thus this handbook, a primer for the naturist volunteer. My hope for this booklet is that it live up to its title—*Grassroots Naturism: A Guide for the TNS Volunteer*. If that goal is met, if this guide proves useful to naturists in the communities in which they live, this undertaking will have been a success.

If it is, much of the credit must go to the TNS Member Advisory Board, which offered valuable comment and criticism along the way.

As for whatever shortcomings may appear on the following pages, I take full responsibility. I do so, however, with one caveat. I ask that any errors of omission or commission found on these pages be brought to my attention so improvements can be made in future editions. As an organization predicated on member participation, your help is more than useful—it is essential.

Naturally,

Debbie Jungwirth
Membership Coordinator
The Naturist Society

CHAPTER ONE

A HISTORY OF THE NATURIST SOCIETY

CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURIST SOCIETY: A HISTORY

“When the culture into which we are born strays too far from nature’s laws, we suffer; ‘naturalization’ is in order.” — TNS founder Lee Baxandall

Officially, The Naturist Society was formed in 1980. Unofficially, however, it goes back much further, to the American “free beach” movement of the 1970s and, earlier still, to a back-to-nature ethos that emerged in Europe during the industrial revolution.

Perhaps its most recognizable forerunner was the free-body culture movement, which flourished in Germany at the turn of the last century. This Freikokultur, or FKK, was a sometimes studied, sometimes spontaneous reaction to the excesses of a rapidly industrializing society. Cut off from nature and increasingly urbanized, many Germans of the pre-Nazi era responded by embracing life in the great outdoors—sans clothing.

To be sure, there was more to it than that. Nudity of the FKK variety was accompanied by a renewed emphasis on fitness and health, and a growing appreciation of the natural world. There were nude hikes and visits to the beach, nude exercise regimens, and an overreaching belief that the naked human form should be nurtured and respected, not scorned as coarse and sinful.

In America, such a mindset was slow to develop. Nudist campgrounds did exist here, but there was nothing that could be described as a movement. “Nudism” in America was cloistered and secretive; not quite an underground activity but far from mainstream. It wasn’t until the 1960s, a time of intense social, cultural, and political ferment that attitudes began to change. And in the forefront of that change was Lee Baxandall, the man who would go on to form The Naturist Society.

Working in New York as a writer, editor and critic, Baxandall would make occasional forays to Cape Cod with his wife and their young son. There the three took up skinny-dipping and made friends with a small

but dedicated group of like-minded people. Fast forward to 1974 and the outline of what was to become TNS starts to take form. That was the year when official attempts to ban skinny-dipping at the Cape Cod National Seashore intensified. It was also the year Baxandall became a free-beach activist.

With a background in writing and editing and a knack for organizing, Baxandall was soon much in demand in free-beach circles. It was, of course, a pre-Internet world, and getting the word out about free beaches and how to protect them was a daunting task. As luck would have it, it was a task well suited to Baxandall's talents.

Using ad hoc beach newspapers, beach protests, and on one occasion in 1976 a special "skinny-dipper issue" of a quarterly social issues magazine he co-founded, Baxandall emerged as an influential voice in the rapidly growing free-beach movement.

Soon, he found himself in the middle of such seminal naturist events as the formation of the Free the Free Beach Committee; created to save skinny-dipping on Cape Cod; the inauguration of National Nude Weekend in 1976 (now Nude Recreation Week); and the founding of the Free Beaches Documentation Center, a kind of clearinghouse for North American naturists.

Located in Oshkosh, Wis., Baxandall's hometown, the documentation center set the stage for TNS. Baxandall had returned to Oshkosh to help with the family business, a vocational education marketing and advertising company. By happy coincidence, the family business worked closely with printers and publishers, and that gave Baxandall an idea: why not expand his role as head of the documentation center by becoming a publisher for the growing North American free-beach movement?

With that were born two important publications. The first was the *World Guide to Nude Beaches and Recreation*, which soon became a best-selling travel guide and remains one of the most respected resources of its kind. The second, *Clothed With the Sun* (now *Nude & Natural*, or "N"), was a quarterly formed to promote a culture of body acceptance, with nude recreation and living at its core. Launched in 1981, the magazine is today a cornerstone of TNS, which was incorporated the previous year with Baxandall as owner and president.

From the beginning, The Naturist Society was dedicated to a form of naturism that focused on grassroots activism and member participation. The choice of the word “naturist” in the name is telling. The term was widely used in Europe to denote family-friendly, body-friendly places, activities, and attitudes and, at the same time, it was free of the negative connotations “nudist” had acquired over the years.

In the 30 years since its founding, TNS has changed with the times. To underscore its mission as a member organization dedicated to family-friendly nude recreation, TNS launched annual Gatherings at select clubs and resorts across the United States. Today, these get-togethers are central to the TNS experience, offering workshops and an array of social, recreational, and cultural activities—all clothing-optional, of course. In the early '90s, faced with growing opposition to nude recreation from the religious right, two allied organizations were formed. The nonprofit Naturist Action Committee became TNS' legal, political, and lobbying adjunct, while the Naturist Education Foundation, also a nonprofit, took up the challenge of educating a sometimes-skeptical public about naturism.

At the turn of the new century that challenge and others were being met in many ways—through local and regional groups in TNS' Naturist Network, through legal and lobbying activities, through opinion surveys that underscore widespread public tolerance of nude use on select public lands, and through educational and informational efforts that stress the family-friendly nature of TNS-style naturism.

In early 2002 Baxandall retired, turning the administration of TNS over to Nicky Hoffman Lee and Margaret Thornton. The TNS commitment to naturism and its emphasis on member involvement remains as strong as ever. Looking ahead, the challenge is to energize TNS' existing members while recruiting new ones.

Like any organization, TNS must adapt to change but that doesn't mean we'll lose sight of our core principles. That central idea, first articulated by Lee, still guides The Naturist Society: “Body acceptance is the idea; nude recreation is the way.”

CHAPTER TWO

AMONG FRIENDS

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How You Can Help

Naturism and volunteerism go hand in hand. And nowhere is that more obvious—and more essential—than at the group level. Simply put, without volunteers to organize meetings, sponsor parties and outings, and print and distribute newsletters, there are no groups. *

As a volunteer, you know that. But what you might not know is how to channel your enthusiasm as a naturist volunteer into constructive activities. The purpose of this chapter is to help you get started.

A good starting point for any volunteer is a bit of honest self-appraisal. Ask yourself: “What am I good at; what are my skills and aptitudes, and how can I make them mesh with my group?”

Sometimes the answer is obvious. If you have a background in writing and editing, for example, you might want to help with your group’s newsletter. Or maybe you have management experience. That would dovetail nicely with the organizational skills needed to chair meetings, draft agendas, or help arrange group outings.

Even if your work background doesn’t suggest an obvious fit with your group’s needs, don’t despair. There’s always something you can do to help. Ask other members of the group what you can do; chances are they’ll have all kinds of suggestions.

*For a definition of “group” and other terms used in this booklet, see Glossary. For purposes of this discussion, “groups” and “TNS Special Interest Groups,” or SIGs, are largely interchangeable. See Glossary for more on SIGs.

In evaluating what you can do as a group volunteer, it’s always a good idea to get an appraisal from someone other than yourself. Ask a friend or, better yet, your spouse or significant other—and insist on frankness. There’s no sense taking on a task you aren’t suited to.

One approach is to ask yourself some questions, and then ask someone close to you to evaluate your answers. Are you an introvert or an extrovert? What kind of work ethic do you have? Are you detail-oriented, or more of a “big picture” type? Do you like physical activity and lots of action, or do you prefer the more cerebral side of life?

Suppose, for the sake of discussion, you’re an action-oriented extrovert with a taste for the outdoors. That should suggest something right away: you’re the one to help with group outings—especially if it involves activities like canoeing or hiking. Conversely, maybe you’re a more solitary personality with a taste for computers. That too suggests something: perhaps you could maintain a website for your group, or help with an on-line newsletter.

The successful naturist group always has room for new volunteers. Ask around; there’s always work to be done.

Making It Fun

Group members will sometimes complain that there’s nothing to do, especially during the colder months when outdoor skinny-dipping isn’t practical in many places.

With a little imagination, however, even snowbound naturists can remain active the year round. For inspiration, consider the Washington, D.C. area’s Potomac Rambling Bares.

A longtime TNS affiliate, the Bares manage to fill the off-season with all sorts of enjoyable activities—all with a naturist twist, of course. Some examples: a German-style Oktoberfest house party (sans lederhosen, of course); a Halloween get together; a beer-tasting party (chances are there’s a home-brewer in your group who can help with one of these); a St. Patrick’s Day “Unwearin’ o’ the Green”; a Super Bowl Party, and a chili cook-off. The point the Rambling Bares seem intent on making is this: just about any group activity that’s fun can be more fun clothes-free—even in winter.

Remember, too, that activities such as those cited above tend to fall under the “house party” category. Other options abound. Many groups

rent health clubs or other gym facilities for activities during colder months. Some motels with swimming pools will accommodate groups for an evening, or even a weekend. Then, too, there might be a naturist club or resort with indoor facilities near you. Most clubs and resorts with winter accommodations are more than happy to have off-season visitors.

When the weather improves there are all kinds of fresh opportunities for fun. If there is a nude beach or swimming hole nearby, you don't need much in the way of instructions. You just get some friends together, pack a lunch and go. But even if you're far removed from such naturist delights, due either to geography or the vicissitudes of local law enforcement, you aren't without options.

For inspiration, consider *N* magazine's roving editor Mark Storey. Mark has made the "nudification" of wild places something of a life mission.

What Mark does—sometimes alone, sometimes with his wife, and sometimes in a group—is as basic as it gets. He'll find a secluded spot suitable for hiking, swimming, kayaking, canoeing or what have you and then do his thing—sans clothing, of course.

Naturally, discretion is advisable when nudifying public lands. But as Mark has discovered over the years, outdoor types will often look at naturists with a sense of bemused tolerance—and sometimes they'll even join in the fun.

The fact is, nudity in the great outdoors is a time-honored American tradition, and there's no reason why your group can't embrace it. White-water rafting, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, even skiing and skydiving—if it can be done clothed, it can be done nude. And if it can be done nude, you and your group can do it.

The Challenge

Any group, naturist or otherwise, must deal with certain mundane but necessary tasks. Keeping track of dues, sending out renewal notices, writing and distributing newsletters, scrounging for house party sites—the list goes on. And in truth, no amount of pie-in-the-sky salesmanship can make things like licking envelopes and writing bylaws fun.

But when tasks are shared and duties and responsibilities rotated, it makes things a lot easier. One of the pitfalls many groups face is burnout. One or two people do all the work and finally move on, or get fed up and quit. It's a crisis some groups don't survive.

That's why it's wise for your group to focus on recruitment. Here, it is important to identify two kinds of recruitment: recruitment of new members, and recruitment of leaders within the existing membership.

Leadership recruitment within a group defies one-size-fits-all solutions. Because naturist groups are democratic or quasi-democratic organizations (officers and boards are typically elected by members), the internal dynamics of a group are subject to the sometimes-changing will of the majority. That's a good thing, but it can complicate the leadership grooming process. And that's why it is important for group members, not just group leaders, to look toward the future. Members at every level should be on the lookout for fresh talent. And when talent is spotted, it should be nurtured. Successful groups manage to make room for new people and fresh ideas. The ones that fail are those in which a handful of people do all the work—and sometimes insist on making all the decisions.

It's no secret, of course, that finding new members is a challenge. Much has been written about the decline of community in American life (see, for example, Harvard social scientist Robert Putnam's 2000 book *Bowling Alone*), and its effect has been felt among naturist groups. Membership recruitment and retention continue to suffer.

One group that has tried to address the problem is the Socially United Nudist Club of Medford, Ore. It offers discounted rates for new members—and rebates for club members who recruit them.

Keep in mind too, that sometimes it's not what your members do, but what they *don't* do that attracts new members. Utah Naturists' newsletter reminded members of the importance of respectful behavior by noting that nothing scares off a potential member faster than unsolicited flirting and suggestive behavior. Nude is not lewd, and anyone who forgets that is not a true naturist.

Forming A Group

Most TNS volunteers come to their volunteer work by way of a local or regional naturist group. But what if there's no group in your area? Or what if there is, but you want to form a group of your own, one that focuses on a specific site (say a favorite beach) or activity (hiking, for instance)?

