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**The Newsletter of the *Naturist Action Committee* and the *Naturist Education Foundation***

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## Nudism/Naturism Before the "-ism": The American Roots of Nude Culture in the United States

### Part 1, by Doug Hickok

We all know what the history books say: Naturism/Nudism was born in the Free Body Culture movement in Germany in the early 1900's. In 1929, Kurt Barthel started the first nudist club in the USA, the American League for Physical Culture (ALPC). In 1931, some of the members formed an offshoot called the International Nudist League (INL), which later became the American Sunbathing Association (ASA), and is now the American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR).

As part of ASA's 25th anniversary in 1956, this history was authored as an essay ("The Beginning of a National Organization") written by Barthel, and has been adopted as being "the history". He asserts that the "first clandestine meetings of the first lone American nudists" in 1929 happened because he imported the idea from Germany.

Books like "Nudism Comes to America" (1932) supported this history. On page 27, it goes so far to state: "Before 1930, no record of an article on European nudism is to be found, at least in the better known and established monthlies or weeklies."

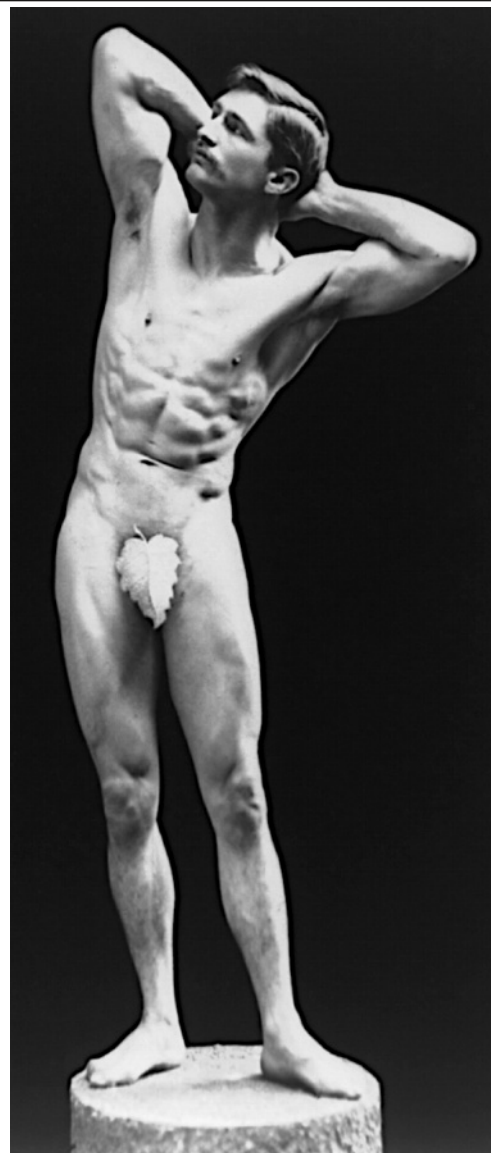
The November 2020 issue of this newsletter presents one about Moses Littauer's naturist colony in 1921. Another from 1903 will be presented soon in an upcoming issue. That isn't a typo -- a club nearly 30 years before Barthel supposedly started nudism in the USA. I'll also present a 1,000 member American organization with nudism as a core value that existed around 1920.

Trees have many roots, and the German influence on Kurt Barthel is one of them, perhaps the most significant one since he is a German immigrant.

This article series explores another significant influence; the American one that prompted Barthel to form a club in the first place.

The all-American story revolves around this all-American guy. ➡

[Continued on next page...]



Also in this issue:

- ▶ **Gunnison - NAC update** on the East coast
- ▶ **Little Beach - NAC update** in Hawaii
- ▶ **Coming Out** - our newest board member

[Continued from previous page.]

There is so much that could be written about Benarr Macfadden that I'm going to have trouble keeping it to a small newsletter article. There's plenty of publications about him, all with interesting stories. A notable 400-page book provides a perfect summary in the title: "Mr. America: How Muscular Millionaire Bernarr Macfadden Transformed the Nation Through Sex, Salad, and the Ultimate Starvation Diet."

