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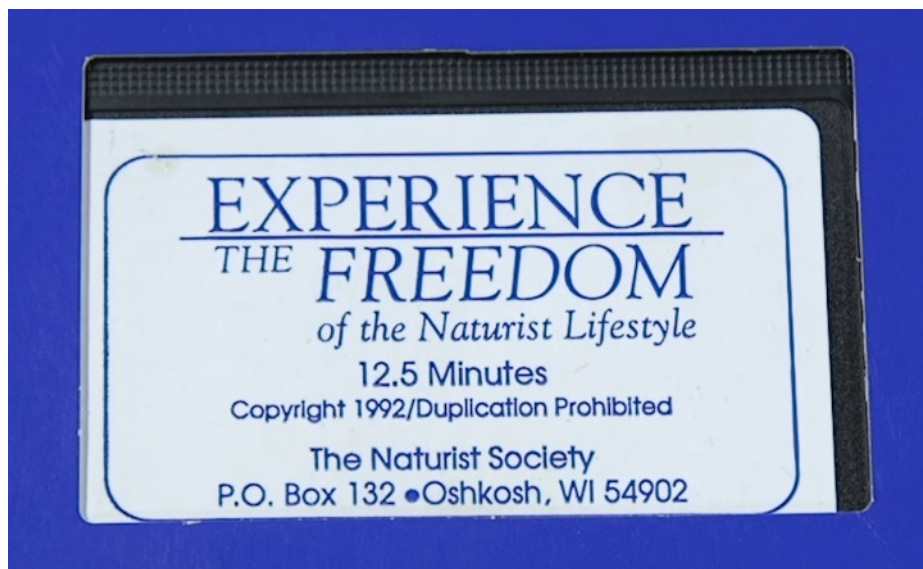
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*The Newsletter of the **Naturist Action Committee** and the **Naturist Education Foundation***

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Experience the Freedom of the Naturist Lifestyle (A Forgotten VHS is Rediscovered)

By Shannon Lewis



In late 1990 and early 1991, director Michael Cooney and Naturist Society founder Lee Baxandall collaborated on a promotional video for TNS titled *Experience the Freedom of the Naturist Lifestyle*. During this same period, the Chris Columbus and John Hughes film *Home Alone* held the top spot at the U.S. box office for twelve consecutive weeks, giving actor Macaulay Culkin his breakthrough role. **How are these two films connected? We'll get to that!**

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Experience the Freedom of the Naturist Lifestyle was the first self-promotional video produced by The Naturist Society. “What we’re all about! Why nude isn’t trivial!” exclaimed the ads in *Nude & Natural*. Offered for sale to readers of the magazine for \$9.95 (\$6.95 for members), the twelve-minute VHS tape provides a brief overview of the naturist idea, primarily through the informal reflections and observations of a group of local Wisconsin skinny-dippers. Ron Burich, The Naturist Society’s Executive Director at the time, describes the mission of the organization, while founder Lee Baxandall discusses the broader history and philosophy of nude living, pointing out that “the original natives of Wisconsin” were known to run around “in nothing but moccasins.” Government Affairs Counsel Kevin Kearney is interviewed on the steps of the United States Capitol. “We’re under the skin of the public land management agencies,” he says. “We’re there, involved, from step one,” in promoting the interests of naturists. Naturists will recognize several other familiar faces in the film, including present-day *Nude & Natural* Publisher & Managing Editor Nicky Hoffman Lee, and longtime naturist activist and Sunsport Gardens owner Morley Schloss. But aside from the very brief comments from Baxandall and Kearney, the majority of the video sticks to the simple premise that naturism is... fun.

In 1995, a revised edition of *Experience the Freedom of the Naturist Lifestyle* was released, enhanced by footage of naturist activities around the world, including resorts such as Turtle Lake, Club Paradise, Cypress Cove, and Desert Shadows Inn in Palm Springs (where the Lee R. Baxandall Bridge opened in 2003). These resorts are credited with providing production assistance for the video, along with Bare Necessities Travel. The 1995 release is especially noteworthy for its brief segment on the Naturist Action Committee. “Through its partner organization, the Naturist Action Committee, the society works at all levels to promote the rights of all to enjoy clothing-optional recreation,” the narrator explains. Special Projects Director Pat O’Brien and NAC Corporate Secretary Judi Zimmerman are seen working at the Oshkosh office, as a list of notable NAC success stories, including Haulover Beach, appear on the screen.