There's a process involved in forming a TNS-sanctioned group, but it's not terribly involved. (For details, see Resources, Item A). The most important thing to remember is that TNS groups must abide by the TNS Participating Agreement, which prohibits certain discriminatory practices (see Resources, Item B).

When it comes to TNS groups, no one way is the right way. Naturism operates under a big tent, and so do naturist groups.

Forming a group is largely a matter of personal choice. Some people form groups to protect a favorite site (see Chapter Five); others are more interested in the social and recreational sides of naturism. Some groups are "landed," meaning they have their own sites; others are "non-landed," meeting at members' homes, rented facilities (public or private), or on public lands.

CHAPTER THREE

IN THE COMMUNITY

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IN THE COMMUNITY

Friends...

Not so long ago, “naturist outreach” was a contradiction in terms. Naturists, or “nudists” as they were more commonly known, didn’t reach out. They hid out.

Happily, times have changed. Naturism may not be entirely mainstream, but it is clearly not the cloistered activity of years past. Today, literally millions of Americans from almost every imaginable background enjoy clothes-free clubs, resorts, beaches, and swimming holes.

The bad news is that in many places naturism is still misunderstood. This chapter seeks to address the misperceptions surrounding naturism with suggestions on how to present the naturist idea to your friends, family, co-workers, and your community.

Where to begin? Here, context matters. It’s one thing to deal with a curious but open-minded friend, relative, or co-worker; it’s quite another to confront a hostile crowd.

Let’s start out easy, with a hypothetical female friend who is curious about naturism but not entirely sure it’s on the level.

The first thing to do is hear her out. If your friend seems to be troubled by your naturist ways, ask why in a calm, polite manner. She may be confusing naturism with swinging or some other form of sexual activity. Explain to her that this is a common misperception. Then go on to tell her that while naturists are not prudes, naturism is not about sex; it’s about body freedom. The TNS Mission Statement (see Resources, Item C) offers a serviceable outline of the naturist philosophy.

Eventually, discussions like the hypothetical conversation outlined above do get personal. Be ready for that. The body freedom and body acceptance naturism promotes has as its flip side body repression and

self-loathing. Often, it's that repression and self-loathing that make these discussions so difficult. That's why it helps to explain how naturism allows us overcome those barriers and accept our physical selves. Your friend, relative, or co-worker may not embrace naturism as a result of what you have to say, but if she realizes how it has helped you, she may at least accept it as a valuable life tool for others.

Foes...

The example above assumes a certain level of open-mindedness. Unfortunately, that is not what you will always encounter. There are plenty of people, many of them ostensibly religious, who have made up their minds that naturism is sinful and perverted and that as a naturist you are...well, a sinner and a pervert.

These folks won't listen; their minds are made up. *N* magazine's Michael Cooney neatly summarized what to do when confronted with anti-naturist zealots after an encounter with a group called Wisconsin Christians United at a nude beach near Madison, Wis. (see Resources, Item D).

Cooney's bottom line, and ours: words are wasted on zealots; save yours for someone willing to listen.

And In Between...

Often, the subject of naturism pops up in conversation with casual acquaintances or co-workers—not relatives or close friends, but not hostile foes, either. How do you present the naturist message when this happens?

Again, context matters, but here are a few tips that might tilt a conversation in a naturist-friendly direction.

Take a look at TNS' Roper Poll of 2000 (see Resources, Item E). Familiarize yourself with its results and you'll be able to rebut claims that nude recreation is a fringe activity.

Keep current on naturist news. Being sure of your facts can only help. *N* magazine gives you the big picture; for day-to-day developments, check the websites and other sources listed in the Appendix.

Do a bit of name-dropping. The quotations and excerpts in the Resources section of this handbook (see Resources, Item M) attach famous names (and occasionally not-so-famous names) to naturist sentiments. It might disarm critics to note, for example, that Teddy Roosevelt was an avid skinny-dipper, or that Pope John Paul II has no problem with simple nudity. It's facts like these that can help tip a discussion your way and get skeptics in a more receptive frame of mind.

Those things said, there's no set schedule for "coming out" as a naturist. Ideally, talking about your naturist ways shouldn't get you into trouble. But it doesn't always work that way. If, for example, your boss is a prude, it might not do to say "Have a nice weekend; I'm going canuding." Naturists shouldn't live in shame, but there are times when silence is the only sensible course to follow.

Out And About...

As suggested above, naturism has come a long way from the days of "nudist colonies" and "first names only, please." Why? To answer the question definitively would require volumes. But part of the answer has to do with naturists themselves. Aware of what might mildly be called an "image problem," naturists over the last 20 years or so have taken to defining themselves publicly, rather than letting others define them.

This has been done in a variety of ways and in a variety of venues, from public beaches and courtrooms to classrooms and city halls.

While protest and litigation remain a vital part of the naturist arsenal, and rightly so given the many threats faced by nude recreation, less confrontational alternatives also exist.

Not to be underestimated is the effect of example on a skeptical public. Things like blood drives, adopt-a-highway programs and, of course, beach cleanups can turn supposedly reclusive nudists into public-

spirited citizens. And these undertakings don't have to be exercises in teeth pulling, either.

An example of how to do it comes from the coalition of naturist and nudist groups who organize an annual beach cleanup at Cape Cod National Seashore. Every spring New England naturists arrive at Cape Cod, and every time they're praised for their public-spirited efforts. The authorities like what they do, the community likes it, and at the end of the day the beach is cleared of debris and there's a big party. It's classic "win-win" stuff.

There are, of course, more studied alternatives. Speeches and presentations before service clubs, chambers of commerce, and student groups are one way of spreading the naturist message, though appearing before groups is not an undertaking for the faint of heart or the ill-informed. The TNS office can supply materials for presentations to community or student groups. Keep in mind too, that the Naturist Education Foundation has developed a speakers' bureau, which may be active in your area (for more on NEF see Chapter Seven).

While your group may not have a speaker or media spokesperson ready to trot out at a moment's notice, you can spread the word about naturism in other ways. Nude Recreation Week, held each July, provides a hook for an array of informational activities. If you're a landed group, an open house might be in order. Let the community know what goes on at your place—and what doesn't. It will allay fears and build trust.

Another option is to set up an information booth at community or regional events, say a downtown festival of some kind, or a county fair. We'll gladly supply your group with informational materials.

CHAPTER FOUR

ON THE BEACH

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ON THE BEACH

As noted in Chapter Three, beach cleanups are a great way to burnish the naturist image. But a nude beach is a two-edged sword. While proper beach behavior can be an invaluable image-builder, improper behavior can tarnish the naturist image and turn a nude beach into a textile beach almost overnight.

On a beach etiquette card distributed by TNS (see Resources, Item F), proper beach behavior can be summed up in a single word—respect. Respect for the beach, the rules of the beach, and the sensibilities of beach users.

In essence what this means is “Don’t be a slob.” Leering, drunkenness, littering, vulgar language, and gestures...if it’s not acceptable in other settings, it’s not acceptable on a nude beach. The same, of course, applies to other nude venues, such as swimming holes, clubs, and resorts. Being a slob doesn’t cut it anywhere.

What do you do when someone breaks the rules? It depends on the situation.

If it appears that the proverbial word to the wise will suffice, provide that word. Sometimes, people just don’t know the rules. For example, if someone strays onto a textile area, it could be accidental. Don’t be afraid to tell someone he’s strayed. But do so in a polite, respectful manner, and do your best to explain where the boundaries are.

While polite reminders are sometimes sufficient, politeness has its limits. A group of leering drunks isn’t likely to heed your admonition to behave. More likely you’ll be insulted, if not assaulted.

Rowdy behavior may necessitate a call to police, park rangers, or lifeguards. If immediate help isn’t available, pay attention to details. Reporting misbehavior after the fact doesn’t help much if the authorities have no way of identifying the troublemakers. Take mental notes to help with identification. If at all possible, get a license number.

Many nude beaches have “beach ambassador” programs (see Resources, Item G). These are definitely worth checking out. The TNS website and the Network section in *N* magazine list various beach organizations, including various beach “friends” groups (see Chapter Five). Contact one in your area and learn how to protect your favorite nude beach both as a user and a volunteer.

No discussion of nude beaches can ignore the camera issue. While the presence of a camera is no cause for alarm, naturists should always remember: no photos without consent. And that goes double for kids: no photos of nude children without their consent (assuming they are old enough to grant it) and the consent of a parent or guardian, who should *always* be present when photos are taken. Remember, too, that any photo session with kids can and will be misconstrued by the enemies of naturism. And keep in mind that photo-processing labs have been known to alert police to the existence of nude photos of kids, no matter how innocent the context.

Finally, the easiest way to lose a nude beach is by tolerating open sex. Don’t accept it. If such activity is covered up or winked at by naturists, they will be seen as complicit. Tell the authorities. And let them know that you’re a naturist when you do—you may gain a powerful ally.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROTECTING YOUR TURF

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Friendly Persuasion

Sooner or later, most naturist sites come under attack. Sometimes—not often but sometimes—these attacks are justified. Like other beach users, some nude beach users can be slobs (see preceding chapter). When they are, they deserve criticism.

In most cases, however, when a naturist site comes under attack it is a result of either a misunderstanding or a deliberate misinformation campaign launched by the enemies of naturism. And that is why forming a “friends” group to protect your favorite public lands nude beach, hot spring, swimming hole, or hiking trail is a must.

Marianna Handler, famous in naturist circles as the longtime “beach mom” of Southern California’s San Onofre Beach, puts it this way: “Whenever our opponents are attacking, they do so in a very organized fashion and show up in large numbers. You will find that at most public meetings the opposition is there en masse, while we naturists have been sticking our heads in the sand hoping the problem will go away. Well folks, it won’t unless and until we stand up for our rights.” In other words, get organized; form a friends group.

What does that mean? At its most basic level, organizing a friends group to protect your favorite public lands naturist site might refer to something as simple as compiling a mailing list. That can be enough to launch letter-writing campaigns to politicians, bureaucrats, and newspapers, get out a simple newsletter, and come up with a leader or two. For most of its existence, Friends of San Onofre operated as a loosely organized network united around one goal: preserving San Onofre Beach for nude use. Only when donations reached a point where greater accountability was deemed necessary did the group incorporate as a nonprofit organization.

The important thing for a friends group, whether informal or incorporated, is relationships. Cultivate them. A friends group should be on familiar terms with public lands administrators, park rangers, lifeguards, police, politicians, and anyone else who might be called upon to vouch for the group.

If the right relationships are nurtured, problems can be nipped in the proverbial bud. For example, if a self-described religious group complains of drug use or overt sexual activity on a naturist beach, a park ranger can quickly lay the matter to rest by refuting the accusation. And it will be easier for him to do so if he trusts the local friends group to tell the truth about what's occurring on his watch. That means you will need to report the bad with the good. Untoward activities should not be papered over. Report such incidents to the proper authorities, but in so doing stress that your friends group wants to help solve the problem. Such honesty may cause pain in the short run, but in the long run it builds mutual understanding and trust.

As discussed elsewhere in this booklet, beach clean-ups and other public-spirited activities also help solidify relationships. They can go a long way toward enhancing a friends group's standing, not just with official types but also in the community.

Handler sums it up succinctly: "If we build a rapport before there is a problem, we have a good chance of survival."

Here, so-called people skills come into play.

Ken Thomas of the Sarasota, Fla. area's SunCoast Naturists says friends groups attract three kinds of volunteers: the timid but helpful, meaning those who want to serve but don't want to be publicly identified with a naturist group; the openly supportive, those who willingly pitch in and have no qualms about being identified as naturists ("Be very nice to this group, as they will recruit others," says Thomas); and the overly zealous.

It is this last group that causes problems, Thomas says. These are the loose cannons: confrontational types whose inflammatory words and actions often do more harm than good. Keep a tight rein on them and don't let them speak for the group.

One thing that “friends of” groups need to stress at the outset is that they are not some kind of secretive bunch of weirdos. That means being upfront about who and what you are.

How is this done? As suggested above, making yourself known to local politicians and bureaucrats helps. But you don’t have to stop there.

