



## The American Association for Nude Recreation – Western Region

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## The Pioneers

### Biographies of Nudist Leaders Who Made a Difference



## Marion and Rae Marie Stelts

By Marion Stelts,  
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I have been asked to write a brief history of my interactions with nudist organizations over the years. I feel compelled to include my wife Rae Marie Stelts who has been an integral part of our participation in nudism.

We were both born and raised in Oregon: Marion in 1940 and Ramie in 1942. We met at the University of Oregon in 1961 and were married in December of 1961. Our first home was in Livermore, California. I was employed by the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory full time and going to graduate school part time. Our two children were born during this time: Steven in 1965 and Tim in 1967.

Our introduction to Nudism was in late 1971. A friend had asked us to join them in a massage workshop conducted by Norma. Norma gave us a gentle introduction to nudism. She was also a member of the **Solotans travel club** located in the southern part of the San Francisco Bay Area. Norma organized a trip to the Red White and Blue Beach for members of the workshop. We were also invited to attend functions of the **Solotans** and to visit Tan Oaks Park, a landed nudist club in the Santa Cruz mountains that was being started by Marlin and Fay Hissim.

We soon concluded that a nudist lifestyle suited us well. We enjoyed the freedom, the people and felt it was a great place for children to associate with people of all ages. Within a couple of months, we had joined both clubs, holding our basic ASA membership with the **Solotans**.

Soon, we were spending almost every weekend at Tan Oaks. With full time work and graduate school, this gave us time to spend as a family.

Among other people who were frequent visitors were **Sol and Toby Stern**. It was said that Sol's goal in life was to become a millionaire in his thirties and then retire. It turns out he was able to do so. He had promoted nudism publicly in the Bay Area. He was also legal counsel for the American Sunbathing Association. They were personable people.

Ramie and I believed in supporting the institutions we believe in. We were active in both clubs we belonged to.

We believed in nudism and appreciated our introduction through travel clubs and the free beach. This was not shared universally by club owners. I engaged in an exchange of letters to the editor in the Western Sun with **Jerry Shaw**, owner of Shangri La in Arizona. This was a rather rustic club at that time. Jerry opposed anyone going nude unless they were paying to do it. I took an opposing view.

At this time, changes to bylaws and election of officers to the ASA were done by delegates from all the clubs at the annual national convention. The number of votes carried by each club was proportional to the number of ASA members in each club. In theory, the

members of the clubs were supposed to instruct the delegates. In practice, the members of the proprietary clubs carried the votes and voted as they wished.

The next national convention was to be held at the Willamettans, located near Eugene, Oregon. Ramie had been born and raised in Eugene and was interested in seeing who she might know from her youth. (It turned out to be quite a few!)

Since most members could not afford the time and money to go to each convention, we were appointed to carry the votes of the **Solotans** and Tan Oaks. Our instructions were to vote in what we considered the best interest of nudism in North America.

The convention was held quickly with little discussion of the issues. Towards the end, Jerry Shaw tried to speak to the general assembly without putting the request as a formal motion. He was being suppressed rather preemptively. I was getting a little irritated by this time. I made a motion that time be allotted in the meeting for people to be able to bring up items of concern without a formal motion. After some discussion, the board voted to add "For the Good of the Order" to the agenda. It has remained since.

Sol Stern took me aside after the meeting and explained that everything had been decided in one of the cabins at Willamettans the night before. He headed a political bloc, using Lake Como's votes for leverage. Most of Lake Como's visitors were winter visitors to Florida. Cot signed them up as members of the club although they visited for just a short time each year. They had by far the biggest "membership" of any club. Furthermore, Sol said that his candidate for president had lost to a woman running independent of his bloc a few years ago. He had vowed that this would not happen again. (I have never been able to understand this passion for politics among otherwise sane people.) At this time, the national dues were quite cheap. This aided Cot in signing up visitors and increasing Como's membership.

On the other hand, the duties of the national office were severely limited. They had a mailing address and a telephone, which was not a toll-free number. Every few years they published a park guide which listed the clubs and provided maps to find the landed clubs. They published a few brochures on nudism that could be mailed in response to inquiries.

They did little to promote nudism to the general public. Any legal defense involved backyard nudism by members, or nudity on landed clubs. We were enthusiastic new nudists and wanted to see the movement grow. There seemed little chance of this happening with the current structure of the ASA.

After some discussion we decided that the only way to make the ASA progressive was to go from delegate voting to a mail ballot, sent to each individual member, thus defeating the political bloc that was strangling the ASA.

The next year, and for years afterward, we submitted a bylaw change to go to a mail ballot.

Although it was a bit of a financial burden, we attended every national convention for the next decade, lobbying for the mail ballot. We were traveling from California and then Long Island NY when I got my Doctorate and a new job in BNL.

We were quite involved with the **Long Island Travasuns**. Our most frequent activity was visiting the nude beach at Smith Point on **Fire Island** during the summer. This was on the Fire Island National Seashore.

The attendance at the beach increased with time. We provided a safe haven for other nudists who were not members of the club. Our relationship with rangers was excellent.