In 2000, another edition of the video was released. *Celebrate the Freedom of the Naturist Lifestyle* features a slightly reworked name, an 18-minute runtime, mostly new material, and vastly improved production value. The Naturist Society’s growth is alluded to with mentions of *Nude & Natural* magazine, *The World Guide to Nude Beaches and Resorts*, The Skinny-Dipper Store, gatherings, special interest groups, and a growing video catalog that includes the titles *Vacation Naturally*, *Tropical Naturism*, and *Adventures in Naturism*. This edition features a much more in-depth look at the work of the Naturist Action Committee. NAC Chairman (from 1997-2017) Bob Morton explains that “NAC exists to advocate and protect the rights of naturists across the North American continent.” Though Morton celebrates NAC’s 96% success rate in combating anti-nudity legislation, he offers some words of caution. “I think one of the biggest threats to naturists may be naturists themselves.” He stresses that naturists must “get together and pull in the same direction in order to be able to withstand the attacks from the outside.” NAC Government Affairs Representative Scootch Pankonin, in

an interview filmed during the August 1999 Naturist Society Midwest Gathering at Cherokee Lodge, hints at a shifting and potentially more challenging political environment for naturists. “We have a set of legislators that do not tend to be at all sympathetic about nude recreation and a lot of other sets of people that might be considered minority groups of various activities, various interests,” she warns. NAC’s inclusion in the later editions of the *Freedom* videos likely has to do with the fact that it helped to fund them, but it also represents an evolving recognition that naturist outreach must be about more than scenes of cheerful sunbathers.



The 1990s were flooded with special-interest VHS tapes, and one might assume that a short video promoting naturism would have long ago been forgotten. But there’s a renewed interest in VHS, both among those who grew up renting low-budget horror films from their neighborhood video stores, and among younger enthusiasts who have an appreciation for the tangibility of obsolete physical media. Popular smartphone apps replicate the glitchy, distorted aesthetic of the old tapes. A company called Lunchmeat VHS publishes books and magazines about VHS and video store culture and collaborates on limited-run analog releases of underground cult classics like *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*, which tend to sell out within minutes of their release. The Los Angeles-based artist’s collective Everything is Terrible edits and recontextualizes found VHS footage into absurdist short films and stage productions. Streaming web series like *Best of the Worst* lampoon various straight-to-VHS horror and science fiction films and other obscure tapes from the 1980s and 1990s.

It was *Best of the Worst* (Episode 78, June 5, 2019) that rediscovered the 1991 *Experience the Freedom* tape, with a celebrity guest host who summarizes the video by saying, “This is not a place I’d like to hang out.” That guest? Macaulay Culkin. Culkin’s critique is far kinder than the rest of the *Best of the Worst* crew, which doesn’t seem persuaded by the naturists.

“Speaking of low-hanging fruits!”
 “Looks like everyone’s aunts and uncles.”
 “Something’s wrong with their brains.”
 “A bunch of gross old people.”
 “It’s Oshkosh, Wisconsin, they all look like that.”
 “This video’s full of hypocrites.”
 “All the men I just think are perverts.”
 “The perverted guy started this as a scam.”

Ouch.

View this segment at:

<https://youtu.be/IKdWSYCM8Ug?t=831>
 (Or search "Best of the Worst Episode 78")
 Segment starts at 13:51.