In Wisconsin, Claudette Richards of Friends of Mazo Beach arranged a face-to-face meeting with the new secretary of the state’s Department of Natural Resources. And while that may not have ensured the survival of nude use on a state-owned stretch of beach, at the very least it was an important step in the direction of mutual understanding and trust. Similar proactive efforts at building relationships with land management authorities are behind nearly every successful nude beach in North America today.

To Have And To Have Not

The downside of not building rapport is obvious. North America is littered with naturist venues that disappeared for want of a friends group, or for want of a friends group with sufficient clout to defend its site. Higbee Beach in New Jersey, Paradise Beach in Wisconsin, and Honokohau Beach in Hawaii, former public nude beaches all, attest to the scope, power, and determination of naturism’s enemies.

And while our enemies are often motivated by a narrow religious agenda, friends groups need to remember that economic forces must also be taken into account.

In Vermont, for example, prudish moral outrage and shoreline development plans combined to nearly kill nude use at The Ledges, New England’s most popular inland skinny-dipping spot. The operative word here is “nearly.” A group called Friends of the Ledges, working with the Naturist Action Committee, saved the Ledges by assiduously cultivating relationships. And in this case it wasn’t just a few small town movers and shakers who were courted. The entire community of Wilmington was wooed, and the community responded in a 2002 referendum by overturning a rigid anti-nudity ordinance.

In the end, the survival of a naturist venue often depends on public opinion. That's where being media-wise helps. Self-described religious groups, generally the most visible and vocal opponents of naturist sites, are often skilled in the ways of modern media. Masters of the catchy sound bite and the sensational but typically distorted or even fabricated accusation, they often have national organizations to fall back on. Sometimes they are national organizations.

In Michigan, for example, an attempt to block a naturist group from after-hours use of a municipal swimming pool was greatly abetted, if not led by, the Mississippi-based American Family Association. The same thing has been known to happen on public lands sites. The good news is that these groups can be beaten, as AFA was in Michigan.

One way to fight back is through the local media. Carefully worded letters to the editor can be effective (see Resources, Item J). Figure out ways of using the media to let the community know who you are and what you're up to. Remember: if you don't define yourself, someone else surely will.

TNS and NAC stand ready to help friends' groups, both new and old, to work with the media and deal with crises as they arise (see Chapter 7 for more on NAC).

But when it comes to protecting your turf, nothing is more powerful than a positive reputation in your own hometown. And that is something only an effective friends group can really sustain. So if your favorite beach, trail, hot spring, or swimming hole doesn't have a friends group, get busy. It's still the best way to ensure the future of your favorite public lands site.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RESORT SCENE

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THE RESORT SCENE

Maintaining Standards

Sooner or later, most naturists find themselves at a nude club or resort.

Sometimes it's a function of age. At a certain point in life a poolside deck chair may start to look more appealing than another mid-day trek to the beach. Other times, it's a function of income. Clubs and resorts may start to look better once you discover you can actually afford them. Still other times, it's a function of both—age and income.

In any event, one way or another you're likely to encounter naturist clubs and resorts if you haven't already done so.

That said, as a TNS volunteer you might be wondering why this handbook bothers to include a chapter on clubs and resorts. After all, when you're visiting these places you're "off duty." You're there to be served, not to serve.

But just because you're on vacation doesn't mean your naturist standards are, too. Previous chapters in this booklet have discussed those standards. Here, we'll apply them to the club/resort scene.

It is important to remember that TNS expects a certain level of behavior from clubs and resorts. That's why we have our TNS Participating Agreement. Signers agree among other things to a non-discrimination clause, and pledge not to use naturism as a front for sexual activity (see Resources, Item B).

The great majority of clubs and resorts sign our Participating Agreement in good faith and do their best to observe it.

Sadly, however, there are exceptions. And when there are, we ask that our members report them to us. Contact us by mail, e-mail, telephone or fax. Tell us what happened, and try to be specific.

But don't just tell us. Speak up for standards by registering your complaint with the management of the club or resort in question. In the

end, someone may thank you. Managers are sometimes simply unaware of misbehavior on the part of staff or guests.

If you do make a complaint, be polite and above all factual. If you think something untoward is happening but aren't sure, say you have suspicions but don't present your suspicions as fact. If presented in the right way, the concerned resort or club manager will thank you and investigate. It's the ones who refuse to investigate that bear watching.

The question of what to report to resort management and what to ignore isn't always easily answered. But in some cases it's obvious. Questionable behavior toward children should always be reported.

The same rule of thumb that applies on the beach applies to clubs and resorts. Leering, drunkenness, open sex, or vulgar language aren't acceptable at clubs and resorts any more than on the beach. Don't tolerate such behavior. Speak up for standards.

Talk Up TNS

There may be no better place to sell the TNS message—and TNS memberships—than at clubs and resorts. For the most part, it's preaching to the proverbial choir.

So please, talk us up when you visit a club or resort. Tell guests about the benefits of TNS membership (see Resources, Item H). And while you're at it, mention us to management. We have a booklet on guidelines for selling TNS memberships that offers incentives to management and staff.

We also have an assortment of promotional materials (flyers, beach cards, etc.) suitable for display and distribution at resorts. If you don't see any of our materials at the clubs or resorts you visit, mention it to management.

Another option for helping to promote TNS' naturist values would be to organize a naturist festival. Festivals are fun, family friendly events organized by TNS in cooperation with local naturists, usually at naturist resorts (see Resources, Item K)

CHAPTER SEVEN

A WORD ABOUT NAC AND NEF

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A WORD ABOUT NAC AND NEF

As you've probably gathered by now, the term "naturist volunteer" covers a lot of ground. It takes in everyone from the beach clean-up crew to the house party organizer to the service club speaker. Each, in one way or another, is a naturist ambassador.

But no discussion of naturism would be complete without mentioning the Naturist Action Committee and the Naturist Education Foundation. Both are nonprofit sister organizations of TNS, and both rely heavily on volunteers.

NAC monitors the ever-changing political and legal front for TNS, keeping an eye out for hostile legislation and rule-making and advocating the naturist cause in court. NEF, as the name implies, focuses on education. Its mission is to explain and promote naturism to the general public, the business community, and to civic leaders.

NAC and NEF are non-profit organizations governed by two boards of volunteer directors that are made up of, and elected by, TNS members.

Although NAC/NEF has a full-time executive director, volunteers are essential to its success. Its board members serve without pay, and NAC relies on Naturist Action Committee Area Representatives (NACARs), to help monitor legislative and legal developments (see Resources, Item I). An *N* magazine article outlining the role of the NACAR is included in the Resources section.

For additional information on NAC and NEF, go to www.naturistaction.org or contact NAC Executive Director Bob Morton at ctnudists@aol.com.

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Clothing-Optional: Applied to beaches and facilities to indicate that nudity is permitted but not required. Some naturist clubs and resorts are clothing-optional; others require nudity.

Club: In the TNS context, a club is a naturist facility that has camping and/or living accommodations for guests and members. Clubs typically operate as co-ops, or as private businesses. A naturist resort connotes an upscale club, typically one that operates year-round.

Festival: A naturist get-together sanctioned by TNS, but organized primarily by a local or regional group or groups. Similar to a GATHERING.

FKK: From the German Freikokultur, meaning “free-body culture.” Refers to a form of naturism that emphasizes nature, health and fitness.

Friends Group: Naturist group dedicated to the preservation and protection of a naturist beach, hot spring, swimming hole, or trail. Examples include Vermont’s Friends of the Ledges and California’s Friends of San Onofre Beach. A friends group that signs the TNS Participating Agreement is also considered a TNS Group. See GROUP and TNS PARTICIPATING AGREEMENT.

Gathering: A TNS-sponsored get-together that provides workshops and various social and recreational opportunities; typically held over a period of four or more days at a naturist club or resort. See FESTIVAL.

Group: Local or regional naturist organizations or Special Interest Groups that have signed the TNS Participating Agreement. TNS groups are often informal; they typically function like most non-naturist social, recreational, or hobby clubs. See SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP and TNS PARTICIPATING AGREEMENT.

Landed: Used to describe a naturist/nudist group that owns or leases land that is open to members for social and recreational use. Typical uses include sunbathing, camping, and swimming.

N or Nude & Natural: TNS' quarterly magazine. Originally called *Clothed with the Sun*.

NAC/NEF: The Naturist Action Committee and the Naturist Education Foundation, TNS sister organizations that respectively handle political/legal issues and educational outreach (see page 33).

Naturist: One who believes in the value of nudity, particularly in recreational or social settings, such as beaches and clubs. "Naturist" and "Nudist" are often used interchangeably, with "naturist" more widely used in Europe than in North America. "Naturist" is preferred because it implies a connection with nature absent from "nudist."

Naturist Network: Umbrella term referring to TNS-affiliated clubs, resorts, groups, and Special Interest Groups.

Non-landed: A naturist group that does not own or lease land. Members typically travel to landed facilities or rent sites for naturist activities.

Nude Recreation Week: Celebration of naturism marked each July by a variety of recreational, social, and educational activities. Originated with TNS as National Nude Beach Day.

Nudist: See NATURIST.

Resort: See CLUB.

Special Interest Group (SIG): TNS-affiliated organization that links naturists with a common interest in a particular activity, hobby, or belief system. Examples might include hiking, photography, or Christian naturism. SIG members are often dispersed over a wide area; they frequently meet at TNS Gatherings and Festivals.

Textile: Term used as a noun to apply to a non-naturist, and as an adjective to refer to the mandatory wearing of clothing. The textile prefers the textile beach.

TNS: The Naturist Society, a member organization that promotes body acceptance through nude recreation (see page 6).

TNS Participating Agreement: Agreement whereby signatory groups, clubs, SIGs, or resorts commit to specified TNS policies in exchange for specified benefits and privileges conferred by TNS (See Resources, Item B).

Topfree: Topfreedom: Denotes, respectively, a state of upper body nudity, and the right to enjoy such a state. Generally used in the context of women's rights, the terms are intended to replace "topless" and "toplessness," which often have sexual connotations.

RESOURCES

Resources

- A) “A Group of One’s Own” and “Understanding the Network,” *N* magazine, Spring, 2002
- B) TNS Participating Agreement
- C) TNS Mission Statement
- D) “What I Learned: Lessons From Mazo,” *N* magazine, Winter, 2002
- E) NEF Roper-Starch Poll press release, October 2000
- F) TNS Beach Etiquette
- G) Beach Ambassador Program, © 2001 – B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation Institute, Inc.
- H) TNS Member Benefits
- I) “NAC Area Representatives,” George Winlock, *N* magazine, Winter, 2002
- J) “You Too Can Exercise Your Right to Write,” *N* magazine, Spring, 2003
- K) How to Organize a TNS Festival
- L) FAQs About Naturism
- M) Excerpts, Quotes, and Anecdotes

ITEM A

“A Group Of One’s Own” and “Understanding The Network,” *N* magazine, Spring 2002

The Naturist Society’s Nicky Hoffman discusses the pleasures and perils of forming a naturist group.

N: Let’s start with the basics. What is a Naturist Network “group,” and why form one in the first place?

Nicky Hoffman: Very simply, a TNS group is a local or regional group that agrees with The Naturist Society philosophy of body acceptance through nude recreation and has enough organizational coherence to meet on a fairly regular basis and put out an occasional newsletter. That’s really about all there is to it. As to the “why” question, my response is “why not?” If you enjoy social nudity, being part of a group gives you a chance to practice it without having to rely solely on clubs and resorts.

It makes particular sense to form a group that’s tied to a traditionally accepted skinny-dipping area, in order to organize the users of that site and help protect it; but some naturist groups serve more general social functions as well.

N: Suppose I want to start a group of my own. What should I be asking myself?

NH: If you have yet to take the first steps in forming a naturist group, you’re in an enviable position, because at this point you have more control over the personality and focus of the group than you will ever have again. You can decide exactly what you want to do and how you wish to go about it. Ask yourself seriously what your goals are in starting such a group. You’ll be doing the initial work in getting it off the ground, so you might as well get what you want out of it.

N: What standards does my group have to meet to be recognized by TNS?

NH: There are all kinds of naturists, and TNS does not claim to represent them all; but groups within the TNS network must be family friendly. That doesn't mean families must be involved in every activity, but the tenor of the group must be such that families would be comfortable at your activities. In addition, TNS requires acceptance of a "participating agreement," a short form indicating, among other things, that your club shares TNS values, will welcome TNS members in good standing to its activities, and will not discriminate.