Macfadden's publication empire started with Physical Culture magazine in 1899. By 1930, Macfadden was publishing 10 different magazines and 10 different newspapers which combined reached over 7.3 million people and earned him about \$30 million. In 1935, his empire was reaching about 35 million readers. Although Physical Culture was his flagship publication, his "True Story" and tabloid publications were hugely popular and the genres are still highly popular today. Add to that his over 50 books, his 8 volume "Encyclopedia of Health", countless newsreels, guest appearances, and his morning exercise show on the radio.


He wasn't just a publisher, but also a founder of the bodybuilding movement. In 1903, Macfadden staged the first bodybuilding contest in America. In 1921 and 1922, the more commonly known "father of bodybuilding" Charles Atlas (pictured below) took home the trophies from Macfadden's contests, and made bodybuilding a successful career thereafter.

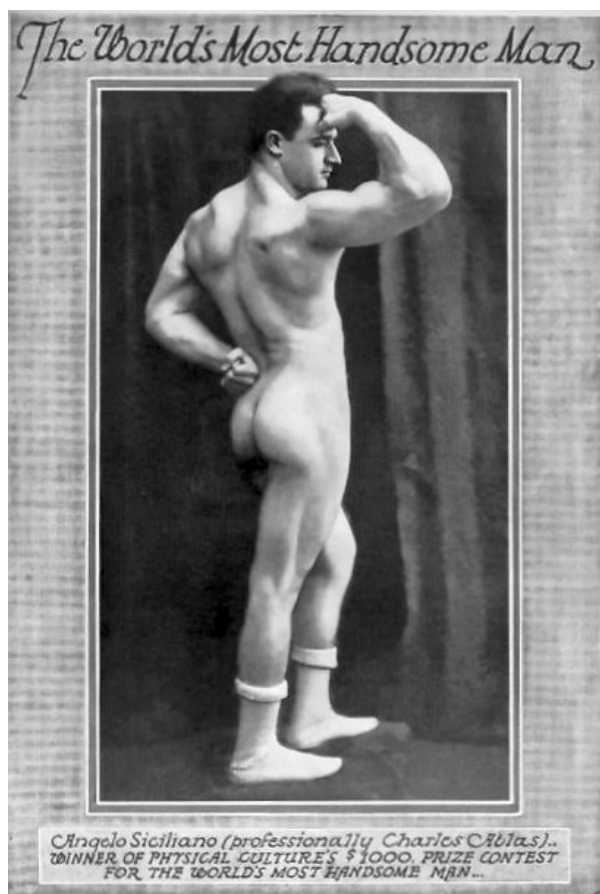
Macfadden's sole purpose was health reform in the US, and his reasons were pretty clear. Through his childhood he was weak and sickly, and was orphaned by the age of 11. At this point, he lived with a farmer until age 13. The hard work on the farm and the wholesome natural food turned him into a

healthy, strong kid. After moving to St. Louis and taking a desk job, his health quickly reverted and he described himself as a "physical wreck" by age 16. Since doctors hadn't been able to help his health (or made things worse), and healthy eating and physical fitness did, he set forth on that path. It must've worked; he lived to 87 years old without any medical help.

In his 80's, Macfadden was still giving lectures on a variety of topics, but important to us was his promotion of nude sunbathing. (He even built a windowed box so he could sunbath in the winter months.) Even though he never considered himself a nudist, Macfadden was OK with public nudity and was encouraging it for health reasons all through his career.

According to a testimony from Russell Nansen, who corresponded a lot with Macfadden after 1945, Macfadden was aware of his indirect influence in founding nudism. Kurt Barthel was a reader of Physical Culture magazine, and saw the many favorable comments about the "nude cults" that were springing up in America. This encouraged Barthel to place the ads announcing the American League for Physical Culture.

Stay tuned to this newsletter as I dive deeper into the links between Macfadden, Physical Culture, and Nudism/Naturism in future issues. If you thought that nudism in America started in 1929, you're in for quite a shock. 



