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

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Sky Farm's 90th Anniversary

By Susan Shopiro

In central New Jersey farm country nestled in the forest on a hill behind a wooden gate is the oldest continually operating landed nudist facility in the country. Purchased by members of the American League of Physical Culture (ALPC) on July 2, 1932, this like-minded group of immigrant and native-born citizens wanted their own place to establish a nudist home where they could safely enjoy nature and practice healthy living. They lived their weekends in nature singing around the campfire, sleeping in tents and working on building a spring-fed swimming pool and the original structure of today's clubhouse. Exercise and healthy living were an important

part of the lifestyle, and equality of the sexes was fundamental

This original nudist home has endured through the years and continues to function as a cooperative where the members provide their volunteer labor and resources to maintain the grounds and properties as well as grow the membership. The entertainment has progressed from campfire songs to live musicians and DJ dances but there continues to be a home-grown base to the activities including art displays, volleyball days and pétanque tournaments. Communal eating is still a big part of the culture with weekend dinners provided by members assisted

by a social committee. The tents and tent platforms have grown roofs and walls and become cabins, and the outhouses have been replaced by bathroom and shower buildings called Greenis.

Some things haven't changed. The members are from all walks of life and ages. Families with children are welcomed, and the club provides a safe place for the children to play across from the now heated swimming pool. Some of the children who grew up on our grounds have returned as adults to continue our traditions.

With the coming anniversary looming, members of the history committee became increasingly concerned that 90 years of unique Sky Farm documents, records, posters, and notebooks were at risk of being destroyed or just rotting away taking with them part of the history of how social nudism was established in America. With the urging and support of the Naturist Education Foundation (NEF), a digital archive of these documents has been established and the preservation is well under way. The Sky Farm historian and long time members are in the process of video recording an oral history of the club as well.

In honor of this special anniversary, over the next 9 months we may be publishing more articles about Sky Farm, about its history and what it is like today.



Sky Farm Nudist Resort

In Basking Ridge, NJ

There's Nothing Else Like It Under The Sun

Want to enjoy the great outdoors naked? At Sky Farm, you've got nothing to lose but tan lines!

<https://www.skyfarm.com>



Nudist Filmmakers and Producing Partners

By T. L. Young

Back in the late 1990s, I was making the transition from being a nudist journalist to a nudist filmmaker. I had no budget and worked with a production team that had no clue what naturism was about. The result was as bad as you could expect.

However, my critics did identify a few points that I feel proud of to this day. They didn't know that single men were discriminated against, and how lack of ethnic diversity affected minorities. ("Naked in the 21st Century," 2001) Issues facing nudist parents were explored in "Kelly Deerdale, Naturist" in 2009, and a dramatization of dating challenges and feelings of loneliness and isolation was the theme of "American Nudist" in 2011. The soon to be released, "Micky's Summer Resort" satirized Congressman Foley and nude beauty pageants.

I had hoped to start a discussion among nudist film fans about these topics. No such discussion existed. Lack of adequate funds meant no real development, poor direction and lack of strong talent in front of and behind the camera. But why was I the only filmmaker to bring up these issues?

Perhaps there have been other nudist filmmakers who have tackled these issues, but I've never read about or encountered any. "Act Naturally," while fun, certainly didn't. And I doubt the current film, "Nudels of Nudeland" will either. And while I praised "Disrobed" for its surprisingly accurate portrayal of young adult nudists, the landscape of nudist films seems focused on body acceptance and acceptance into society.

I feel that we as nudists have more stories to tell -- stories that are buried as comments on a blog or an obscure article that never hits the mainstream. And where are the voices of our youths?

We should be making more serious films and less of the same old propaganda documentaries that have cluttered up our watchlists for decades. Keep in mind that while the late Doris Wishman was making exploitative nudie cuties in the 1960s, the first African American couple was admitted to a nudist resort, and no one ever knew. Today, Doris Wishman would be making sex-positive LGBT films which could still involve naturism, and she would be lauded as an icon of that community.

This is why I feel the time is right to remake "American Nudist," based on the original plot and treatment. The script

has been updated to reflect my actual experiences that were never filmed.



I once won a playwriting award for a one-act play, and my return to the Hawaii theatre at TAG (The Actor's Group) Theater was praised as "impressive." This is the quality I bring to the table with every script, which includes the cult hit "Samurai Cop 2", produced by the same production team that produced my nudist films.

I am currently fundraising for this film, "The Photographer," which is budgeted at \$300,000. I've applied for an ultra low budget agreement with the Screen Actor's Guild and we are awaiting word from our donors. But because fundraising does take a while, I would like to invite the nudist community to be a bigger part of it by joining our crowdfunding campaign. We have already completed a demo reel that will

soon be posted on our social media pages.