N: I understand there are two basic kinds of groups, "landed" and "non-landed." What's that about?

NH: As you might guess, a landed group owns property; a non-landed group doesn't. Most TNS groups are non-landed, but they're often associated with a particular site. The Friends of San Onofre Beach, for example, enjoy California's San Onofre Beach and work to protect it, but they don't own the beach; the state does. Other groups might focus their interest on a favorite lake, river, or hot spring. Sometimes groups rent a lodge, a health club, a sports facility, or a hotel swimming pool for an occasional evening of nude socializing. It's really up to each group to define its activities and where and how it wants to enjoy them.

N: What about TNS' Special Interest Groups, or SIGs? How are they different from other TNS groups?

NH: The main difference is geography. In contrast to TNS groups, which tend to focus on a particular site, region or state, Special Interest Groups are made up of individuals who are spread over a large geographic area but who share a common interest in addition to naturism. Borrowing the idea from the Mensa organization, TNS was the first in the naturist world to recognize that its members' naked lives could be enhanced by incorporating some of the activities and interests they enjoyed while clothed. SIGs have been organized for cooking, outdoor recreation, and amateur radio enthusiasts; other SIGs focus on the needs of single naturists and people with disabilities.

N: How are naturist groups governed? Are they mini-democracies with elections, or what?

NH: That's up to the person or people forming the group. You can run a group yourself as a sort of benevolent dictator, or you can arrange for some kind of democratically elected leadership committee. Running things yourself helps ensure that the group will be what you had in mind. On the other hand, division of labor is a wonderful thing, and if things get rolling you'll no doubt want some help.

N: What about money? You'll need some, right?

NH: Let's just say that it helps when you're trying to put out a newsletter or organize activities. You don't have to demand membership dues, but you won't be out of line if you do. Many groups seem to be doing fine with annual dues of \$20 per person. We aren't talking high finance here.

Keep in mind, though, that few things can be more divisive than arguments over money. Be sure to have a treasurer. There needs to be a clear point of contact for financial transactions, and that person must be trustworthy and able to keep clear records. Money is the one place you absolutely do not want to be unstructured.

N: What are some of the other basics you absolutely must have?

NH: A post office box, a phone number and an e-mail address that can be made public are essential. A website provides an easy, inexpensive way to communicate with your members and potential members. The point is, you can't function effectively, except as a very small, insular clique, without ready contact with the outside world.

N: What if someone close to me, say my spouse, thinks this naturism stuff is a bunch of hooley?

NH: If that's the case, forget about starting a group. Running a group is vastly rewarding, but it can be time consuming, and spouses and families cannot be expected to support your enthusiasm for an extended period of time if they don't share it from the start.

N: Okay, let's say I've figured out that I want to start a group. I've even got a phone number, P.O. Box and e-mail address. Now what?

NH: Contact me to begin the process of having your group included in the Naturist Network (listings are found on the TNS website and at the back of each issue of *N*). We'll want to know something about your plans, so it helps to send along a brief description of your background and experience with naturism, your goals in starting a group, your plans for activities, a copy of your brochure, a copy of your newsletter (if you have one yet), and any other introductory information you can provide. Once we have established that our goals are compatible, you will be sent a Participating Agreement.

Next, of course, you'll want to begin promoting your new group. Don't rely exclusively on the Naturist Network listing. Get the word out in your state, region or locality.

N: How do I do that?

NH: You could run a small ad in your local paper. To avoid cranks, you might want to word your ad something like this: "An informal, family-friendly recreation group is starting in [area]. If you are or have been a member of TNS or AANR and want more information, send a SASE to ...". Potentially desirable members will know what you mean; the perverts and cranks probably won't. You might also contact other regional naturist organizations to see if they are willing to mention your new venture in their newsletters, or perhaps plan a joint activity with your group. And most groups find that the Internet is a primary source of new inquiries, so getting even a basic website up and running for your group should be one of your first tasks.

N: How else can TNS help?

NH: Because of confidentiality commitments, TNS cannot and will not release members' names. We will, however, do targeted mailing to members, at your expense, announcing the formation of your group and how to contact you.

We can also give you some tips on how to prepare a newsletter, fun activities common to many clubs, and a lot more. Check with us at the TNS office if you have questions or need advice. That's what we're here for.

“What is the Naturist Network? How does it relate to TNS groups? What does it have to offer?” As The Naturist Society’s Director, these are questions I hear from members every day.

Many of you already know what the Naturist Network is. But many TNS members, new ones especially, don’t. If you’re among them, read on.

Let’s start with a definition. Simply put, the Naturist Network is the umbrella term for three types of TNS-sanctioned entities: participating groups, usually small, loosely organized local or regional naturist organizations (see adjoining Q&A); special interest groups (SIGs), which are comprised of TNS members with an interest in a particular topic or activity; and participating naturist parks and resorts, meaning private or member-owned facilities, typically commercial ones. (There are other subtypes, but all fit into these basic categories.)

What ties these Network organizations together is a commitment to the TNS philosophy of body acceptance through nude recreation. By virtue of that commitment, groups, SIGs, and clubs and resorts are listed in *N*’s “Naturist Network” section and on the TNS website (www.naturistsociety.com), without charge.

Of course, there is a bit more to it than that. Because TNS is committed to body acceptance, not just anyone can be listed as part of the Network. We view naturism as family friendly; we aren’t interested in listing groups or clubs that promote sexual activity or other activities that conflict with the naturist philosophy.

Therefore, we insist that any group, SIG, club, or resort interested in joining the Network sign what we call a “participating agreement”. The agreement constitutes a pledge by signers that they will not promote sexual activity, nor practice any policy of exclusion based on race, religion, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Because of the large percentage of naturist organizations that still insist on the need for “gender balance,” we do allow groups and clubs to set reasonable quotas for single males if it is deemed by the club to be absolutely necessary, and if the quota system isn’t so strict as to create a de facto exclusion of all singles. But that is the only exception.

By signing the participating agreement and adhering to its standards, groups, SIGs, clubs and resorts receive a number of benefits, in addition to the free promotion provided by the listings in *N* and on the TNS website.

For example, signers are allowed to retain a portion of TNS membership dues they collect from their members. To assist, TNS maintains a database of members and sends notification to the group or club membership coordinator when a member is up for renewal. It's really a simple process that can earn groups and clubs a fair amount of return for very little effort.

In addition to adhering to a policy of non-exclusion, clubs and resorts that sign the Network participating agreement must offer TNS members visitor discounts at least as generous as those offered to members of other naturist or nudist organizations, such as the American Association for Nude Recreation or the Federation of Canadian Naturists.

Other benefits to Network organizations include timely information on TNS Gatherings and Nude Recreation Week; the chance to promote your organization (usually for no additional cost) at Naturist Gatherings and Festivals; discounts on advertising in *N*, as well as on wholesale merchandise from the Skinny-Dipper Shop; a monthly newsletter of important TNS and Network news; helpful brochures on such things as beach etiquette; local and regional contact information; special mailings; and the opportunity to have your organization's brochures included in TNS information packs.

The special mailings, open to groups, SIGs, clubs and resorts alike, allow us to use our extensive database to reach a targeted area. For example, suppose a new group is forming in Chicago and wants to contact TNS members in the Chicago area. We would make a targeted mailing to our Chicago area members at the group's expense, while maintaining member confidentiality.

Special Interest Groups can do the same thing. If, for example, someone wants to form some kind of literary SIG, we can alert participants and organizers of literary-oriented workshops conducted at our Gatherings. And we usually can announce the formation of a new SIG in *N*.

As a member organization, we view such services as critical to advancing the naturist cause. Most of them are free of charge for the groups and clubs who take advantage of them. Taken together, they provide our Network groups and clubs, and the members who run them, with important organizational and communication tools.

Our hope is that you use these tools. That's what they're there for. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us at:
naturist@naturistsociety.com or 800-886-7230.

ITEM B

PARTICIPATING AGREEMENT OF THE NATURIST NETWORK

Group/Club Name: _____
Date Received: _____

Do Not Write In This Space!

Participating Agreement of The Naturist Society Network

THE NATURIST NETWORK is a group of Naturist Society-associated organizations and individuals who work for the greater recognition of the right to practice nude recreation on appropriate public lands, and the growth and protection of safe, friendly, family-oriented private nudist parks and resorts. To apply for inclusion in the Naturist Network, please read and agree to the following and sign. This agreement with The Naturist Society (TNS) admits a club, resort or group to the Naturist Network. Network members are entitled to (a) a free listing in the TNS quarterly magazine *N* and on the TNS Web site; (b) free receipt of the monthly Network newsletter *In The Loop*; (c) the right to retain a portion of funds collected by the organization for TNS memberships; (d) discounts on advertising in *N* if you are a TNS member and on wholesale merchandise offered by TNS; (e) such other benefits and privileges as TNS may deem appropriate. A full list of benefits is included in the TNS Network Resource Guidelines, available on request. In return for these benefits, TNS asks that your group, club or resort:

- 1) Share TNS' basic values. We believe the human body is wholesome, not an object of shame. We strive for full body acceptance through nude recreation. We do not welcome groups who promise or intend to promote sexual activity.
- 2) If you publish a newsletter, please include the TNS office on the subscription list. You may use the TNS logo in your newsletter.
- 3) If your group maintains a Web site, the TNS logo and link are available for your use. They may be downloaded from the Resources section of the TNS Web site.
- 4) If you have an outreach program and/or spokesperson(s) for media and community contact, TNS will supply you with brochures, magazines, and other appropriate hand-outs.
- 5) Help further our mutual goals by promoting TNS membership and educating others about the organization.
- 6) Provide TNS with your current contact information (address, phone, fax and e-mail encouraged) for the listing in *N*, *The World's Best Nude Beaches & Resorts*, and the TNS Web site, and alert TNS of any changes to that info as soon as possible.
- 7) Appoint a liaison person (a TNS member) to communicate with the TNS Network Coordinator on matters related to your organization. This person is responsible for keeping in touch about changes/updates/memberships and also the person to receive information from our office.

8) Please send TNS a copy of your current brochure, a copy of your guidelines (e.g. singles quota policy), and any other pertinent information that will enable us to promote and appropriately describe your organization to TNS members, the media, etc.

9) Group leaders and resort owners/managers must be members of The Naturist Society. This is a reciprocal agreement.

10) All members of SIGs (Special Interest Groups) must belong to The Naturist Society. (please fill out other side)

_____ (your organization name), the signatory, agrees to welcome members of The Naturist Society (TNS).

In acknowledgement of The Naturist Society's mission to promote body acceptance through nude recreation, the signatory further agrees **NOT** to (a) promote or promise sexual activity; (b) discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation. TNS acknowledges that single male visitors may be subject to a quota if a club or resort deems this unavoidable. If, however, a club or resort chooses to limit the admission of males without accompanying females based on a quota system, this will be clearly posted or published and fairly administered.

The signatory agrees to grant TNS members discounts for day visits, on-site activities and overnight stays that are equal to discounts granted to visitors from other naturist/nudist organizations such as the American Association for Nude Recreation, the International Naturist Federation, and the Federation of Canadian Naturists. Accordingly, Network associates will publish or post a fee schedule which states favorable rates for TNS members. It is understood that failure to comply with the terms of this agreement can result in its termination at any time. Such termination shall be left to the sole discretion of TNS.

Signatories who wish to withdraw from this agreement may do so by notifying TNS of their intent to withdraw in writing.

I, _____, owner/president, or empowered to act as the owner/president of _____, hereby agree to the above.

Print signer's name: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form by 12/31/2008 to:

The Naturist Society
PO Box 132
Oshkosh WI 54903 USA
FAX to 920.426.5184

TNS Network Listing

Please fill out the following information completely for your free listing in *N* magazine and on our Web site, www.naturistsociety.com.

Group name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Web Site _____

E-mail _____

TNS Liaison _____ Membership No: _____
(TNS needs a liaison to communicate concerns of mutual interests)

Please give a 40-50 word description of your group to be put on the TNS Web site. It can include general monthly events or a description of your amenities. This description will only be listed on www.naturistsociety.com.

Return this form to: The Naturist Society, PO Box 132, Oshkosh, WI 54903
or FAX to 920.426.5184

ITEM C

TNS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of The Naturist Society is to promote a culture of body acceptance through clothing-optional recreation using the tools of education and community outreach.

