

My First Time

By Gary Mussell

My first nudist experience came by accident when I was 32 years old. Prior to that, I had been raised in a very modest family where my mother forbid my father to have Playboy Magazines in the house (I found out years later he did anyway.) Nevertheless, as a teen I was always curious about it and on those rare occasions when I found myself home for a few hours alone while my parents and younger brother and sisters were off on some family outing, I tried out being without clothes for an hour here or an hour there. It felt comfortable, but I never dreamed I would ever try it in front of others. Still, skinny-dipping was on my mental "Bucket List" to try sometime in my life when – or if – I ever could summon the courage.

That chance came when I was married with a six year old daughter. My wife, like my mother, was extremely self-conscious about her body. What nudity there was in our home was limited to streaking from the bathroom to the bedroom after a shower. On this particular day, the three of us happened to be exploring tide pools near Paradise Cove on the shore of the Pacific just north of Los Angeles. My daughter was fascinated by the sea creatures trapped in the water at low tide, so we often visited different beaches along the 50 miles of county shoreline where these pools could be explored.

On this particular Sunday, we walked north from Paradise Cove, looking for the tide pool area a specific guidebook said was there. After a while we rounded a particular corner to discover a long beach perhaps a half-mile long, that was covered with naked bodies. "Oh my God!" my wife cried out, "It's a nude beach. We need to go – now!" At that instant, my daughter squealed with delight and took off running down the beach and into the crowd. She had totally forgotten about any tide pools.

My wife rolled her eyes, and we walked with purpose toward where she had shed her bathing suit and was now running even faster down the beach. "I always wanted to try this," I confessed to my wife. "Don't you dare!" she quietly but firmly replied. From her tone I knew I couldn't press the issue any farther. After we retrieved our daughter and got her dressed, we turned south and returned to our car and left.

As a family we never went back. However, I happened to mention our accidental discovery to a co-worker a few days later. He nonchalantly admitted he and his wife went there all the time. I was more than surprised to hear this. Nudists lived among us! Who knew?

A year passed, and the next summer my wife and daughter left to visit her sister in Washington State. I stayed behind for another week to complete an important project at work. A few days later, the same co-worker

came into my office and closed the door. "Now's your chance," he said.

"What?"

"Remember last year you told me about the nude beach? Now's your time to go without your wife finding out."

"No, I couldn't do that. I would feel like I was cheating or something."

"Nah, how would she ever find out? Come on down Saturday with Gail and me."

Well, I was nervous enough about the idea but going with people from work was totally out of the question. "Okay, but I want to go by myself the first time." I think I said it as much to end the conversation and get him out of the office as to be serious about what I was saying. But as the days passed, I started thinking that perhaps this might be my only chance to try it, and I started making plans.

That Saturday morning I drove to Paradise Cove and retraced our steps from the previous year, up the coast, until I got to the same large, sandy beach just south of Pt. Dume. Only I got there early and there was hardly anyone else there. I walked about halfway down, spread my blanket, and sat there, alone, not wanting to be the only one on the beach who wasn't wearing my swim suit. It took a couple of hours, but by the time the sun was overhead many others began to arrive. Some were families, some were couples, and some were obvious groups of friends who had done this many times before. They all dropped their suits like they had done it a thousand times before (they probably had) with not a hint of self-consciousness or shyness. They unpacked umbrellas and sand chairs and Frisbees and footballs, same as on any beach. Only these people had no tan lines.

I reach my first moment of truth when I knew it was time to either join in or leave. So I pulled off my suit and immediately rolled onto my stomach, thinking, "Oh wow, I really did it! I really did it!"

About a half hour later came the second moment of truth. That is when I realized I was burning in places that had not been exposed to the sun before, and I was going to have to turn over. But I had a better idea: I would head for the cool ocean water and hide my privates there.

So I summoned all the courage I had, and stood up. I was certain everyone's head would turn and I would be exposed for everyone to judge. I tried not to think about it as I took step after step toward the water. After a few moments I realized they weren't looking at me. "Why weren't they looking at me? I'm having a nervous breakdown here and the least they could do is look and acknowledge it!" But nobody did. Nobody cared about me at all. Later, I found that many others also go through

these twin “moment of terror” their first time, only to look back and laugh at their conceit later.

By now there were several hundred people in the water, splashing, diving, body surfing, doing what people everywhere do in the water. Only without clothes. I joined in the fun and experienced my first surprising moment when the ocean wraps itself around one’s body free of clothing.

That was my moment of epiphany. I didn’t expect to love the feeling so much. I thought this whole thing would be a few moments checking off an item on my Bucket List, and then I would go home and live the rest of my life.

Nope, someday would have to come back. This was an amazing, unexpected experience, and I stayed all afternoon. I felt no sexual tension, in fact I saw no sexuality at all. I found out later that the beach had it unofficial mayor and a team to volunteers who made sure nothing inappropriate would happen there. So I found it really a very relaxing day. I even played a little beach volleyball. Modesty and shame would have been inappropriate in this setting.

On Monday morning, first-thing, my co-worker came into my office and asked, simply, “Well?” I told him I really enjoyed the experience and I thanked him for talking me into going. No, I wasn’t going to go back some other day with him and Gail, but perhaps someday. Then something happened I didn’t expect.

A few hours later, another co-worker came into my office and closed the door. “My wife and I saw you Saturday,” he said quietly with a big grin on his face.

Oh, no! I couldn’t sink far enough into my chair! He then explained he and his family go to that beach often and they were going to say hello but felt I might upset me (damn right it would have!).

“Is this some big conspiracy?” I asked. “Do a lot of the people I know go down to this type of beach?”

“More than you’ll ever know,” he replied. “We just never talk about it.”

There is a postscript to this story. A few days later I boarded a plane and joined my wife, daughter, and her sister’s family in Washington. We had a lovely vacation except for one thing I had forgotten about.

One night in getting undressed for bed, my wife asked, “What is that?”

“What?” I replied.

“It looks like your back is peeling. In fact your butt is peeling!” There was a nervous pause while her mind put together the puzzle. “Don’t tell me you went to that beach, did you?”

I sheepishly nodded. “I knew you’d never go there and I wanted to try it.”

“Oh my God! I don’t believe it..etc. etc.” She reminded me of it often during the next few years, especially when we had guests over for dinner so she could make an example of her “crazy” husband.

Unfortunately for her, some of our guests confessed they went to that beach (or others like it) also!

Social nudity, as it turns out, is hugely popular, but nobody ever wants to talk about it.

My wife (now my ex) thinks the world is nuts.

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