Naturism in Hawaii is a different animal than that on the mainland. Our Oahu Sun Club is only open to adults and popular though it is, it runs into the same problems old school nudists have with these younger non-landed organizations. This is a story worth exploring and I hope you can join me in bridging the gap between nudist films and the textile audience curious about the inner workings of our lifestyle.



Link to "The Photographer" crowdfunding page:
<https://gofund.me/677ec8b8>

"The Photographer" on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/IAmAmberwood>

Keep up-to-date with Young's projects:
<https://twitter.com/pacificinvasion>



Last Month's "Caption This!" Winner

How it started. How it's going.
(Thanks to the pandemic lockdowns.)



- Submitted by John C. Wells

Honorable Mention:

"Puff or Buff, which do you prefer?"

- Submitted by Amanda

Honorable Mention:

"Goofus & Gallant, the later years."

- Submitted by Reb

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

Found in Sunshine & Health, December of 1956, with credits to Norm Cook and Nevada Sun Rancho. This has a lot of possibilities, since the speech/thought bubbles could go on the people, the dogs, or both.

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!

Air Baths
Sun Baths
H²O Baths



A Long History of Healthful Nudity

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

Part 2, by Doug Hickok

[This series is exploring the American roots of nude culture in the US. See the July 2021 issue of this newsletter for Part 1, introducing Bernarr Macfadden and his influence on Kurt Barthel's decision to form the American League for Physical Culture (ALPC).]

When Bernarr Macfadden started his publication empire in 1899, issue #1 of *Physical Culture* was already promoting skinny-dipping, air baths, and sunbathing as a way of gaining health.

"Salt water is undoubtedly vastly superior to fresh as a tonic, but much benefit can certainly be derived from fresh water bathing. The benefit of sun and the air baths can be secured, and, as before stated, these have a most decidedly beneficial effect on health and strength. Do not cumber yourself with any more clothes than is positively essential for the occasion; the less clothes you wear, the greater the benefits."

While Macfadden certainly had influence and promoted physical culture ideals to the extent of being considered the "father of physical culture", the concept is certainly older. There are numerous physical culture publications before Macfadden and many were written by doctors and academics.

One example from 1891 was published by "Charles Wesley Emerson, M. D., LL. D., President of the Emerson College of Oratory, Boston." He was a minister in Congregational and Unitarian churches until 1885, got a medical degree and a law degree, and in 1880 founded what is now still known as Emerson College. In his "Physical Culture" publication, here's what he had to say:

"By wearing too much clothing in warm weather or in warm rooms, the skin becomes weakened and morbidly sensitive to cool air. The skin is not only weakened by too much clothing, but the energy of the small arteries that supply the skin suffers a loss of tone in the muscular coating with which they are lined, and therefore they fail to convey the blood to the surface of the body whenever the temperature is lowered even in a small degree, and a chill and a cold are the consequences."



Charles Emerson

"If one concludes he is wearing too much clothing he should leave it off very gradually, and commence to do so during the hottest weather, and should take great pains, morning and evening, to bathe in tepid or cold water, and rub the person with either a flesh

brush or coarse towels. One should always take off all his clothing at night and expose the entire person to the air in the room; but the room should exhibit the mercury at not less than sixty-five degrees, unless the individual is healthy and used to such exposure. The skin needs to come into contact with fresh air daily."

Night-time nudity seems to be a longstanding practice. An article that ran in the July 1908 *Physical Culture* titled "Birthday Clothes" (which promotes nude exercise), highlighted a lengthy quote from Benjamin Franklin on his air baths. The letter is dated July 28th, 1768 to Jacques Barbeu-Dubourg, and states:



Benjamin Franklin

"You know the cold bath has long been in vogue here as a tonic; but the shock of the cold water has always appeared to me, generally speaking, as too violent: and I have found it much more agreeable to my constitution, to bathe in another element, I mean cold air. With this view I rise early almost every morning, and sit in my chamber, without any clothes whatever, half an hour or an hour, according to the season, either reading or writing. This practice is not in the least painful, but on the contrary, agreeable; and if I return to bed afterwards, before I dress myself, as sometimes happens, I make a supplement to my night's rest, of one or two hours of the most pleasing sleep that can be imagined. I find no ill consequences whatever resulting from it, and that at least it does not injure my health, if it does not in fact contribute much to its preservation."

Logically, if fresh air and full exposure are this important and beneficial, as Emerson and Franklin seem to convey, then why not do it more than only at night?