### Last Month's "Caption This!" Winner

#### Not your typical fish story:



**Hey, Mom! Look what I caught!  
Can I keep it?**

- Submitted by Reb

Honorable Mention: "Historians tell us first-century Roman lions preferred their meals unwrapped."

- Submitted by dave.carlson



# NAC Update: Gunnison Beach (New Jersey)

By Susan Shopiro, NAC Board Member

The biggest naturist beach in the northeast US is Gunnison Beach, on Sandy Hook. Sandy Hook is the New Jersey part of the Gateway National Recreation Area and is home to the Fort Hancock Historic Landmark including the oldest surviving lighthouse in the US.

Gunnison Beach is one of 7 beaches at the park, and nude use dates back to the late 1970's. It is extremely popular because of its clothing optional status and is the busiest beach on Sandy Hook. The status of Parking Lot G (Gunnison) is a closely watched statistic for attendees. The parking fees from people going to Gunnison and other beaches go to support park infrastructure and maintenance. Naturists are the biggest group contributing to this fund.

About two years ago we began to get emails from regular Gunnison beach-goers concerned about the shortening of the beach for nude use, and rumors of closure of the entire beach to nude use. Rumors of closures have a long history on this beach but this time it was accompanied with the claim that one of the Park Rangers had said this was pending. The other concerns they reported were the large crowds drinking and smoking, loud music, inappropriate and unruly behavior. Gunnison old-timers noted that over the last five years a new crowd had started coming to the beach that were not always nudists and were apparently there to party without consideration of the beach or other beach attendees. The crowds on the weekends were reported to be reaching 5-10 thousand. At this time the Park Service outlawed alcohol on all beaches at Sandy Hook and put limitations on tents and screens that blocked view. The Park Rangers began searching coolers coming onto the beach as well as those already on the beach. They began walking the beach and demanding the removal of tents and screens they deemed against the new regulation\*.

Also at that time NAC began regular communications with the head Park Ranger and staff with the intent of

understanding what the issues were from their point of view. The behavior and trash were unsurprisingly their biggest concerns. The Park Service has been severely underfunded for many years and the head Ranger reported that he only had 10 rangers to cover the entire area of Sandy Hook. NAC made it clear we were there to listen and to work to make the beach atmosphere pleasant for the management and the attendees alike. Over the last two years we have kept in contact with the management to understand their issues.

Our primary efforts have focused on the beach attendees, mostly through their Facebook pages with 5000 or more followers. NAC, with the input of the Facebook followers, has developed and published a Naturist Beach Etiquette document, posted the History of Gunnison Beach from *Nude & Natural* magazine and provided educational posts on the role of Beach Ambassadors.

This year Gunnison Beach regulars report reduced numbers and a more pleasant time except for the loud music. They report that the beach is much cleaner and more attendees are picking up trash and carrying it off the beach to the trash cans in the parking lot.

Our desire is identify and support a group of regular local attendees who will organize a new Friends of Gunnison to help take care of the beach, educate beach-goers and work with the Park Service to have a safe, clean and pleasant beach experience for all.

\*From a Federal level law clerk friend: "The Federal government has the right to protect its property in any way it deems appropriate as long as it applies these means equally across all groups, and with justification it can apply these means unequally. And I will remind you that Nudists are not a protected class."



Sandy Hook from above, from Wikimedia Commons

# NAC Update: Little Beach (Hawaii)

By Bill Schroer, NAC Chair

Since the DLNR administrative closing of Little Beach earlier this year, allegedly due to Covid-19 violations, the Beach has since been re-opened. However, signs predominantly featuring "No Nudity" have been installed. A team of naturist activists including Bill Watts, working with the Naturist Action Committee (NAC), are working to re-establish the Friends of Little Beach organization. Once established this team will represent the many naturists both local and international who have, for years, enjoyed the clothing optional status at Little Beach. We will continue to provide updates to this situation as it develops.

After reviewing the status of Little Beach with Bill Watts, here are the key takeaways....