The Naturist Society celebrates the nude human form as inherently wholesome and natural; TNS promotes attitudes of tolerance and respect toward the body, and rejects the exploitation of the body for commercial or sexual purposes.

The Naturist Society views clothing-optional recreation as essential to body acceptance. Through clothing-optional recreation, participants, be they individuals, couples or families, learn to appreciate the diversity of body types, gain a better understanding and acceptance of their own bodies, and reap the social, psychological, and physical benefits of a healthy and natural way of life.

The Naturist Society believes the interests of naturists are advanced through education and community outreach. TNS recognizes it is part of a larger community and welcomes the challenge of spreading the naturist message.

ITEM D

“MICHAEL J. COONEY, UNDERCOVER AT MAZO”

The following account by Michael J. Cooney originally appeared in the Winter 2002 issue of *N* magazine. In it, Cooney draws on lessons learned during an anti-nudity protest at Wisconsin’s Mazomanie Beach.

Non-Engagement is Smart

Any exchange between beachgoers and WCU [Wisconsin Christians United] protesters invited high-decibel preaching, insults (“sinner,” “pervert,” “child molester,” etc.) and targeting for further attention. Provoking reactions and physical confrontations makes for a successful WCU demonstration and paints all naturists in a bad light. Be cool and behave. Otherwise, they win.

Words are Wasted

Don’t try to reason with a true believer, especially one who has memorized lots and lots of Bible passages and just can’t wait to start spouting them. You might think you’ll be able to make your point if you get into a discussion with these folks, but do you really believe they came to listen?

Humor helps!

My old friend Jerry did it right. A beach user for more than 30 years, he simply breezed past the zealots while laughing at their craziness.

Bikes are Best

Beachgoers with bikes were able to run the WCU gauntlet with ease, leaving the sermons and insults in their wake.

Beach Behavior Matters

Naturists must enforce a policy of zero tolerance toward both real and suspected cases of sexual misconduct. Not to do so is to feed the lie that nude beaches are nothing more than fronts for swingers, cruisers, and child molesters. Questionable behavior should be reported. It's both a civic responsibility and a practical imperative. If we don't report questionable behavior, we'll be rightly seen as complicit.

The Seductive Power of Righteousness

After spending time with members of WCU and being seen by beachgoers as "one of them," I began to appreciate the simple-minded appeal of WCU's absolutist views. Call it the beginnings of the Stockholm Syndrome if you will. WCU's black and white perspective offered a quick cure for all those nagging questions about the meaning of life. But after three hours, as the supply of heathen beachgoers dwindled, and WCU started taking an interest in converting me, the seductive power of righteousness vanished. That's when I knew it was time to go.

ITEM E

Naturist Education Foundation Announces Results of Nationwide Roper Poll On Skinny-Dipping and Nude Sunbathing

OSHKOSH, Wisconsin—A new nationwide poll commissioned by the Naturist Education Foundation (NEF) and conducted by the independent Roper-Starch organization indicates that Americans overwhelmingly approve of nude sunbathing on beaches set aside for that purpose.

In the scientific sampling conducted by Roper, 80 percent of those polled said they believed people who enjoy nude sunbathing should be able to do so without interference from officials, as long as they do so at a beach that is accepted for that purpose. The approval rating for nude beaches is up from the 72 percent that was registered in a poll with identical questions taken by Gallup in 1983.

The NEF/Roper Poll 2000 was conducted on September 21, 2000, and included 1,010 adult U.S. residents. The poll has an error risk of 5 percent.

Responses to other questions in the poll suggest that more than 51 million Americans have, at one time or another, skinny-dipped or sunbathed nude in mixed-gender groups. Poll respondents were evenly split on the question of whether a portion of public land should be set aside for nude recreation, as it often is for other special recreation interests like snowmobiling, surfing, and hunting.

“That’s a tremendous difference from the numbers in the 1980s,” noted NEF Chair Bob Morton. “In the earlier poll, there were 15 percentage points separating those who favored setting aside special and secluded areas for nude sunbathing and those who didn’t. Now they’re absolutely even. I believe we’ve turned the corner in terms of acceptance.”

The Naturist Education Foundation, Inc. is the nonprofit educational and informational adjunct of The Naturist Society, an organization with more than 27,000 members who enjoy nude recreation throughout the U.S. and Canada. Through the gathering and dissemination of

information, NEF promotes body acceptance and an understanding of naturist issues.

For more information on the Naturist Education Foundation, or the NEF/Roper Poll 2000, visit the NEF Web site at: www.naturistaction.org or call (512) 282-6621 during business hours (Central Time).

ITEM F

TNS Beach Etiquette

Like any place where people gather, beaches have certain rules of etiquette. Some rules vary from one place to the next—rules about parking, trash, pets, etc. But the basic etiquette common to any nude beach can be summed up in a single word—RESPECT.

Over the years practical guidelines have evolved to prevent problems in clothing-optional settings. Please respect them, for your own sake and the sake of others.

DO...

- Obey parking regulations and other posted rules. They're there for a reason.
- Bring a towel, blanket or some equivalent. It's common practice when nude to place something between your bare buns and any public surface you sit or lie down on.
- Ask before taking pictures. You can't legally be stopped from taking pictures in public places, but asking permission is common courtesy. Not everyone wants to be in some stranger's photo album. And remember: parents should always be asked before children are photographed.
- Respect people's property. Don't assume because you're sharing a public beach you can share other people's property.
- Respect people's privacy. It's not wrong to seek out new friends, but it is wrong to monopolize a person's time when the welcome mat wasn't out in the first place.
- Come prepared. Bring the right supplies, such as food, beverages, chairs, towels and sunscreen. Don't expect others to share with you. Mooching is offensive.

- **Speak up for standards.** If a person seems unaware of proper etiquette, explain what's expected politely, of course. If he or she doesn't respond to polite suggestion, it's appropriate to notify the club manager or staff, a lifeguard, a beach user group volunteer, or someone else who can help get the message across.

DON'T...

- **Engage in overt sexual activity or exhibitionism. Nude is not lewd!**
- **Stare at, harass, or otherwise intimidate other beach users. Behave just as you're expected to in a clothed social setting.**
- **Trample on or through environmentally sensitive areas.**
- **Litter. Bring a trash bag and pack out what you brought in. And take some extra trash with you while you're at it.**
- **Violate other people's space with loud music. If you want to listen to the radio or your favorite CD, bring headphones.**

ITEM G

Beach Ambassador Program

Beach Ambassadors are Naturist volunteers, selected by the naturist organization that has assumed the care and mentorship of a particular clothing-optional beach. As a Beach Ambassador acts as a representative of the naturist organization involved, care should be taken that only those who are committed to working within the established and recognized standards of naturist philosophy, behavior, and etiquette are selected. The naturist group should also be prepared to revoke the ambassador status of those who intentionally violate its standards, or otherwise show their unsuitability after they have been selected.

Beach Ambassadors should have a distinctive form of identification. Naturally (in every sense of the word), the best choice is distinctive headgear with a design, color scheme, legend (e.g.: “Haulover Beach Ambassadors”), and/or logo which is solely reserved for the use of Beach Ambassadors, and not offered for sale or randomly distributed. Clear recognition of the presence of Beach Ambassadors on the beach can in itself go a long way toward maintaining a friendly family atmosphere at the beach.

The Mission of a Beach Ambassador at a clothing-optional beach is...

- To present naturism as a positive, mainstream, non-sexual, and life-enhancing social and recreational activity.
- To assist visitors who are new to clothing-optional activities, both by making them at ease and comfortable with their surroundings, and by explaining the accepted standards of naturist etiquette and courtesy.
- To actively watch for those individuals who, whether through ignorance or intent, violate the accepted standards of naturist behavior.
- To take prudent, restrained, and legally sanctioned action to counter those who are violating the accepted standards of behavior or the privacy of others.

- To respect the prerogatives of and to assist, and not hinder, legally sanctioned authorities such as police officers, lifeguards, and other public service officers.
- To help preserve and maintain the environmental quality, appearance, and safety of the beach, and to encourage others to do the same.
- To provide information on naturism, naturist activities, and destinations to interested individuals.
- To present himself or herself as an exemplary naturist citizen, by fully abiding by all the standards of naturist behavior, etiquette and courtesy, and further by not violating any laws, rules, or regulations in force at a particular beach.

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ITEM H

TNS Member Benefits

(The following, taken verbatim from a TNS promotional flyer, is a summary of TNS member benefits. Use it to recruit new members, or simply to remind yourself of the TNS member benefits package.)

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE: *N* (aka *Nude & Natural*): *N* takes you inside the fascinating world of naturism with incisive commentary and analysis, solid reporting, and naturist-friendly but always tasteful photography. Travel stories, club and resort updates, naturist politics and culture, *N* has it all.

A TNS MEMBER CARD: Your key to discounts at naturist clubs and resorts. As a cardholder, you'll have entrée to some of the finest naturist facilities in North America.

STORE DISCOUNTS: Our popular Skinny-Dipper Shop features an array of naturist-friendly items, from art books to videos to t-shirts to beach accessories, and is accessible online, by phone (toll-free), or via mail order.

SPECIAL EVENTS: Members are invited to attend our family-friendly annual Gatherings and Festivals, exciting naturist get-togethers that include games and sporting events, issue-oriented workshops, arts programs, social activities and much more. As a TNS member, you're entitled to registration fee discounts and advance information on Gatherings and Festivals.

REGIONAL AFFILIATES: As a TNS member you'll be welcome at over 200 local and regional naturist group activities, clubs, and resorts...often at a discount. These fine organizations share our naturist values; an up-to-date listing may be found in the Naturist Network section of *N* and on the TNS website, www.naturistsociety.com.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS: You may participate in our TNS-affiliated special interest groups, or "SIGs." Our SIGs add a naturist twist to a rainbow of interests and activities, from opera to the outdoors, from scuba diving to spirituality.

ADVERTISING DISCOUNTS: A special 10% discount is offered to members advertising in *N*.

TOLL-FREE PHONE SUPPORT: You'll be able to use our toll-free number (1-800-886-7230) for site updates, orders and more, from our knowledgeable office staff.

ACTIVIST OPPORTUNITIES: Your TNS membership helps support the Naturist Acton Committee and the Naturist Education Foundation. NAC and NEF are non-profit sister organizations of TNS dedicated respectively to protecting naturist rights and educating the public on naturism. TNS members may vote in the elections of the board of directors of NAC and NEF, and may be eligible to serve on those boards. As a TNS member you'll also receive occasional Action Alerts and Updates on issues of concern in your region. (For a small additional donation to either NAC or NEF, you can also receive the monthly *N* Newsletter, published by NAC, NEF and TNS).

All of the services outlined above are provided in the strictest confidence. The TNS mailing list is not for sale and never will be.

MEMBERSHIP RATES:

Choose Your Membership: Same rate applies to individual, couples or families living at the same address.

U.S.A.: _____\$55/year _____\$100/2years

***Senior Citizen/Young Adult/Disabled Veteran Rate:**

U.S.A.: _____\$45/year _____\$80/2years

(*Discount rate available in U.S.A. only. To be eligible, members must provide proof of age, or of veteran disability status.)

Canada: _____\$60/year _____\$110/2years

Foreign: _____\$70/year _____\$130/2years

Contact:

The Naturist Society

Suite 200

627 Bay Shore Drive

Oshkosh, WI 54901

800-886-7230

www.naturistsociety.com

ITEM I

“Who Are We? What Do We Do?” – An Introduction To NAC Area Reps

By George Winlock

Naturist Action Committee Area Representatives, or NACARs, are volunteers responsible to the Naturist Action Committee board. The nine-member board, elected by TNS members, includes among its responsibilities the monitoring of legislation. Because nine people cannot keep track of every legislative jurisdiction, they look to NACARs for help.

And who are these NACARs? Simply put, they are TNS members who serve as eyes and ears for the NAC board.

How do they do this? Each NACAR is responsible for an area that can be as large as a state or as small as a beach. Proposed legislation arising in a NACAR's designated area is monitored with an eye toward protecting naturist interests.