By 1904, Macfadden's "Building of Vital Power" includes a chapter on sun and air baths. You'll see hints of the same concepts as Emerson and Franklin, but also the building blocks of social nudism. Quoting several of the paragraphs in this chapter:

"An air bath is a tonic beyond the conception of those who have not indulged in one. By air bath I

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don't mean an accidental one of a few moments' duration. I mean a good, long, deliberate bath of air taken under the most favorable conditions. You are aware, now, why the internal tissues need the life-giving oxygen of the air, but have you ever thought that the skin needs it also? The skin requires air just as much as the lungs do. Nor can the body as a whole, develop its fullest amount of vitality until you acquire the habit of giving the skin its ablutions of air regularly, freely and ungrudgingly."

"Doubtless there are many of my readers who will wonder just how the skin should be given an air bath. The directions are simple enough. First of all, select a spot where there is the purest air obtainable. ... Take off every article of clothing. Don't retain the smallest kind of garment, for if you do, you are getting but a partial air bath. Partial air baths give partial benefits."

"If the temperature is mild enough, and you don't care to take some active exercise, sit down and read. If there is any task about the room that you would like to perform, do it. The bath will go on while you are attending to other things. Two enthusiastic friends can even play cards, checkers, chess, or some similar game, and all the while the body is benefiting greatly and grandly by the bath."

"As to the proper length of an air bath, half an hour is a very moderate duration, unless the air that comes into the room be unusually crisp and keen. ... And do not seek to limit the number of such baths. Take one as often as you can; two or three every day will do you no harm. In addition to the bath in the morning, it is a first-class plan to acquire the habit of taking one whenever you are reading, or moving about the room."

"Air baths out-of-doors, either in the day or at night, soon become a positive luxury if you happen to be so situated that you can indulge in them. Those of my readers who are camping in lonely spots, or who are living on farms where it is possible to roam about without clothing, can experience a new source of delight and increased health."

Just to recap, Macfadden in 1904 was already encouraging people to take air baths "as often as you can" and was encouraging "enthusiastic friends" to do social recreation while nude. The only thing missing from the modern nudist experience is a little bit of sunshine. He covered that next.

"But little attention has been paid, heretofore, to the immense value of the action of the sun's rays when coming into direct contact with the body. Put a plant in the dark, or smother it with some covering so that the sun cannot reach it, and it will at once begin to wither and die. And yet, we human beings swathe ourselves in clothes through which the sun can never reach our bodies."

PHYSICAL CULTURE.

Price, 50c per year, post paid.

Edited by BERNARR A. MACFADDEN, author of "Macfadden's Physical Training" and "The Athlete's Conquest," a 300-page novel on Physical Culture, a revised copy of which is now running as a serial story in this publication.

London address—55 Jewin Street, London, E. C.

New York City address—88-90 Gold Street.

It is the editor's firm and conscientious belief—

That weakness is a crime.

That one has no more excuse for being weak than he can have for going hungry when food is at hand.

That if one possesses sufficient vitality to remain alive under the abnormal conditions of sickness, he has more than sufficient strength to regain vigorous health.

That usually disease is simply an effort on the part of the physical organism to right itself, and is the means adopted to attain the end of effecting a cure.

That there is no disease without a cause, and if the cause is removed the body will gradually "cure itself."

That disease is not "sent by Divine Providence," but is the result of the victim's own ignorance or carelessness.

That vigorous, pulsating health, with all the energy of mind and body that accompanies this exalted physical condition, is within the reach of all.

That health and strength of a high degree is the natural condition of man, and it is otherwise only when one's life does not conform to nature's laws.

That there are thousands in every civilized country annually dying from consumption, general debility, heart trouble, and other causes too numerous to mention, who could easily have been brought back to health, strength and power had they adopted rational methods at the proper time

That his great purpose in life is to "preach the gospel" of health, strength and the means of acquiring it.

That the finest and most satisfying results that can be acquired from proper physical culture are the cure of disease and the development of that energy, vitality and health essential to the success and happiness of life.

The above will remain for a few issues, that my principles may not be misunderstood.

If there are those whom I can benefit that are unable financially to recompense me, they will find me just as ready and willing to answer their queries as those others who can afford to be liberal in their fees.

When writing please do not expect a reply too soon, as the duties of a lecturer, engaged nearly every night, are rather difficult to fulfill; but, if a reply does not come after waiting a reasonable time, please write again, as the letter may have been mislaid or lost in the mails.

THE EDITOR.

The lead-in for the early Physical Culture magazines, making Bernarr Macfadden's health principles clear.

