



The American Association for Nude Recreation – Western Region

23679 Calabasas Road #966
Calabasas, CA 93021

Email: Information@aanrwest.org



The Pioneers

Biographies of Nudist Leaders Who Made a Difference

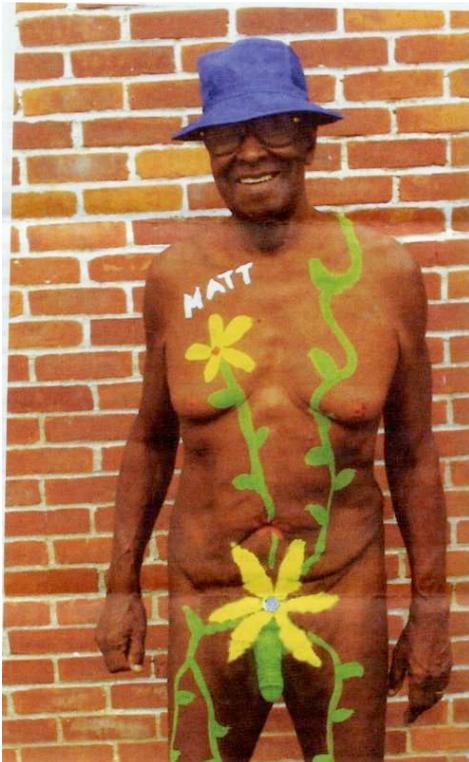
Matt Bullock: April 4, 1920 – July 7, 2013

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My Life as a Black Nudist

A distinguished Black American jurist has been a lifestyle advocate for nearly 70 years

by Matt Bullock, Jr.



I am a very fortunate person. I had great parents. I have a good brain, a good education, and good health. I meditate 45 minutes first thing every day, and my favorite mantra is "I am thankful." One of the blessings for which I am most appreciative is nudism. (I greatly prefer *nudism* to *naturism*. *Nudism* to me suggests the specific traditional artistic appreciation of the beauty of the human body, whereas *naturism* is a nonspecific euphemism suggesting trees, clouds, animals, birds, and vegetarianism, as well as rusticity and lack of sophistication.)

I was born in Boston in 1920 a few months before women got the right to vote. Although some might consider that my being born Black was unfortunate, I have never felt this way. I think the difficulties involved in so being have made me a stronger person.

When I was nine, I had gone to a summer camp where the boys bathed in a lake nude. Prior to that, I had attended a boys' club in Boston where there was nude swimming. In 1938, when I was in college, I read *Among the Nudists*, by Frances and Mason Merrill. My immediate reaction was "This is for me!"

Reading the book formed my intention to pursue organized nudism. I did not get around to making a move until 1950, however. By that time, I had graduated from Bowdoin College (*summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa) and Harvard Law School, had a four-year interruption in the US Army, married, moved to Philadelphia, and had a daughter, then three years old.

At that time, the headquarters of the American Sunbathing Association was in Mays Landing, New Jersey. I wrote to its associated club there, Sunshine Park, expressing my interest in bringing my family to visit. At the end of the letter I said I was Black; I did not want to risk going and being turned away at the gate. I received a response to my

letter 17 years later, in March 1967. It was a form letter invitation, with a postscript that noted, "We found your letter of June 1950 in the effects of a prior owner of the camp."

Sunny Rest and Circle H

I did not, however, pursue the invitation, since by that time I had already gotten involved in nudism. In 1965 a friend got me an invitation to a social event at which were present the owners of Sunny Rest, a nudist resort in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. This meeting resulted in my going with my wife Etta and two other couples, one of whom were members, to Sunny Rest a few weeks later.

I told the husband-owner of my writing a letter to a newspaper about censorship of pictorial nudity. A couple of weeks later he advised the members with whom we had visited that my wife and I were not acceptable to join Sunny Rest. The reason given was: I was too assertive and might not take any racial insults lying down, and he did not want any trouble.

A member of Sunny Rest heard of our rejection and was incensed. He was determined to find a nudist resort that would accept us. Consequently, a few weeks later he took me, my two daughters (12 and 18), and the two other couples who had gone to Sunny Rest, to Circle H Ranch, near Clinton, New Jersey. (My wife had been called out of town on an emergency.)

Thus, my attending nudist resorts ended for the time being.

Back in Pennsylvania

On my one visit to Sunny Rest, I experienced a sauna for the first time and thoroughly enjoyed it. I decided that I would build a sauna in my basement in Philadelphia and have parties with it as a focus. I spent most of the summer of 1965 building the sauna and installing a shower. I subsequently installed a king-sized waterbed.

Every other Friday night I had a nude sauna party. Many of my non-nudist social friends enjoyed the parties; attendance varied from half a dozen to 15 or so. These events continued until 1981, when I moved to California. In the meantime, in 1972 my wife decided to move to Africa, and we were consequently divorced.