Currently there are 11 citations. The most recent 3, including a topless woman, were issued on July 6.

The prior cases, issued in March-May time frame, are concluded. All lost. The judge rejects any defense arguments and quotes the public prosecutor's argument in his judgments.

The public defender is on our side (a naturist) but has to get the best deal, which is a 6 month deferment that wipes the record clean after 6 months with no repeat offense + \$100 fine + \$30 court fee. Most are more than willing to take that deal and avoid a trial and possibly (probably) being found guilty of indecent exposure.

Bill has been in touch with Rep. Wildberger...she is on our side and disgusted with the responses she has received from the DLNR. She held a public meeting on June 23 which is posted on her website. Bill was on at 7:45 minutes followed by Thomas Willman. Rep. Wildberger also held a zoom meeting with FoLB directors on July 21. She is working on a bill to present in the House but agreed it would not go anywhere because so many representatives are of plantation and missionary mentality.

The FOLB website is in development and once the website is developed they will work on aggressive recruiting and fundraising drive. NAC, and AANR, may be able to help with both once that gets started.

Overall...I (Bill Schroer) feel Bill Watts and his team are doing their best....but they are up against a very intolerant DLNR and a legal system that has the missionary/body shame mindset value system. Very challenging to say the least. The Watts team will need all naturist support....to push back against this very difficult environment. The fact that Little Beach has a long history of nude use is of no interest to this DLNR. They are effectively saying "That was then, this is now. Nudity is out."

We will continue to monitor this situation and connect with Bill Watts to determine how else NAC can help.



## Naturist Education Foundation Research Library: Summary of Library Services

**Visitation, Tours, and Browsing**  
Limited and by appointment only.

**Physical Loans / Inter-Library Loans**  
This isn't practical for a Research Library (and rare material archive) such as ours. There are no physical loans at this time.

**Digital Loans**  
Patrons can sign up for a virtual "library card" and request items digitally. The digital loans can be viewed in your web browser. We offer items in our audio collection, some celluloid films, and numerous other items for digital loan. Our offerings keep expanding as we digitize new items. Best of all, this service is FREE.

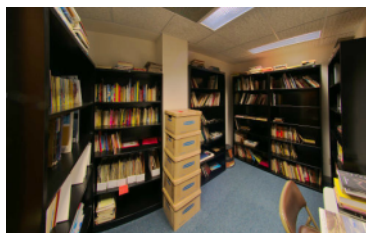
**Research Requests**  
Most people have never done this at a library, but it's the best way to access

our nearly 16,000 magazines, nearly 1,000 books, and anything else. You don't need a library card for this, and it's also a FREE service. Fill out the simple form and send it in, and we'll see what we can do.

See the NEF Research Library webpage for details: [NaturistEducation.org/library](http://NaturistEducation.org/library)

The NEF Research Library is proudly a member of:

- ▶ Wisconsin Library Association
- ▶ American Library Association
- ▶ Nudist Library Consortium





# Coming Out

By James Nunn

"I have a secret. There is a part of my life that I have been hiding for too long, and it has been eating away at me where holding it in any longer is causing me more anxiety and a general level of unhappiness. I know this is not what you want to hear, and there is nothing that you have done that has made me this way ... it is ... well ..."

How many coming stories have we heard in the LGBTQ+ community that had a similar awkward way to share something so private, yet so life-defining? The reaction to a coming out story has a wide range of responses. I've met young men and women who have been rejected by their families because they "chose" to be gay or chose to be a lesbian, or "even worse" chose to change the gender they were assigned at birth. I've read stories of young and less-young people taking their own lives because life in the world they think they live in, has no alternative reality where they could ever be happy as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

I was incredibly fortunate growing up as I didn't have to "come out" and I didn't have to go through the same trauma that many others have. My family was accepting, inclusive and loving. When I announced that I was bringing my boyfriend home for Christmas, my mother's response was that she was looking forward to meeting him (keep in mind, that the previous year, I had taken my girlfriend). No judgement, just acceptance.