"The value of the sun's rays as a curative agent in nervous troubles is becoming recognized now more and more by leading medical authorities throughout the country. Almost every large hospital and sanitarium has installed commodious quarters where patients may take this healing bath during certain hours of the day."

"A sun bath can be taken in the same manner as that advised for an air bath. In fact, the greatest amount of good is derived when the two life-giving baths are taken at one and the same time. A sun bath, however, should not last more than fifteen minutes in the beginning. The skin is apt to become burned, causing a considerable amount of discomfort. Accustom yourself gradually to the effects of the rays of the sun and, with the added habit of taking air baths, you will soon be the possessor of a well-tanned, healthy-looking skin, strong enough to endure any change or condition of weather."

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In 1908, Macfadden wrote sun and air baths into his “Creed of Physcultopathy”. If you’re a fan of little-used words, you’ll like this one in his short statement: “By sun and air baths, allowing the nude doer to come in contact with the air and sun, which has a quieting and strengthening effect on the nervous system and increases the general vigor of the body.” Apparently “doer” is an endearing term typically for a beloved person.

It wasn’t always Macfadden doing the writing. The July 1909 *Physical Culture* included a letter to the editor from L. H. Gates titled “Purity in the Nude”. Gates seems to describe that *Physical Culture* cured him of some kind of “cursed vice” without going into detail about what that vice was, exactly. He ends this segment by stating that “the practice of nudity, absolute nudity, not only by one’s self but, under proper conditions in the sight of one’s family, is a deterrent as well as a detergent of impurity, prudery, ignorance and all the vices attendant upon these.”

His interesting recommendation for how to “try nudity” seems just as viable today as it did more than a century ago. His method seems to be more thought-out and complete compared to Macfaddens (to simply strip down in a location with the purest air). Here’s what he wrote:

“To the readers of *Physical Culture*, and especially to those still hampered by temptations and evil and prurient imaginations I venture to suggest a simple test of this value and virtue of nudity. Some time during the day, preferably in the day time, when it is not one’s custom to do so, discard all clothing and garments of every description, kneel down and offer an earnest prayer to the Divine Creator of your beautiful, pure, manly (or womanly), form for purity and strength and guidance in the face of temptations and for the power to see the beautiful in Life. After arising practice physical culture exercises for ten or fifteen minutes in your room. Then take a cold shower bath or plunge and rub down with a towel until the skin fairly vibrates with exhilaration, and see if you don’t feel like remaining naked for the rest of the day. One feels like a new man physically, morally, and spiritually.”

“I could not close this letter, however, without warning the reader, especially, he who has not yet conquered a perverted or impure imaginative tendency, to constantly engage the thought and attention upon something positively pure, for the practice of nudity, when one is not accustomed to it will tend to unduly concentrate the mind upon parts of the body ordinarily covered. For this reason, and as a precautionary measure against this tendency I have recommended prayer and exercise.”

Finally, Gates states that “One can after awhile acquire a ‘natural modesty’ regarding, and in the presence of the naked body. It is a virtue which everyone should strive to attain.”

While Gates offers up friendly advice, Macfadden takes a

very different approach. In fact, he’s known to be a little extreme at times, but that’s what makes his content interesting. In his editorial in January, 1911, he asserts that “Clothing destroys manhood”.

“This statement may seem far-fetched to many, but the clothing that we wear is to a large extent the cause of the weakness and disease that are found among men everywhere. Honest investigation, however, will absolutely prove the accuracy of this statement.”

He goes on to state that impurities that would normally be expelled by the skin are trapped because of clothing. He also points to the Scottish, who wear kilts, as having superb vigor. His conclusion is as follows:

“One might say that thousands of ‘well-dressed’ men are weak and frail mentally and physically, solely because of the clothing habit. If they were to get away from civilization – out in the woods, or where they could live free from the prying eyes of vile-minded human beings, the product of conventional education and civilization, and divest themselves of their clothing, they would be amazed at the gradual increase in vigor, virility and vitality that would quickly ensue as the result of this going-back-to-Nature process. We shut up our bodies in cloth and leather boxes. We forget that the external parts of the body should have opportunity to breathe, to absorb oxygen, and to secure the stimulus that comes through contact with air and sunlight, and consequently we are suffering the penalties that have come to us because of this ridiculous mistake.”

Air baths and skinny-dipping come up again in August 1928. An article written by Edgar Forest Wolfe reminisces in “the old swimmin’ hole”. He says that “the practice of goin’ in swimmin’ is one which, if you acquired it as a boy, you should not allow yourself to neglect as a man. And if you happen to be one of the few who were not provided with the opportunity as a boy you should begin NOW to be the boy you should have been.” The health benefits he listed combine “a curative sun-bath with the invigorating plunge and the healthful exercise.”