The early 90's saw a flood of kooky educational videos, and perhaps it's only natural to dismiss a tape about nude living as another oddity of the era. But one wonders if the

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Best of the Worst hosts would have responded any differently to another naturist-themed promotional film. Are they laughing at the “clearly hired” young female host, the naturists at a “filthy pond” raving about no tan lines and freedom, or is naturism itself the joke? And perhaps there’s a more important question for naturists to ask ourselves. Do we approach public relations any differently than we did back in 1991? Do we continue to rely on images of idealized young women to promote our ideas and products, and then wonder why outsiders get upset to discover that many of us “look like aunts and uncles?” Do we continue to lean too heavily into the “practical” benefits of nude living (No tan lines! Less laundry!) rather than elevating the dialogue to something more substantive and perhaps more challenging? We can be a rather insular community, often sealed away with like-minded folks in our camps and committees, and we’re not always terribly aware of how we are perceived by the outside world, until the snarky article appears in the mainstream press, or until naturism is treated as the punchline of someone’s joke. The “naturism is fun” message is harmless enough, but perhaps it’s difficult to get those outside the movement to take us seriously, if we don’t appear to be taking ourselves all that seriously.

Oscar Wilde wrote, “There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.” While I’m not sure that being talked about as “gross old people” with “low-hanging fruits” is the kind of publicity we were hoping for with the Experience the Freedom video, I suppose it’s something of an achievement that people are still talking about a \$9.95, twelve-minute, mail-order tape, sold exclusively in the back of a small-press journal, over thirty-one years later.



Preserving Naturist History through NEF Grant

An update from WNRL's acquisition of Cec Cinder's AINS collection

By Mark Pavelchak, WNRL President

[Editor's Note: See the December 2021 newsletter for some background. The Western Nudist Research Library (WNRL) was in a position to accept the Cec Cinder's Archive for the Institute of Nudist Studies (AINS), and the Naturist Education Foundation (NEF) provided a grant to help protect and preserve the collection at our fellow Nudist Library Consortium partner. The grant helped with the costs associated with relocating the collection, temporary storage, and additional shelving to house the materials long-term. Part of the grant agreement included periodic reports of WNRL's progress as they work through the collection. What follows is a condensed version of the most recent report.]

This report will cover three new areas: legal files, scrapbooks, and personal correspondence with Jefferson Poland, an early player in the free beach movement. It will also include updates on Club/Organization newsletters, and a report on something that was only mentioned in AINS – the Special California Nudist Collection at the Pomona Public Library. But first, we want to confirm that we have fulfilled our commitment to “attach permanent plaques on the shelving in a visible location that indicates that they were funded by a grant from the Naturist Education Foundation (NEF).”

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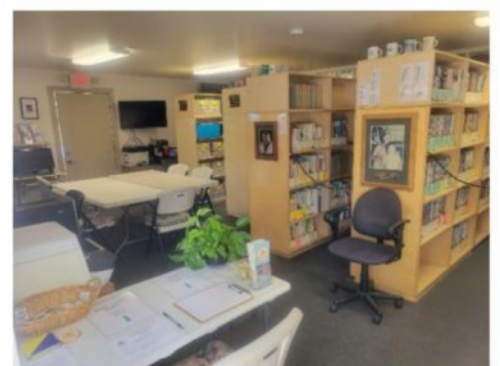
Three views of permanent plaques indicating funding was provided by NEF



Close-up



Side-by-side



View from front door

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Legal files

What follows is a list of some of the documents we found.

General resources

- ▶ The lawmaker's Guide to Skinny-Dipping Issues (NEF)
- ▶ Statutes for State and Localities in the Western US
- ▶ Naturist Legislative Survival Guide (1995-96 Special Edition) by the South Florida Free Beaches Legal Defense Fund
- ▶ ACLU Florida (1993) policy on the right to dress or undress.

Documents about particular court cases

- ▶ Cape Cod National Seashore class-action suit
- ▶ The "top-free" fight in New York
- ▶ Topfree in Virginia: U.S. 4th Circuit's Ruling - U.S. v. Jeanine Biocic 1990 and 1991
- ▶ Records of a variety of court cases involving nudity.