To do this a NACAR must:

- Identify proposed legislation that might affect naturists.
- Get the actual wording of any relevant bill or ordinance.
- Try to determine if a measure under scrutiny will most likely die quietly in committee and, if not, see if sections that pertain to naturism need modification.
- Contact legislators and other interested parties to engage their support.

As the progress of a proposed bill or ordinance is monitored, an Area Rep will discuss the situation with the NAC board member he or she is assigned to. If necessary, action may be requested. NACARs sometimes attend meetings and, on occasion, address a committee, council, or other governmental body.

Sometimes NACARs attend town or city council meetings to try to ensure that localities don't pass anti-nudity ordinances or close local skinny-dipping areas.

At times nudists are ticketed on a beach or in some remote area. NACARs help here, too. In one case a NACAR contacted the National Park Service and was able to discuss why a ticket was issued and how future conflicts could be avoided. In another case a NACAR was able to help a ticketed party obtain legal advice and reach an amicable settlement.

How much time does a NACAR spend doing these kinds of things? Being a NACAR is a full-time job only in the sense that an Area Rep must remain aware of his or her responsibilities. Checking state legislation does not take a lot of time if one has a computer and the state legislature can be accessed through it (having a computer is helpful but it is not a requirement). When a NACAR reads the paper, watches the news on TV, or talks with people, extra attention is needed to spot issues that may affect naturists.

Most NACARs are not expected to give media interviews. Normally, that role is left to those with experience in dealing with the press.

Helping at Festivals and Gatherings is another thing NACARs do. Sitting at an information booth or selling raffle tickets, while not required, is a good way to spread the word about NAC and raise funds. NACARs work out a schedule so that the workload is evenly distributed. That way, they are still able to participate in activities and events. Attendance at NAC meetings while at a Gathering or Festival is encouraged, but not required.

To be a NACAR, does one have to be open about being a naturist? The short answer is "yes," but in reality it depends on the amount of involvement one is comfortable with. But NACARs should be proud, not ashamed, of their lifestyle.

How can you become a NACAR? Simply contact the NAC board member responsible for the area you are willing to cover and complete an application form. The application will then be submitted to the NAC board for approval.

Why should you become a NACAR? To preserve the lifestyle we have come to enjoy, we must help protect it. Those who oppose naturist activities are a small but extremely vocal minority. They word their opposition to us in ways that make legislators vote in their favor rather than ours. Naturists have to stand up to this vocal minority and let them know that we too support “family values,” that they do not have exclusive rights to the term.

In order for NAC board members to function efficiently, they need the help of NACARs. And in order for NACARs to be effective, they need help from the naturist community.

While being a NACAR is not for everyone, it’s an important job. Consider the possibilities. The pay may not be great, but you’ll be amply rewarded in knowing that you’re helping promote and protect the lifestyle we all enjoy.

George Winlock has been a NACAR since 1998. He lives in Paw Paw, WV. To learn more about becoming a NACAR, go to: www.naturistaction.org or contact NAC Executive Director Bob Morton at: ctnudists@aol.com.

ITEM J

You Too Can Exercise Your Right To Write

By Matthew Kerwin

Premier Hotel And Resorts reply to my letter to the magazine's editor got me excited about writing the media. I came across the publication in an Ann Arbor, Michigan bookstore. Thumbing through it, I noticed that the Grand Lido Resorts in Jamaica did not make any mention of their nude beaches. My letter to the publication pointed this out and called into question the accuracy of the rest of the listings. I pointed out that the existence of a nude beach at a resort would certainly be of interest to a significant number of vacationers. Some time later, to my surprise, I received a package that included the latest copy of the publication. A letter thanked me for my interest and directed me to check out the listings for the Grand Lido Resorts. Sure enough, listed in the amenities were the au naturel beaches.

I've written to many local and national publications and media outlets since then and even have had letters published. I've had several letters printed in my local paper, the *Ann Arbor News*, and one lengthy opinion piece. I've encouraged others to also write the paper, and they too have been published.

Editors do respond to the interests of their readers. Even the publisher of your conservative hometown newspaper may allow a more objective view of naturism if he hears from even a few of you.

What do you say in such a letter? The main thing is to let the publisher know that social nudity is a healthy, family-friendly activity practiced by people from all walks of life—some of whom are among the publication's readership. Write a short letter and stick to one central point, whatever it may be. Read *N* and articles on naturist websites to familiarize yourself with good points that you can make your own. Concerned about having your name in the paper? You can state that your letter is not meant for publication, or you can create a pen name for your letter—although letters in which the writer's real name is withheld are often not published. If you do use a pen name, tell others in your household about it, because many publications will call back to

confirm that you want your letter published. You don't want your family saying, "That person doesn't live here." Obviously, using your real name is simpler. Plus, it demonstrates that we naturists have nothing to hide.

Respond to any article that mentions naturist-related items. I expressed disappointment to *Travel Holiday* that an article, "25 Beaches in Florida," failed to mention Haulover Beach. *Caribbean Travel & Life* published my letter in response to the article, "Our Favorite Beaches." Therein, the author mentioned the existence of several nude beaches but said nothing more about them. I suggested that clothing-optional enthusiasts would be interested in the same information that interests any beachgoer: type of beach, suitability for swimming, available amenities, and treatment of naturists (welcomed or merely tolerated "if no one complains"). In each letter I stuck to one topic.

When a magazine is remarkably bad in its policy, voice concern. *Condé Nast Traveler* for instance, never showed nudity, not even bare female breasts, despite many photographs of beaches all over the world. To my dismay, the same magazine, in a feature on Las Vegas, printed a prominent photo of a bare-breasted stripper leaning toward a leering man who was offering her money. Her breasts were fully exposed. What? *Condé Nast* prints this but can't show a bare-breasted woman sunning on a beach? I took the magazine to task for this. Many months later, when the same publication actually did show bare-breasted women on a French beach, I wrote to thank it for the apparent change in editorial policy. I also noticed that *National Geographic* had a picture of bare-breasted white European women on a Tahitian beach and wrote to thank it for this (at the same time expressing naturist values in my letter).

Occasionally, some magazine will do a good article on a naturist subject. In those cases I often write to compliment the reporter and thank the editor for the article and maybe expand on some particularly worthy point. *Allure* devoted most of an issue in 2000 to the theme of nudity and did so without giggly salaciousness; and *Jane* had an excellent article on a reporter's first visit to a nudist resort. I did challenge both magazines to avoid the titillation of near nudity and cheesecake poses and to include instead, photos of unabashed nudes of all physical types when appropriate to the article—reminding the editor of *Jane* of, in her own

words, “the importance of leaving out of the magazine messages that reinforce unhealthy attitudes toward physical self-image.”

Sometimes, a magazine will include pictures of unabashed, non-sexualized nudity. *Self*, for example, included the depiction of unabashedly bare-breasted women in two different articles. I congratulated the editor for the attitude, contrasting it to *Condé Nast’s* policy at the time and suggesting that the depiction of women exercising control over their dress is verboten in some publications, possibly because the publisher has a stake in keeping women subject to fashion. Thus I turned naturism into a women’s issue.

Body issues are an opportunity to extol the benefits of naturism and are a subject in every woman’s magazine every month. *Elle* magazine even published my response to “The Thin Threat,” a disturbing account of the poor manner in which women treat each other regarding body image. I recommended nudism as a means for women to “disentangle their self-image from bodies and fashion.”

Be creative in finding a reason to mention naturist issues. I noticed that protecting the right to hunt foxes was becoming a major issue in *The Chronicle of the Horse*, as animal rights activists in England were successfully pressuring for a ban on fox hunting and were beginning to make it an issue in this country. In a letter to the magazine, I pointed out that efforts to protect fox hunting were doomed unless equestrians worked to assure the liberties of all, even those folks whom you might dislike. I said that if you elect officials who pander to your prejudices, or your particular religious agenda, you would be electing people who will also sacrifice your particular interests to court the majority or a powerful minority. So, I added, it is in your interest to support the rights of all—and here I ran off a list of minorities including, yes, nudists and their right to some public nude beaches. The magazine published my letter.

Less successfully I’ve written to television networks and producers. I’ve yet to receive an acknowledgement, nor have I seen favorable change. Does it irritate you that all nudity on American television (and in most American movies) is sexualized? With rare exceptions, the nudity has to be that of a beautiful woman (men—bare buns only) who is having sex, being raped, killed, or is already dead. Really!

On network television, nudity is verboten, yet sexual acts are rampant (as is graphic violence). Thus we have the ridiculousness of shows like *Elimidate*, that show women grinding their groins into men's faces or having shots of alcohol licked off their chests, but pixellate the bare breasts of a nonchalant woman on a Spanish beach. They even pixilated a nude statue! Who are they worried about offending?

Since PBS occasionally can broadcast nudity, so can the commercial networks. Well, let them know their self-imposed censorship policies offend you. I've written the producers of *NYPD Blue* (the show's much-ballyhooed nudity is always associated with sexual situations). I've written *The Tonight Show* (pixilated a picture in a *Playboy*) and the *Late Show with David Letterman* (pixilated nudes riding bikes). Perhaps if more of us write, the network producers will respond more favorably. If eventually successful, it will have been worth the effort. (You can usually find where to write a show by searching the Internet.)

You also have a right—even a duty—to write public officials. The U.S. Constitution protects that right and so do most, probably all, state constitutions. It may be our most basic and protected American right, so use it. Write your state department of natural resources. Write your state and local officials. I wrote the state attorney general to complain about her blanket and false statement that “nudity is illegal in Michigan” and gave the reasons why her statement was wrong, and I wrote to protest her support for the suppression of the “Naked Mile” run at the University of Michigan. Including a cover letter asking to be kept informed of any legislative action regarding nudity, I sent a copy of the letter to my state representative as well. At least my state representative responded positively. Obviously, coordinated action by all naturists will be more effective; so do respond to any Naturist Action Committee Alert, but don't wait for an emergency to let your public officials know that you have an interest that deserves fair consideration.

You have visited some public nudist beach somewhere, haven't you? After visiting Gunnison Beach at Gateway National Seashore in New Jersey—a federally run, public, clothing-optional beach that provides lifeguards, lavatories, refreshment stands, and police protection for nudists—I wrote the park superintendent thanking him for maintaining the beach. I also wrote the hotel where my wife and I stayed, explaining

what a jewel the nude beach is and emphasizing that the beach was my reason for visiting the area. I also sent a letter to the local chamber of commerce saying much the same thing, and also adding how much money I spent around the area.

I mentioned my letter-writing plans to one regular at Gunnison. Oh, how he averred my actions would only make officials aware of the nude use. What nonsense! The officials are well aware of public nude beaches in their areas. The cranks certainly let them know. It can only help our cause to balance any complaints with positive feedback. Let the officials know how valued these beaches are. After visiting Haulover Beach in Florida and Mazomanie Beach in Wisconsin, I wrote similar letters to public officials in those areas. Before even visiting any of these areas, I called or e-mailed the state and/or city travel bureaus to request information on, among other things, nude beaches in the area. Now, I already knew what beaches existed, but I figure the more requests they get for such information the more likely it is that they will begin to understand the value of the beaches.

Even though my state has no official public nude beach, I requested from Michigan's Travel Bureau information on nude beaches in the state. They wrote back to say that none exist, but did include a photocopy of a page listing nudist resorts. If more people take the time to request information, maybe Michigan (and other states) will more seriously consider nude recreation as a valid and profitable tourist attraction. Get the bureaucrats on your side and the legislators are more likely to follow.

Get the media to treat simple nudity as natural and normative, and society will follow. So please take the time to write. We will be a force if we all exercise our right to write.

ITEM K

How to Organize a TNS Festival

Naturist Society Gatherings and Festivals are, after more than 20 years, now well-established events. We try hard to bring this special blend of fun, learning, networking, activism, friendship, and growth to as many parts of the country as possible. But we are only a handful of people. We can't make it to every area of the country every year. So we are letting naturist groups, clubs, even energetic individuals know that the opportunity exists for them to bring one of these exceptional events to their region by organizing it themselves.

What Is a Festival?

Festivals follow a format established by TNS. What is so special about these events? Two key concepts that are central to the TNS philosophy: nudity-plus, and a grassroots focus. Nudity-plus means there is more to naturism than simply being naked. Body acceptance, body awareness, health and fitness, and an embrace of the natural world are all involved with the concept of naturism.