In 1971 the friend with whom I had gone to Circle H Ranch was invited to go to Beechwood Lodge in Ashfield, Pennsylvania.

She was very enthusiastic and told me there was a mobile home for sale there. She suggested that we find a couple of other people and buy it together. I was interested, but at the time I happened to be running for judge of the Common Pleas Court in Philadelphia and thought it would be prudent for me to avoid nudist resorts during the election campaign.

My friend found a mutual friend and her mother who were interested, so we bought the mobile home without my ever having seen it. I was elected judge in November 1971 and a few days later visited the mobile home for the first time. For the next ten years I spent most of my weekends at Beechwood, where many of my friends visited. I never had a moment's trouble because of my being Black. Moreover; it was there that I met Bert (Bertha), the woman who subsequently became my second wife.

Encounter Groups and Elysium Fields

During the 60s and 70s, there was another venue that offered me nudist experience, the Human Potential Movement. I attended many encounter groups, sensitivity training groups, and massage workshops on both coasts. Many of them were sponsored by an organization in Philadelphia called the Center for the Whole Person, which acquired a body-temperature pool in New Jersey. I attended several encounter groups led by Dr. Paul Bindrim, the father of nude encounter groups.

In 1969 I made my first trip to Los Angeles to a legal conference and was taken to Elysium Fields, a nudist-oriented "growth center." For the next twelve years, before I retired and moved to California, I visited California twice a year and experienced a variety of workshops, most of them nude. I also joined an "alternative lifestyle" organization called Family Synergy in Los Angeles. Many of their events were nude.

During the 70s I visited a number of places in the Caribbean which had nude beaches or nude sunbathing areas. These included Club Meds in Martinique and Guadeloupe, St Martin, and Jamaica. My favorite place was Negril Beach `Village in Jamaica [*now Hedonism II – Ed*], which I visited five times.

Back in California

In January 1981, shortly after my second wife and I had married, we drove across country and settled in a multi-unit property in Long Beach, California. We had a hot tub which we all used nude. Soon after our move, my wife and I started a massage group which we called The Loving Hands. It met once a month for about five years in the Philadelphia area and was attended by a dozen or more people.

In 1985 we visited friends in Florida who took us to Paradise Lakes Resort. The following year we bought a condo there. Thereafter, until my wife's death in 1992, we spent about twelve weeks a year there in four-week stints.

In 1994 I married again and moved into my wife Aida's home in Santa Barbara, California. In 1998 we were part of the first group to take a trip sponsored by the American Association For Nude Recreation to Paris and Provence. Ultimately, my wife lost interest in Paradise Lakes and, after 18 years of ownership, I sold the condo.

In 2001, we decided to have separate residences. I moved into a senior apartment less than a mile from my wife's home. We still talk on the phone daily, see each other several times a week, and go on trips together.

I am now free to attend nudist events on my own, although I do not exercise that option very often. One such occasion was a 10-day Mexican nude cruise in 2002. My most recent event was the gathering of The Naturist Society in Lenox, Massachusetts, in 2006. I am a member of two nudist travel clubs, the Olympian Club and the Southern California Naturist Association.

To me social nakedness is physically very pleasurable, emotionally very warm, socially very bonding, esthetically very appealing, and spiritually very inspirational. What more can I say?

Postscript

I am asked often, "Why is there only a handful of Black people in nudism?"

I'm really not the one to ask, since I am an ardent Black nudist. However, I can venture some thoughts on the subject.

I suspect that various traditional subterranean attitudes also discourage interracial nudism, including Black women's traditional vulnerability at the hands of White men, White men's traditional envy of the supposed virility of Black men, and Black men's and White women's shared sense of oppression by White men. Moreover~ not only has nudism not reached out to encourage participation by Black people, but it was not that long ago that Blacks were actually excluded, as my own experience indicates.

The United States, with its history of over two centuries of Black slavery, followed by many decades of legalized racial oppression, discrimination, segregation, and injustice, is still a racially divided country. White prejudice, condescension, and hostility and the Black sense of victimization do not die easily. Socially, the vast majority of both races confine their socializing to their own race. Experience in the workplace, school, sports, and cultural events may result in some interracial socializing, but this is the exception.

The average Black person has no exposure whatsoever to nudism. The relative few who do are likely to feel that it is difficult enough being seen as "different" as a Black person without also being seen as different as a nudist, in a culture in which most people regard nudism as a strange cult, if not a depraved form of activity.

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SCNA Says Goodbye to Judge Matthew Bullock,

July 2013 - We are sad to report that Judge Matthew Bullock, an original member of SCNA and a nudist pioneer who broke the color barrier at several east coast clubs in the 1960's, has died following an extended battle with leukemia. Bullock was 93 years young and a good friend and mentor to our club.