Compilations of court cases

- ▶ Recreational Nudity and the Law: Abstracts of Cases Compiled and edited by Gordon Gill (1987 and 1993 update)
- ▶ Compilations of Anti-Nudist legislation in Florida and Ohio
- ▶ A list of court decisions that support nude sunbathing compiled by Florida Free Beaches

Documents that reflect organizational strategy

- ▶ A copy of a letter to sheriff Jake Miller of Titusville, FL from Naturists Unyielding Demand Equality (NUDE) informing him that their organization would be "protesting anti-nudity laws and the intellectually bankrupt and morally corrupt politicians who have instituted these laws" and gave him examples of what he can expect.
- ▶ Considerable additional documentation of Beachfront USA efforts including printouts of summarized or complete court cases, articles about police liability in such cases.

We also came across a poignant story about Cec Cinder's last big fight for free beaches:

Smuggler's Cove: Cec Cinder's last free beach fight. After the Los Angeles City Council passed an anti-nudity ordinance in July 1974, Beachfront USA led by Eugene Callen and Cec Cinder hired attorney Stanley Raskin in an ill-fated attempt to secure an injunction of the ordinance. In the Nudist Idea, Dr. Cinder wrote "I would compare the profundity of the 1974 loss of Venice Beach and all other Los Angeles City and County beaches to the New York state anti-nudity legislation of 1934..." (p. 619). But that didn't stop the fight for free beaches in Southern California or Cec's belief in the fight. Fourteen years later Cec sent Mr. Raskin four separate letters (we have not yet found them in AINS) that he found very helpful. That plus some research that he did on his own led him to believe that the California cases were likely wrongly decided.

Perhaps based on that encouragement, in 1993 he appealed to the US Supreme Court for a writ of certiorari about the 1974 decision (to require the decision to be reconsidered). As is the case in the large majority of such appeals, it was denied.

All this time Beachfront USA had been gathering funds for another wrongly decided case, and to Cec, it just may have

occurred the following year when the city of Rancho Palos Verdes passed an anti-nudity ordinance regarding Smuggler's Cove. He waited until 2000 to ask Mr. Raskin to commit to this new fight, and he tried to help by seeking BFUSA members who were willing to become plaintiffs in the case.

Raskin filed the case in November 2000, but the fight didn't last long. By April it became clear that a new court decision that had occurred in 1999 (City of Erie v. Pap's Am., TDBA "Kandyland" 529 U.S. 277) was going to negatively influence their decision, and it did. Cec and Mr. Raskin decided not to appeal in exchange for not having to pay court costs. His friend Mr. Raskin voluntarily reduced his fee for finishing up the case down to \$1,000.

Scrapbooks

Cec Cinder apparently began active collection of nudist material around 1973 and his preferred method was scrapbooks. As shown below, from 1973 until 1988 he filled almost 850 pages of scrapbooks with articles, documents, and some photos. (Not included are the contents of three other scrapbooks that only contained pinup-style photos of women).

On many pages, more than one item was attached. Some additional observations about these scrapbooks:

Scrapbook #1 seemed to contain a record of historically significant points in Dr. Cinder's timeline or significant editorials or documents he wrote. For example:

- ▶ Cec assumed editorship of *the Bulletin* then he is soon removed from the position
- ▶ 1st meeting of Beachfront USA
- ▶ "My First Day at Camp" Cec's discovering nudism story
- ▶ In the later years previews of several sections of *the Nudist Idea*

One other note about this scrapbook: Although the title suggests that it included content dated until 1988, there was one article added at the end from 2012.

For the period of 1973 to 1976, Dr. Cinder put content in three different scrapbooks. The timelines of the more recent scrapbooks had virtually no overlap.

With the exception of the one article from 2012, Dr. Cinder's practice of building scrapbooks ended in 1993.

Personal correspondence with Jefferson Poland

Jefferson Poland, an anarchist who also went by several aliases such as Geoff Tortuga, was one of three brave souls who created the San Francisco Wade-in event in 1965 (see pp 589-593 in *the Nudist Idea*). Poland was consistently pushing the envelope regarding nudity in public settings. His book "Sex Marchers" (1968) (included in AINS) reflected on many of his activities.