Recognizing these things, TNS Festivals are:

- organized primarily through the cooperative work of volunteer naturists from the region where a festival is held and volunteers from the host facility—usually a nudist club (though larger events are sometimes held at non-naturist venues).
- opportunities to experience a variety of activities, discussions, and workshops that relate to nude recreation, body acceptance, or both.
- a marketplace for naturist groups and organizations to share information about what they have to offer naturists in their region.
- venues that may be used to explore the frontiers of naturism; anything from arts to healing touch new ways of thinking about the body and relationships. Many now-mainstream naturist ideas (e.g., acceptance of single gay naturists, naturist photography guidelines, and formation of

NAC & NEF) were first put forth and examined by a wide cross-section of naturists during Gatherings.

- at least a partial discussion on what public lands recreation areas are available for naturists. A public-lands outing is often part of the program, as are legal/political discussions.
- open and inclusive. There are rarely, if ever closed, meetings at Gatherings and Festivals. The events are not just open to TNS members, but to all naturists and newcomers too (subject, of course, to the usual naturist etiquette and behavior standards). Families with children are welcomed, and often at least a portion of the activities will be planned with them in mind.

What's the Difference Between a Gathering and a Festival?

The basic difference is that Gatherings are coordinated by TNS staff, and Festivals are coordinated on a regional basis, but working closely with TNS staff on things like timing, location, and promotion. Festivals tend to be slightly smaller and reflect regional interests more than Gatherings do.

Why Are Festivals Organized?

TNS has always had a grassroots focus. To be an effective grassroots group, you need to network, coordinate, and work closely with others in your region that share your interests. Gatherings and festivals provide a great opportunity for meeting, learning from, bonding with, and learning about other naturists and naturist organizations in your region.

And, for groups and clubs, there's the added benefit of additional exposure for your organization to new people who might not otherwise have become involved with you. You can have an opportunity to host, if you're a club; or at least, to have an information booth, a workshop, a beach trip, or some other involvement that gives you a chance to promote your group and its activities.

Participants will come away more educated, and aware of, not just the good opportunities we all have for increased naturist involvement, but also some of the challenges we face.

Plus, Festivals are fun. They are goodwill efforts, giving something back to members and promoting group cohesion. You get to socialize, play, and possibly learn at the same time.

Who Can or Should Organize a Festival?

Candidates should be:

- TNS members.
- active in a TNS group.
- familiar with the Gathering/Festival format and concept.
- proven organizers; at the very least they should have organizing experience at the group, club, or beach level.
- able to get along with others; good relationships with regional naturists and naturist organizations is critical.
- In a good, trusting relationship with the proposed host club
- Able to draw upon many regional naturist volunteers to host workshops, seminars, and games.

Where Are Festivals Held?

Festivals are almost always held at naturist clubs that can accommodate 200-300 participants. Of course, ideally the club will be one that already has a strong working relationship with TNS. At a minimum, the club should be part of the TNS Network. The club should enjoy a good reputation in the region, because you will be drawing locally for the bulk of attendees and volunteers.

How do you find a club that is willing to host? Ask around. Most clubs will be more than happy to have a Festival held on their grounds. For the most part they are already set up to do everything that you need them to do; you'll simply be bringing in more guests for a few days. Festivals are generally a good deal for clubs; most host clubs will agree that it is

beneficial for them and worth whatever extra work may be involved in preparing for the event.

When Are Festivals Held?

There are only so many weeks in a year, and you should not undertake to plan a Festival if you can't or won't coordinate with TNS on dates and locations. Ideally, TNS would like to see one Festival held in each major region of the country every year.

Summer months are obviously the best, but there are only so many of them. If you live in an area where climate is not much of an issue, the options become much more varied. The annual Midwinter Festival in Florida, which began as a Gathering and became a Festival in 1999, is now one of the most popular Festivals.

What Are Some of the Things I Have to Do As a Festival Organizer?

- 1) Coordination and planning with TNS (place, date, program consultation, promotional consultation, etc).
- 2) Coordination and planning with host club on all aspects of the Festival, including registration and check-in, meal planning, entertainment, etc.
- 3) Solicitation of volunteers for activities and workshops, and the organization of activities and workshops into a schedule.
- 4) Planning and usually production of materials to promote the Festival. TNS can help with formatting and the like, and usually handles a lot of the distribution, but the actual information should come directly from the organizer.
- 5) On-site coordination, making sure workshop leaders are present and have what they need, trying to keep things running on schedule, and resolving or at least reporting problems that attendees have (or finding someone who can).

6) Delegation. Ideally you will have some other key folks—whether from your group, your beach or the host club—to help carry out the necessary tasks.

What Are Some of the Things I *Don't* Have to Do?

Generally, the way a Festival works is that the organizing individual or group takes care of most of the activities planning and coordination, and lets the club take care of the things that the club would normally take care of when any group is present: registration, check-in, security, maintenance, food, overnight accommodations, etc.

Often, the club also takes care of evening entertainment (such as hiring bands or dance DJs); however that doesn't mean that the organizers can't offer input (say you want a DJ and no bands, or live music but no DJ, or no karaoke, or extra karaoke). Plus there are often other evening activities planned (such as movie nights, game nights, bonfires, and storytelling, etc).

Workshop leaders and marketplace vendors for the most part take care of their own needs. Most workshops are pretty low-tech and don't require fancy equipment. At most you may need to coordinate getting mics, or maybe a TV/VCR, or white boards for presenters; clubs usually have most of these things. If you've done your planning ahead of time (finding out what people need when scheduling them, for example) this shouldn't require too much work.

Generally, a small registration fee will be charged to Festival attendees in addition to grounds, camping, and meal fees charged by the host club. The host club will keep its grounds and camping fees and will be responsible for all the costs associated with running the club for the Festival days. The host club usually picks up some or all of the cost of the mailings. The registration fees may be used to cover other expenses related to the organization of the Festival, including a portion to TNS to cover its expenses. The remaining proceeds usually are donated to the Naturist Action Committee. So far, TNS has organized this fairly informally, and the distribution of fees and expenses has largely been at the discretion of the coordinators. As TNS opens this up to more people, it is likely to be made a little more formal.

In keeping with the grassroots spirit of Gatherings and Festivals, workshop presenters and activities leaders are almost always unpaid volunteers. Sometimes certain fees (perhaps grounds fees for the day the activity is done) can be waived for presenters.

Other Things to Keep in Mind

Organizing a Festival is a great way for a group to increase its visibility, to offer something unique and exciting to its members, to reinforce its relationship with local and regional naturist organizations, to strengthen its ties to TNS, and to do something important to support naturist activism. Festivals can be fun and fulfilling, even for their organizers. If you're up to the challenge, talk to us!

A good tip is to work with a non-landed club in the region to get help in lining up workshop, activity, or game hosts. The host clubs should provide some of the workshops, but a tri-lateral group consisting of: TNS, the host club, and the co-hosting non-landed club can make things run much smoother, and everyone involves benefits accordingly.

ITEM L

Frequently Asked Questions About Naturism

What is a naturist?

Naturists are people who believe the human body is inherently dignified and worthy of respect. Naturists enjoy spending time in their “natural state,” that is, clothes-free. Naturists believe people should have the right to be nude at appropriate times and places, public and private. The Naturist Society is a national organization whose members share this philosophy of body acceptance.

Naturism is not a radical new idea. The philosophy is thousands of years old. In ancient cultures as diverse as the Japanese, Roman, Hawaiian, and Greek, non-sexual social nudism was common. Skinny-dipping, or swimming without suits, was the norm until the early 20th century. Today, millions of families around the world have embraced naturism as a healthy way of living and recreating.

Why do naturists like to be nude?

Naturists reject clothes when possible for the same reason most people avoid wearing a three-piece suit to the beach: It’s more comfortable to be free of them. The benefits naturists claim from clothes-free recreation are as varied as the individuals who participate, but may include relaxation and stress relief; improved body image and self-esteem; the chance to form social relationships based on character rather than appearance; a deeper feeling of connection to the earth and other naked creatures; and the satisfaction of a more natural, rational approach to the body.

How are naturists different from other people?

In their day-to-day lives, naturists are not very different at all from the people you know. There are naturists in every profession and socio-economic level. Some are married, some are single, and some are parents with children.

Naturists tend to be well educated. They are often politically minded and vote across the spectrum. Many are religious; virtually every major denomination is represented.

Chances are, you already are acquainted with some naturists. Some of your friends, neighbors and co-workers probably enjoy skinny-dipping from time to time. Perhaps you yourself have visited a nude beach or resort, either close to home or while traveling in Europe or the Caribbean.

Naturist gatherings bring together people from all walks of life but with a fundamental similarity. Naturists say this diversity of background combined with a shared belief in body acceptance provides an atmosphere of tolerance and openness unmatched by other social groups and settings.

What do naturists like to do while nude?

The activities you might enjoy at a clothing-optional beach or resort are the same ones you'd enjoy at any beach or resort: Swimming, running, walking, Frisbee, bicycling, picnicking, or just reading and relaxing. Many resorts have volleyball, tennis, petanque and other sports facilities, along with hot tubs, saunas, and spas.

If you're an outdoors type, you might enjoy backcountry hiking, camping, sailing, canoeing (sometimes called "canuding"), hot springs soaking, or backpacking. If you live in a climate where the weather turns cold, look for a local naturist group to provide pool parties, bowling, roller-skating, or other indoor nude activities in winter. The Naturist Society reports on a full range of such activities and the places where they happen in its quarterly journal, *Nude & Natural*.

Is naturism popular?

Very! Millions of people have experienced the freedom of nude recreation. Long accepted in European countries like France, Germany and the Netherlands, today clothing-optional beaches and resorts may

be found across the globe and are increasingly popular in the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, Australia, Britain, Spain, South Africa, Brazil, New Zealand—even Russia! *The World’s Best Nude Beaches & Resorts* lists over 1,000 such destinations worldwide!

In the U.S., poll after poll demonstrates public acceptance of naturism. A survey conducted in 2000 for the Naturist Education Foundation by the Roper Organization found that 80 % of Americans believe that people who enjoy nude sunbathing should be able to do so without interference from officials as long as they do so at a beach that is accepted for that purpose. The same poll found that 25 percent of Americans have skinny-dipped in mixed company.

While the majority clearly accepts the naturist lifestyle, it seems our lawmakers and politicians in North America have yet to catch up with the times. Although there are a number of traditionally recognized clothes-optional beaches in the U.S., only a few are officially designated.

What’s the difference between a naturist and a nudist?

Both terms refer to persons who believe in the inherent dignity of the human form, whether or not it is covered with clothing, and who reject the notion that all nudity is sexual. “Naturism” is the term more commonly used outside the U.S. to describe family-friendly clothes-free recreation at appropriate times and places; “nudism” is an American term and usually refers to nude recreation that occurs within the confines of private clubs organized for that purpose. The Naturist Society chose the former term because it better describes TNS’ organizational goals.

Some who prefer the term naturism think of it as “nudity with more” — that is, they have embraced other values that tie in with their belief in body acceptance (environmentalism, freedom of expression, anti-consumerism, and others). Others use naturism simply to indicate a preference for nude activities in “the great outdoors” rather than at a private nudist club or resort. Still others call themselves naturists primarily because of their membership in The Naturist Society. The majority of those who enjoy skinny-dipping and other clothes-free activities, though, reject attaching any particular label to it at all.

What about sex? Are naturists a bunch of perverts or exhibitionists?

Absolutely not. To the contrary, naturists believe it is our cultural heritage of body shame that leads to an unhealthy obsession with sex. Naturists believe sex is a normal, healthy part of life, but one that should be enjoyed by consenting adults in private. They believe clothes-optional beaches, resorts, or social gatherings are inappropriate places for sexual activity. They recognize that while nude is not lewd, public sex is offensive to many people, and almost always illegal.

Naturists are not exhibitionists. They do not wish to offend those who fear nakedness, and therefore work for designated public and private areas at which people have the option to wear clothes or not. They prefer such areas to be well marked so people who may be offended can easily avoid them. As in all social situations, there is an etiquette to clothes-free gatherings that's based on common sense and respect for others.

Isn't it against the law to be nude in public?

Maybe not. All 50 states have laws addressing public nudity, and there are Canadian and territorial laws addressing the topic, too. But laws are not uniform across North America. In some places, nudity is only restricted under certain circumstances, such as being reckless in your disregard for the presence of someone who would be offended.

