



## The American Association for Nude Recreation – Western Region

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## The Pioneers:

### Biographies of Nudists Leaders Who Made a Difference



## Horst Krause 1930 - ) Founder of Shangri-La Nudist Park, GOP Activist

09/29/2007, Phoenix, Arizona – On the wall of his office hang framed pictures of Ronald Reagan and President George W. Bush. There's also a hook where Kraus keeps clothes that he can get into quickly in case shy visitors come by.

Kraus, 77, has been a Republican longer than he has been a practicing nudist.

Kraus said that he frequently would be nude as a child, something that was "not a big deal" in Germany, he said. He became an adult nudist after he moved to the United States, settling in Illinois. He and his wife, Gini, had to travel to neighboring Indiana because there were no nudist camps in Illinois, Kraus said.

"You take your clothes off and everyone looks alike," he said. "You take the pressure off the everyday business, the competition, of how to dress and how to look good.

"You take that away and it's an unbelievable feeling that no one can understand unless they experience it."

Kraus moved to Arizona to retire and took over Shangri-La in 1997, figuring running the nudist ranch would be a nice hobby. He turned it into a job, though, as he expanded and improved the ranch.

Kraus said his entrepreneurial spirit attracted him to the Republican Party after he and his wife immigrated to the United States in 1960. Kraus' first vote after becoming a U.S. citizen was for Richard Nixon in the presidential election of 1968.

Kraus started giving heavily to Arizona Republican candidates and the state party in 2003 including U.S. Sen. Jon Kyl. In 2004, he also donated to the state Republican parties of Ohio, Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Florida. So far this year, he has donated \$3,950, nearly the maximum amount allowed, to U.S. Sen. John McCain's presidential run.

"We're really cranking it up now," he said of the donations from him and his wife. Records show she has donated more than \$10,000 to Republican causes since 2003.

"I want to see a Republican in the White House," Horst Kraus said, "and I want that Republican to be John McCain."

His political volunteer work has put Kraus on a first-name basis with the state's top Republican officials. The party recently named Kraus to a post on its finance committee, heaping praise on him for attracting new Republicans.

When Kraus was named to the Arizona Republican Party's finance committee in August, the communications director for the party praised the nudist ranch operator. Brett Mecum told the Arizona Capitol Times that Kraus was doing a "heck of a job" at recruiting voters.

The Arizona Democratic Party relished the news that Kraus had been appointed to a leadership position. The party issued a news release headlined "Nudist czar named to Arizona GOP Finance Committee."

It questioned Republicans' commitment to "family values," bringing up a case where Kraus was called to testify as a character witness for a person accused of child molestation. Kraus had phoned the police about the incident.

Kraus expected Democrats to make sport of his nudism. And he knows that it causes some members of his own party to keep their distance. But Kraus remains steadfast in his politics. He would wear his Republican pride on his sleeve if he regularly wore a shirt.

"As a self-thinking individual, like most nudists are, they want the government to stay out of their way," Kraus said, "and the Republican Party is that for the most part."

Although the party appreciates his checkbook, Kraus knows that some question how visible a role a nudist should have in the Republican Party.

"I don't think I have any enemies. I just have people in the Republican Party who think I'm nuts. And the feeling is mutual," he said. "As far as the movers and shakers in the party, I'm all right."

Republican Party officials have since distanced themselves from the leadership decision.

Randy Pullen, chairman of the state Republican Party, would not agree to an interview about Kraus. Mecum did confirm that Pullen gave up his seat to allow Kraus to be part of the delegation that attended the 2004 Republican Convention.

Kraus said he was grateful to Pullen for doing so and that he met a few other nudists on the convention floor.

"Nudists are proud conservatives," he said.

Kraus recalled being at a party function when Jan Brewer, the secretary of state and the top elected Republican official in Arizona, introduced him to her son. "She said, 'Horst owns a nudist camp. But it's OK.' "

Brewer said she has long appreciated Kraus' dedication to the Republican Party. "He is a man who knows what his philosophy is and what he believes and is very adamant about it," she said.

His nudism has not been an issue for Brewer.

"They can still be upstanding citizens, can't they?" Brewer asked of nudists. "And be good Republicans."

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