Jumping ahead another decade, to July 1940, *Physical Culture* ran an article by Samuel Edwin Olmstead which mixes a little science with the sunbathing concepts. He describes the role of Vitamin D, the use of sunshine as a germicide. “Many

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diseases are bred, and thrive, in the shadows. ... Most human bodies that do not even get basked in the summer sun have a pasty, anemic, unhealthy appearance, like something you'd find under a flat stone or a rotted log."

Olmstead described his help at one of Macfadden's health institutions over 30 years prior (around 1910), and with Macfadden's support began experimenting with sunbathing in "doses" at that time. Oddly, he summarized people's tolerance for sunshine based on their hair color. Apparently real brunettes could take an hour of sun and tan almost immediately. Light blondes and redheads could only start with about 10 minutes. He finally admitted, "we had some miserable sunburns before we got individuals properly cataloged." But over time he noted some amazing improvements that weren't just skin-deep, but mentally uplifting as well. He summarizes, "While physical culture methods had secured splendid results before, this additional natural therapy was a booster par excellence."

Even though the Olmstead article is the newest one I'm covering, it cites the oldest evidence. In Olmstead's words:

"I had been reading some medical book which mentioned the theories of Hippocrates on bathing the nude body in sunshine. Our whole physical culture credo was much the same as it is now; using all the forces of nature for building health and strength certainly included sunlight. Why not get it on the skin of the entire body?"

While social nude recreation was encouraged by *Physical Culture* magazine, it was purely encouraged for health reasons. During the time of Macfadden's publications, health was a big motivator and people were trying all kinds of crazy things to get healthier and live longer. While naturists today might be nodding in agreement with all the positive aspects of air baths, sun-bathing, and skinny-dipping that I've presented thus far, I leave them to ponder a more typical writing from Macfadden that many health-loving naturists at the time would've also practiced. (From the July 1908 *Physical Culture* Editorial, page 3.)

"TAKE CARE OF YOU BODY. It is the only one you have and you are liable to need it next year and the year after, and in fact, for many years to come. Don't wear out the vital organs by compelling them to handle from two to four times as much food as it needed to fully nourish your body. ... You will be a better man, a stronger woman, and life will open up opportunities under these changed conditions that would amaze you. AWAKE NOW! Do not be satisfied with the average doped mind and weakened body that we find everywhere at the present time. Insist on getting all there is out of life. DON'T BE A TOBACCO-DOPE, a WHISKEY-SOAK or a BEER-GUZZLER. Don't load your internal organism with needless food. If you follow these rules, you can then live in the highest sense. Life will be one continuous development, one continuous improvement, and you will be able to secure all there is in it from every standpoint."



Air-Bather, or Nudist?

In early 1949, Ilsley Boone weighed in on the "nudist" vs. "naturist" debate in a letter to Russell Nansen. Oddly, his definition of a nudist seems to align with Macfadden's promotion of air baths and sunbathing, which are part of physical culture. His definition of a naturist seems to also align with Macfadden's promotion of physical culture in general. Either way you look at it, people were going naked for health reasons. Quoting Boone:

"A nudist is generally understood to be a person who has realized that sunbathing to the widest possible extent is wholesome for the naked body and of vital importance to his or her health. A nudist takes any suitable opportunity to move about naked, in order that his or her body can be supplied with vitamins from the sun and air. ... A Naturist is a nudist who together with his cultivation of nude culture also practices certain rules of health which in his or her opinion must be combined with nudism if he or she is to get the most out of life. A real Naturist is a vegetarian ... and does not smoke or drink intoxicating liquors. They abstain from all the usual stimulants which most modern people use."

It's curious that the parallel worlds of nudism/naturism and physical culture were never unified. Testimony from Nansen about ASA president Alois Knapp states: "Knapp agreed with my ideas involving physical culture with nudism. He had met Bernarr Macfadden and practiced the precepts himself, but he didn't believe that a nudist camp owner should try to shove them down his members' throats." Further testimony from Nansen from the "other side" states: "Macfadden later wrote to me that he thought it would be a problem for nudists to accept physical culture. They would have to drop nudism and embrace his ideas - while they practiced public nakedness."

Nudism and Physical Culture have certainly diverged over the decades. Nudism is a \$1 billion industry that occasionally promotes health. Health and fitness is a \$100 billion industry that no longer promotes air baths, discourages sunbathing due to skin cancer fears, and requires a swimsuit for water activities.

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