Apparently, Dr. Cinder and Poland had respect for one another because we discovered a folder of correspondence between the two. Most of it is hard to read scribbles in the margins of other documents, but it shows that Poland was

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giving Dr. Cinder feedback and advice. This correspondence is especially valuable because as Dr. Carl Hild reports, Poland died alone and all of his personal possessions were destroyed when his apartment was emptied. It appears there are two other places that retain files of his correspondence regarding free beaches; the Pomona Public Library Special Free Beach Collection (see below) and the Free Beach Documentation Center. In addition, the University of California, Berkeley has Poland's other papers that are mostly focused on his work with the Sexual Freedom League.

Club/Organization Newsletters

The number of newsletters in AINS has increased almost 50% since the September report to 1,394 issues. In the complete newsletter inventory, a full 40 percent come from thirteen states other than California. There are also a few from three countries: Canada, Holland, and France. We were especially pleased to find at least some newsletters from McConville, which was located only six miles from WNRL.

We are pleased to report two modest additions to the Free Beach - focused portion of AINS:

- ▶ Cec's self-interview. In an effort to provide a conversational approach to the subject, Dr. Cinder created a ten-page self-interview entitled "What is this Free Beach Movement?"
- ▶ Meeting with the Masons. Dr Cinder had a meeting with Richard and Shirley Mason of the South Florida Free Beaches organization. They led the successful fight 30 years ago for the creation of Miami's Haulover Beach. In the notes of this meeting, it is clear that Dr. Cinder saw that Beachfront USA could learn some lessons from how the fight was being waged in Florida.



[AI generated artwork]

Special Collection at the Pomona Public Library

We previously reported that we had corresponded with the Pomona Public Library in regard to the fact that in AINS, it was mentioned that a "Special California Nudist Collection" existed at their library. The librarian confirmed its existence, listed the labels that were on the boxes in the collection, and indicated that we would be able to review the collection in late October.

We didn't know what to expect when we got there. But given that free beaches was Cec Cinder's lifelong passion, we suspected that much if not all of the collection in Pomona was donated by Dr. Cinder. What we discovered was quite different. The collection was created in the 1980s by David Streeter who was the Special Collections librarian at the Pomona Public Library at the time. David became frustrated when a book on free beaches was stolen and a replacement was defaced. In response, he began to actively seek information on nudism, naturism, and free beaches with a particular focus on California. For example, he placed an ad in the free beach publication *Bare in Mind*. Cec Cinder did donate a minor amount of material to David's collection, but so did many others. The collection has some material that is widely available elsewhere, but some of it is unique and historic. (Incidentally, Cec Cinder invited Streeter to Olive Dell to learn about nudism and he eventually became a member).

Other insights

Even though the pace of Dr. Cinder's scholarship and dedication to the cause slowed considerably since the 2001 loss in the courts regarding Smuggler's Cove, he remained on the Board of Directors of Beachfront USA and the Callen Davis Memorial Fund for another 17 years.



Last Month's "Caption This!" Winner

Tuesday night?
Sure, I've got
nothing on...



- Submitted by Carlo Panno

Photo Series Ending

Back in the May 2021 newsletter, I started the "Caption This!" challenge to highlight some of the smile-worthy past photos. I opened the segment as follows...

"There once was a time when naturists weren't deathly afraid of cameras. The privacy busting Internet didn't exist yet, and magazine distribution was limited to like minded individuals. What's the harm in letting someone take a photo? Not only were people allowed to brandish a camera in a naturist resort, but other naturists would pose, show off, or just act goofy for a photograph. Browsing old magazines, one can't help but smile at some of these cheesy photos."

Well, this short era declined as privacy concerns rose. Camera use was discouraged, and that policy still holds strong at most places today. Most private campgrounds and resorts ban camera use altogether, with special permission and oversight needed to take any photos or video. Public venues like free beaches are legal to photograph, but I've heard of cameras taking trips into the water. The era of regular naturists being comfortable in front of the camera seems to have ended a long time ago.


Likewise, the "Caption This!" challenge is ending as well, for now. If you have any other fun ideas for future newsletters, let me know. 



Photo credit is to Norm Cook at Lupin Lodge, published in *Sunshine & Health*, August 1956. Sign reads "No cameras or picture taking permitted within the camp".

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