



## The American Association for Nude Recreation – Western Region

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# The Pioneers:

## Biographies of Nudists Leaders Who Made a Difference

Compiled by Beverly B. Price



### Ilesley Silas “Uncle Danny” Boone (1879-1968) Father of the Modern United States Nudist Movement

“There is little question that Ilesley Boone has been the most controversial figure in the American nudist scene. Opinions of him range from the fervent and unyielding admiration of some of his contemporary followers . . . to the loathing of some of his detractors, who considered him a pretentious phony and an unctuous con man. I also think he was an unusual man, intelligent, talented, courageous and idealistic.” - Cec Cinder to *The Nudist Idea*.

Boone, who didn't become a nudist until he was fifty years old, was the founder of ASA (The American Sunbathing Association). This group had evolved from his International Nudist League, later called the International Nudist Conference. Through all the changes in name, the ownership was never in doubt, as “Uncle Danny,” (Boone's preference) maintained control by calling himself the Executive Secretary and never letting the membership rolls out of his hands. In 1935 he bought Sunshine Park near Mays Landing, NJ. The ASA office was housed there and the American Sunbathing Association was incorporated in New Jersey on February 18, 1937.

In subsequent years, several attempts were made to wrest control of ASA from Boone, but none was successful until August 1951 when a very well organized opposition orchestrated his demise. Boone immediately drove home from Penn Sylvan to Sunshine Park and tied up both the membership roster and the funds. It took a court case against him (and a full year) before he would release both to the new, and rightfully elected, directors. In 1952 Mervin Mounce became the first ASA president not directly under the control of Boone.

Boone's other accomplishments include at least two that are notable. He founded and operated a nudist school for children ages three through twelve on the grounds at Sunshine Park. He also made an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court to allow nudist magazines -- even those with full-frontal nudity -- to be mailed through the U.S. Post Office. **He won that appeal in a landmark decision on January 13, 1958.** Of course, the men's magazines of the day immediately took advantage of the judgment.

By 1963, Boone's Sunshine Publishing Company was out of business and Boone was broke. Edith Church of the National Nudist Council let him live at her place in Ohio until his death on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1968. His obituary in the New York Times called him "the czar of the nudist movement in the USA."

The AANR award given in his name are to club newsletters deemed to be superior. This is perhaps most fitting when one realizes that Boone was the publisher of some of the most famous nudist magazines in America, *The Nudist* and *Sunshine and Health*. In fact, Boone's influence on nudism and on ASA is so profound that it will be impossible to write an adequate biography of him in this small space. Anyone interested in further information is referred to *The Nudist Idea*, written by Cec Cinder, who states in his book:

Boone was one of three charter members of the ASA Hall of Fame when it was established in 1964. The other two were Alicia Lloyd and Kurt Barthel.