



The American Association for Nude Recreation – Western Region

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The Pioneers:

Biographies of Nudists Leaders Who Made a Difference

Irene Shannon

5/1/1922 – 8/2/2017

IRENE SHANNON a lifelong nudist and naturist advocate, died on August 2, 2017. She was 95 years young.

Shannon made a unique contribution at a critical time in the 1970's and 80's when local activists were attempting to create legal nude beaches along the California coastline. The result was the Cahill policy that lasted 30+ years in California.

Over the course of her life she formed several non-landed nudist clubs in Southern California.

In 1973, she joined Beachfront USA while it was trying to legalize long-used clothing-optional Venice Beach, and she became a frequent contributor to the Bare-in-Mind publication, which focused on the national Free Beach Movement.

A year later, she formed a nudist travel club in Huntington Beach known as the Orange-Peelers and became active in WSA (now the Western Region for AANR) politics, chairing their Non-Park Nudist Activities Committee.

A tireless volunteer, Shannon spent much of her spare time attending legislative hearings whenever bills were introduced to support or restrict social nudity.

A tireless volunteer, Shannon spent much of her spare time during the next decade attending legislative hearings whenever bills were introduced to support or restrict social nudity. She spoke passionately at the 1979 hearing when then-Parks Director Russell Cahill decided to institute his now famous "Policy" protecting nude use of the state parks in traditional places except upon complaint.

When a local Assemblyman from San Diego tried to put thru a bill that said the creation of any nude beach in California it had to go thru the legislature, Shannon convinced 11 of the bill's 13 co-authors to pull their names off the bill so that it died in committee.

She acted as a go-between and key player in the 1979 bitter struggle to get the ASA (now AANR) to accept the Free Beach Movement as part of its larger mission.

The attempt failed, Shannon wrote years later in N Magazine due to the acrimony of many landed club owners, toward the "beachers," whom they considered "hippies" who "wouldn't pay" to join the established landed clubs. So, when Baxandall gave up and left the ASA to form the Naturist Society as a separate organization in 1980, Shannon left to help him.

In her later years, Shannon remained active in naturist issues. A supporter of the Naturists in the OC (NitOC) club, she was a frequent visitor to the club's monthly swims in Huntington Beach until the city closed them down. In 2007, she attended the Huntington Beach hearing to ban nudity in that city and she passionately spoke against it.



At age 88, she testified before the CA State Parks Commission to support establishing designated nude beaches statewide.

She also was a member of the Olympian club and Olive Dell Ranch.

Shannon had been in declining health for the past several years, suffering from chronic leukemia.

A legal secretary by profession, Shannon was also a founder and leading figure in The Hemlock Society. Although confined to a senior living center in Huntington Beach her last few years, she actively wrote letters and made phone calls to legislators to help pass Assembly Bill 15 in 2016, the California Right-to-Die law.

She was a Lifetime member of SCNA and she was inducted into the SCNA Hall of Fame in 2009. Her energy and sage advice will be missed by many.



Irene poses with Robin Martin (left) and Clothing Optional Society president Charles Finley (right) at Venice Beach during 1986 beach rally.