The same is true for my nudism. My mother knew that I went to nude beaches ("it's in the Nunn blood" she said on a few occasions), but it was not done in a way where I came out, it was just something I did. It was a personal life decision that I made. While there are a whole lot of differences between the words "being gay" and "being a nudist" the responses - in my case - were the same. I completely acknowledge that this is not true for many, many others.

Being raised in a different country, with a different understanding to who really has an interest in one's personal life, has definitely helped over the years of being USA based. I truly didn't understand the struggles of "being gay" or "being a nudist" until I moved to the US. As I've shared more than once with friends, you have more chance of seeing a breast on television, than you would a gun. It's just a different culture as it relates to the human body, and - more importantly - the

value we place on human life by protecting ourselves from each other at times.

I have no issues introducing my better half as my husband. In that statement to people I've not met or socialized with previously, I am making a statement that is based on years of fighting and social adjustment to same-sex relationships. I am not only saying that I'm gay, but also that I'm married ... to a man. "Being gay" has become increasingly more easy over the past 5-10 years, even in the Great State of Texas.



This, however, is not the same when coming out as a Nudist (or Naturist). In this situation the stigma associated with being a nudist is similar - in many ways - to the early days of the gay rights movement. A lack of understanding, sometimes fear, the equation of "nude equals lewd" and most common, the belief that being naked is shameful (biblical reference here — the devil is the one responsible for introducing shame).

Over the past year or so, as I did some COVID navel gazing, I realized that I had reached a time in my life when my preference for being a naturist would move towards me coming out more. I wanted to figure out a way to not only introduce myself as a naturist (which can be pretty easy), but also work towards a stronger acceptance of the naturist lifestyle for those that wish to live it.

I was fortunate to meet some incredible folks with the Naturist Education Foundation and the Naturist Action Committee, and discovered that I could bring these two passions together by working more closely with both organizations.

I also think there is much to be learned from the struggles of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters in the past, and the lessons learned over those years can be applied to changing the minds and hearts of people as it relates to naturism. Our naturist struggle is real as we face ongoing attacks and restrictions on our ability to enjoy clothes-free recreation, and it is time for us to open the closet door (some irony here), and be proud of our naturist lives.

As the newest member of the NAC and NEF boards, I want to introduce myself: I am James Nunn, a fifty-something, married, naturist-living, Aussie-born, US-claimed, dog-dad living in the Great State of Texas. Now, where is my parade?

Want to become a NAC or NEF board member too?  
See the last page of this newsletter for our annual  
"Call for Candidates".



## Caption This!

This ongoing series highlights a time when cameras were allowed and cheesy photographs were encouraged. (See the May 2021 newsletter for more details.) All photos are from items held at the NEF Research Library.

### About this Photograph

Coming from *Continental Nudist*, Summer of 1966, this photo clearly shows the difference between "trying hard" and "succeeding". What are they thinking? What's a good caption? Let us know!

Now it's your turn to Caption This! ➡

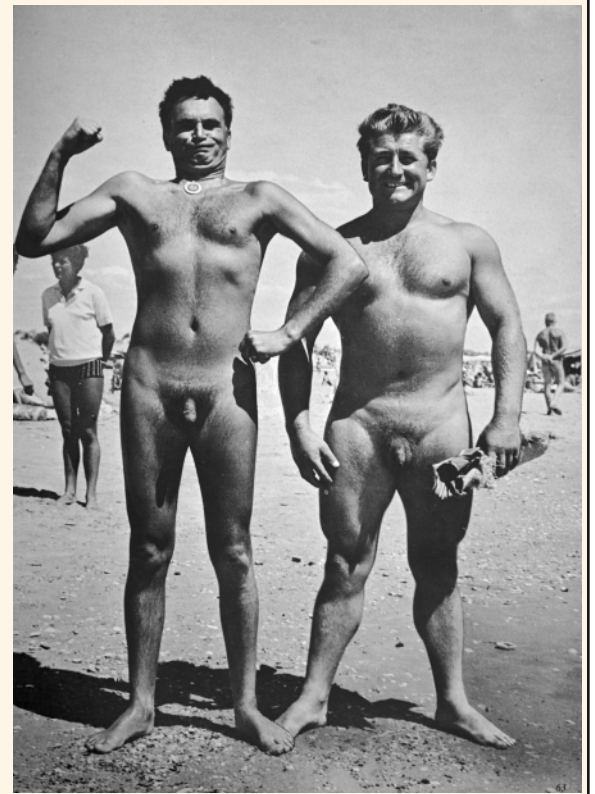
Send your caption ideas to:

Doug.Hickok@NaturistEducation.org

Please include:

- ▶ Your name that we can print if yours is selected. (Full name, or first name, or nickname, or anonymous...whatever you prefer)
- ▶ The type of caption (Title above, Caption below, Speech Bubbles, or a mix of all these).
- ▶ The caption wording, or who said/thought what.

Winners get fame in the next newsletter!



## Like this newsletter? Sign up today and be notified each month!

Newsletters provide you with original content about:

- ▶ the activist efforts of the Naturist Action Committee,
- ▶ the educational & public outreach efforts of the Naturist Education Foundation, &
- ▶ the preservation of naturist history by the NEF Research Library.

Be in the loop with the **FREE** newsletter!

Sign up on the newsletter page:

<http://naturisteducation.org/library/newsletters.html>



By signing up, you'll also get occasional NAC Action Alerts, Advisories, and Updates too.

NAC is on Facebook and Twitter too!  
<https://Facebook.com/NaturistAction/>  
<https://Twitter.com/NaturistAction/>

## Like Our Efforts? Here's a great way to help out:

Please support NAC with its mission of naturist activism set forth by Lee Baxandall. NAC relies entirely on donations from generous naturists like you, now more than ever. Donations are accepted online or by mail.

[NaturistAction.org/donate](http://NaturistAction.org/donate)

NAC  
 P.O. Box 132  
 Oshkosh, WI 54903



Please support NEF with its mission of naturist education and public outreach set forth by Lee Baxandall. NEF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and all donations to NEF are tax-deductible. Donations are accepted online or by mail.

[NaturistEducation.org/donate](http://NaturistEducation.org/donate)

NEF  
 P.O. Box 132  
 Oshkosh, WI 54903



**Show Your Love and Support of Naturism  
Become a NAC and/or NEF Board Member**

**Naturist Action Committee (NAC)  
and  
Naturist Education Foundation (NEF)  
Annual Call for Candidates for Members of the Boards**

With Your Energy and Support Help us Protect and Expand Opportunities and  
Locations for Clothing Optional Recreation

**The Naturist Action Committee (NAC)**  
is a non-profit 501(c)4 political advocacy social welfare organization. NAC's mission  
is to make naturism an accepted part of society.

**The Naturist Education Foundation (NEF)**  
is a non-profit 501(c)3 public charity organization. NEF is also dedicated to making  
naturism an accepted part of society.

**NAC and NEF have Boards of Directors whose volunteer members serve three-  
year terms. We are looking for candidates to fill open positions on these boards.**  
Candidates should be committed naturists who are willing to dedicate a substantial  
portion of their time and skills to the cause.

Interested persons are encouraged to apply by sending a letter of inquiry and naturist  
resume to: [Jim.Dickey@NaturistAction.org](mailto:Jim.Dickey@NaturistAction.org) by August 6, 2021.

The resume should include:  
-- Full name and contact information  
-- Names and contact info of three references  
-- Naturist and professional experience

The selection committee will request any needed additional information and provide  
you with additional requirements, information and the application. Any questions may  
be sent to the Secretary of the Boards at [Jim.Dickey@NaturistAction.org](mailto:Jim.Dickey@NaturistAction.org).

If you cannot serve as a board member but would still like to **help support Naturism**,  
there are many other ways to participate. Please send a note to  
[Jim.Dickey@NaturistAction.org](mailto:Jim.Dickey@NaturistAction.org) for more information.