Definitions of nudity vary wildly among jurisdictions, too. In many places, a top-free woman is not considered nude, while in other places, a man wearing trousers could be considered nude in some circumstances. One Florida county started a legal trend a few years ago with a bizarre 250-word mathematical definition of the human buttocks!

Enlightened jurisdictions are making a distinction between lewd activity and simple non-sexual nudity (e.g., skinny-dipping or nude sunbathing). Even those retaining relatively harsh penalties for nudity are beginning to see the benefit of having public places set aside for clothing-optional use.

For questions involving legal interpretations, TNS recommends that you consult an attorney. For a complete listing of the various state laws regarding nudity and an interesting insight into the essential grassroots process of monitoring state and local lawmakers and developing proactive means of advancing naturism, visit the website of the Naturist Action Committee (www.naturistaction.org).

I'd have to lose 15 pounds first. Do all naturists have perfect bodies?

Most of us are so accustomed to viewing idealized versions of the human body in movies, in magazines, and on television that we've developed an unrealistic idea of what the "average" body is like. Consequently, as a first-time naturist you may fear that everyone else will have a thin, fit, perfectly proportioned body, and that you will not. This is not the case. At clothes-optional beaches and resorts you will be greeted by body types of all kinds: young and old, tall and short, fat and thin, tanned and pale, and everything in between. Some people will have physical disabilities; others will carry scars from past injuries or surgeries. Few will conform to an artificial "Hollywood standard" of perfection, a standard that's impossible to achieve for most people. What's more, you will find that all types of bodies are accepted just as they are.

Will people get "turned on" looking at me? Or, will I become sexually aroused by all the nudity?

It's common in cultures that link nudity and sexuality for people to believe that anyone who is nude is somehow motivated by sexual desire. Women may worry that men will ogle them or come on to them. Men might fear that they will embarrass themselves by becoming aroused at the sight of so many naked bodies. The truth is that neither happens very often.

Women concerned about gawkers should be encouraged to learn that it is socially unacceptable at the places where naturists gather for people to stare, harass, or intimidate others. If someone is making you feel uncomfortable with their comments or behavior, it is right to speak up against it, and to notify the resort manager, activity leader or beach user group volunteer. Unacceptable behavior need not be tolerated.

Men who fear they will get an erection should know that it is rare in naturist settings. Some say it's because the initial nervousness of the new situation inhibits a physical sexual response. But the most important reason is that a naturist environment is not sexually charged. If a man should experience an involuntary erection, the appropriate response would be to casually cover up with a towel, roll over onto his stomach, jump in the water, or otherwise excuse himself until the moment passes. Naturists know that erections are natural and often involuntary, but it's considered impolite to "flaunt it."

Breaking the link between nudity and sexuality often opens an entirely new dimension of body and self-acceptance. For most people it's an exhilarating realization of physical and spiritual freedom.

Will I be forced to undress the minute I arrive?

Some people fear they will be embarrassed to undress in front of others for the first time. The good news is that all public lands naturist areas, and most private naturist resorts, are clothing-optional. That means it is entirely up to the individual whether, when, and how to disrobe.

At nude beaches especially, you will find it easy to go at your own pace. In fact, you will probably find that you are eager to undress, since you might feel strange when you are the only one in clothing! Some resorts have stricter "undress codes" than others; it's best to ask the management when you call to arrange your visit, if this is important to you. Most clubs will not allow clothing of any kind in their spas or swimming pools, for example, whether or not clothes are optional elsewhere on the grounds.

Most naturists will dress at some times (like when the sun goes down and it's chilly) or for some activities (like barbecuing). Women who are menstruating sometimes will wear shorts, a pareo, or other wrap-around (though others simply wear tampons and tuck in or cut off the "string"). For the most part, naturists prefer to be naked, and will be whenever the opportunity is there.

Are my children welcome?

Naturism is for all ages, and naturist beaches and resorts in general are family-friendly places (though some parents may find those out-of-the-way beaches difficult to reach with the little ones). Parents may wonder whether their children will want to participate in nude activities, and the answer depends a great deal upon the child and what messages he or she has received about the body while growing up. Young children are natural nudists, but it's not unusual for older ones to become less interested in nude recreation at the onset of puberty. How parents react to these differing developmental stages varies, but a child's fears and feelings should be respected. Discretion is the watchword here.

Some parents worry whether their children will be safe in a nude setting. Nude beaches and resorts tend to be very safe places, and naturists do tend to look out for each other. But as in all situations involving children, especially near water, parental vigilance is recommended.

While introducing one's children to naturism is a matter of parental choice, Alayne Yates, professor of psychiatry at the University of Arizona, has shown that in cultures where nudity is common, children grow up to be less critical of their bodies. Other studies have shown similar, positive benefits for children who are raised in a nudity-friendly environment.

I would like to try naturism, but my spouse/partner/friend isn't interested. What do I do?

For many people the idea of baring it all in front of strangers is terrifying. Some harbor feelings of shame because they feel their bodies are somehow flawed. Others see nudity as immodest or sinful. These beliefs may be difficult to overcome. But most of the time it is just plain fear of the unknown that keeps people from trying nude recreation.

One way to get ready to "go public" is to learn what to expect. In addition to the information found in *Nude & Natural* magazine, the World's Best Nude Beaches & Resorts, and on The Naturist Society website, TNS has several fine videotapes that provide an introduction to naturism, all of which are available through the Skinny-Dipper Shop.

You may want to call a naturist group or club in your area and speak to a representative about clothes-optional activities they might be sponsoring where you and your partner can disrobe at your own pace. Many group members are willing to meet with new naturists in a clothed setting to discuss concerns. Many private clubs will offer clothed tours of their facilities, or open houses several times a year. To find a group or club near you, see the Naturist Network section of each issue of *Nude & Natural* or check the TNS website. Be understanding if your partner is nervous, and don't force the issue. Remember, everyone had a "first time" for skinny-dipping. Some of those men and women who were most reluctant at first are now among the most enthusiastic participants.

ITEM M

Excerpts, Quotes and Anecdotes...

“The best dress for walking is nakedness.” —*The Complete Walker III*,
Colin Fletcher

“On the fourth day of telecommuting, I realized that clothes are totally unnecessary.”
—“*Dilbert*,” by Scott Adams

“Nudism is not a spectator sport. We all have the equipment and everyone can play.”
—Jim Cunningham, *Naturist Life International*

“There is but one temple in this Universe: The Body. We speak to God whenever we lay our hands upon it.”—Thomas Carlyle

“When the culture into which we are born strays too far from nature’s laws, we suffer; a ‘naturalization’ is in order.” —TNS founder Lee Baxandall

“It is an interesting question how far people would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes.”—Henry David Thoreau

“What spirit is so empty and blind, that it cannot recognize the fact that the foot is more noble than the shoe, and skin more beautiful than the garment with which it is clothed?” —Michelangelo

“After it was found in practice to be better to strip than to cover up all those parts, then what was ridiculous to the eyes faded away in the face of what argument showed to be best.” —Plato’s *Republic*

“What a singular fact for an angel visitant to this earth to carry back in his note-book, that men were forbidden to expose their bodies under the severest penalties!” —*Journals*, Henry David Thoreau

“Clothes therefore, must be truly a badge of greatness; the insignia of the superiority of man over all other animals, for surely there could be no

other reason for wearing the hideous things.” —*Tarzan of the Apes*,
Edgar Rice Burroughs

“The convention missionaries call modesty has no standard and cannot have one, because it is opposed to nature and reason and is therefore an artificiality and subject to anybody’s whim, anybody’s diseased caprice.”
—Mark Twain

“...Nowhere, he thought with satisfaction, could there be a group of young ladies that wasted less time upon frivol and froth. No fluffy-duff primping, no feather, no fuss. They were simply themselves and chose not to disguise it.” —*The Seven Lady Godivas*, Dr. Seuss

“The Church says: The body is a sin.
Science says: The body is a machine.
Advertising says: The body is a business.
The body says: I am a fiesta.” —*Windows on the World*, Eduardo Galeano

“[19th century Washington raconteur Benjamin Ogle] Taylor tells the story of President John Quincy Adams telling an English visitor the tale of how he lost his clothes to a high tide while bathing in the Potomac River. The president then walked nude along the riverbank until he found someone to take a message to Mrs. Adams to send him a suit of clothes. The English guest replied, ‘I now have a clearer idea of republican simplicity than I did before.’” —from an article in *The Washington Post*

“Social nudity permits us to heighten our awareness of how much we are like one another and how equally vulnerable we are. In turn we may learn to lessen our fear of the gaze of another. Arbitrary and fragmenting barriers of sex, class, and social position are lowered, as individuals grow in sensitivity and dispense with the trappings of difference, privilege, and fear. The individual can thereby be strengthened, the alienated recovered and revitalized.” —TNS founder Lee Baxandall

“Soon as it was night out we shoved; when we got her out to about the middle we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes, and dangled our legs in the water, and talked about all kinds of things—we was always naked, day and night,

whenever the mosquitoes would let us—the new clothes Buck’s folks made for me was too good to be comfortable, and besides I didn’t go much for clothes, no how.”—*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain

“The love of the body of a man or woman balks account, the body itself balks account,
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect...
The swimmer naked in the swimming bath, seen as he swims through the transparent green-shine, or lies with his face up and rolls
Silently to and fro in the heave of the water,
If anything is sacred the human body is sacred,
And the glory and the sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted, and in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred
Body, is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.”
—“*I Sing the Body Electric*,” Walt Whitman

“Nakedness as such is not to be equated with physical shamelessness. Immodesty is only present when nakedness plays a negative role with regard to the value of the person...The human body is not in itself shameful, nor for the same reasons are sensual reactions, and human sensuality in general. Shamelessness (just like shame and modesty) is a function of the interior of the individual.”
—Pope John Paul II

“Sweet, sane, still Nakedness in Nature!—ah if poor, sick, prurient humanity in cities might really know you once more! Is not nakedness then indecent? No, not inherently. It is your thought, your sophistication, your fear, and your respectability that is indecent. There come moods when these clothes of ours are not only too irksome to wear, but are themselves indecent. Perhaps indeed he or she to whom the free exhilarating ecstasy of nakedness in Nature has never been eligible (and how many thousands there are!) has not really known what purity is—nor what faith or art or health really is.” —*Specimen Days*, Walt Whitman

“The horse I ride has his own fell: strip him of the girths and flaps and extraneous tags I have fastened round him, and the noble creature is his own sempster and weaver and spinner; nay his own boot maker, jeweler, and man-milliner; he bounds free through the valleys, with a perennial

rain-proof court-suit on his body; wherein warmth and easiness of fit have reached perfection... While I—Good Heaven!—have thatched myself over with the dead fleeces of sheep, the bark of vegetables, the entrails of worms, the hides of oxen or seals, the felt of furred beasts; and walk abroad a moving Rag-screen, over heaped with shreds and tatters raked from the Charnel-house of Nature, where they would have rotted, to rot on me more slowly! Day after day, I must thatch myself anew.”—*Sartor Resartus*, Thomas Carlyle

“During his White House years, [Theodore Roosevelt] seemed to spend as much time in Rock Creek as at his desk. And ‘in’ was the operative word, as friends regretfully learned. Sooner or later, the president would find an excuse to step naked into the stream, even when it was jostling with ice floes. ‘Gentlemen, we will have to ferry our clothes across on our heads.’”—From a 2003 *Arizona Republic* column by TR biographer Edmund Morris

“The big problem with pornography is defining it. You can’t just say its pictures of naked people. For example, you have these primitive African tribes that exist by chasing the wildebeest on foot, and they have to go around largely naked, because, as the old tribal saying goes: ‘N’ wam k honi soit qui mali,’ which means, ‘If you think you can catch a wildebeest in this climate and wear clothes at the same time, then I have some beach front property in the desert region of Northern Mali that you may be interested in.’ So it’s not considered pornographic when National Geographic publishes color photographs of these people hunting wildebeest naked... But if *National Geographic* were to publish an article titled ‘The Girls of the California Junior College System Hunt the Wildebeest Naked,’ some people would call it pornography. But others would not. And still others, such as ... Jerry Falwell, would get upset about seeing the wildebeest naked.”—Columnist Dave Barry