One day a ranger came with a message from the Superintendent of of FINSS, Richard Marks. I was the president at that time. The message was that he wanted to see me at his offices in Patchogue early Monday morning.

He notified me of his intent to shut the seashore down to "nudism and related sexual activities". I warned him to be to be careful of these associations because he could be subjected to a lawsuit. I said I would consult with our board of directors and our national organization.

Our board of directors decided to develop a passive resistance policy, continuing to go nude and put our clothes on when a ranger approached. This recommendation was copied and posted at all nude beaches on Fire Island. The Rangers used to patrol on horseback and 4WD trucks. They now started walking. They would stop and say "hello" and continue saying they didn't intend to look back.

The next major event was a **Celebration of Nudity organized by Lee Baxandall** and the Naturist Society. This was held at Davis Park on Fire Island This was written up in the New York City newspapers as a "Demonstration". There were perhaps a dozen rangers patrolling the beach looking in vain for the demonstration. All they found was a bunch of nude people enjoying the sun.

About noon Marks sent another message saying that he wanted to talk to Lee and I and would provide a speedboat to take us to his offices. We declined, saying it was a beautiful day and he could come to us.

The next Saturday a Ranger delivered another message. Marks wanted to meet with the Travasuns on neutral ground at Old Inlet. Perhaps 8 or 10 of us met him. About the first words out of his mouth was "I heard you threw a guy and his camera into the surf a while back". We replied that we had not done so, but we had threatened. He said that was too bad because his rangers couldn't do that but that there was nothing to stop us.

His rangers had talked to him and he had had an epiphany. He realized now that we made a large contribution to the safety of others. He asked that we not advertise in the NYC papers but had no trouble with the nudist press. We agreed because we didn't appreciate the creeps from the city that would show up in response to those articles.

The advice from the National office, when it arrived, said “Don’t go nude anywhere but Landed Clubs or your own backyard!” I never showed the letter to the Superintendent!

Not long after, we moved to Los Alamos, NM. We continued to attend National Conventions. By this time, we would tow a small pop-up tent trailer instead of staying in a tent.

On the national scene we started to see more support from the delegates; mostly from travel clubs and the cooperatively owned landed clubs. We also started getting support from **Jim and Pete Hadley**, who owned Cypress Cove, a large landed club in Florida.

I also heard my words coming out of other mouths. I thought I had probably offended enough people over the years, and we let others carry the flag. The mail ballot passed a short time later.

The membership and funding for the ASA increased over the next few years. They became an advocate for nudism in North America.

We are now facing a serious problem of an aging membership. We hope this can be overcome.

Ramie and I withdrew from active participation at the National Level. We would attend some of the conventions but would relax and not be delegates!

When we moved to New Mexico in 1980, there was only one club, the **Yucca Naturist Club**. They rented land from a group that had bought it for a nudist club. People in that group had lost interest in nudism or had died. We tried to talk YNC into raising the dues so that we could buy the land, but the club wanted to keep the dues low, so they had minimal facilities. The property was eventually sold to a neighboring rancher. The club continued for a while as **Enchantment Naturists**. This club also failed after a few years of not finding land.

In 1981 and 1982, we discussed among us the possibility of founding travel clubs in other NM towns in order to increase the number of nudists in NM. During this time, I got a call at our home in Los Alamos from Peter Wolfe. His first statement was “We hear that you are nudists”. I replied affirmatively. He then said, “Don’t you think we should start a club in Los Alamos?”

This led to the founding of **Roadrunner Naturists** in about 1982 by Peter and Marge, Ramie and I, and two other couples. We still lacked 2 people to get to the qualifying club membership for ASA of 10. Peter and Marge signed up their daughter, who was in college and we signed up our eldest son who was attending a university.

The club grew rapidly. When Enchantment Naturists folded, we got more members from Albuquerque. I think Ramie was membership chairman until 2000. Peter served as president until he was disabled with ALS. I was elected president until 2000. At this point we had more members from Albuquerque.

In 2000, Ramie appeared to be coming down with arthritis. We both hoped to travel eventually and decided it had better be sooner than later. It turned out later that her “arthritis” was cured by inserts in her shoes. I took pension in 2000.

Ramie and I declined to run for reelection. I stated that officers should be dependable, and we didn’t intend to be. At this point the club moved to Albuquerque where most members lived.

We continued our membership while doing quite a bit of traveling. This increased to Australia and New Zealand after our eldest son moved, with his family, to NZ. We had the opportunity to visit nudist clubs in both countries.

In 2014, Ramie started to have increased problems with anxiety attacks. We attributed this to the increasing doses of medication she was getting to control her benign tremor. In 2015 we decided to have deep brain stimulation probes put in, along with the stimulator to control the tremors at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona. Something went wrong with the insertion of the second probe. This led to all sorts of problems. We eventually brought her home to hospice. With excellent nursing, she “flunked” hospice. The health problems (and therapy) continued.

She is in now in assisted living at Aspen Lodge and is quite happy.

We have gotten great support from the Roadrunner Naturists. In 2016 we were made Life Members of the Roadrunners and the AANR. We are quite appreciative.

We have many happy memories of our life as nudists!