

## REMEMBERING XB58 ON ITS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

by Gary Mussell

*On June 29 we celebrate the golden anniversary of the first officially sanctioned nude beach experience in America. It occurred in 1958 at Davenport Landing beach, twelve miles north of the northern California city of Santa Cruz when an estimated crowd of sixty men, women, and children spent a quiet afternoon enjoying the sun and sea – all with the blessings of local and state government officials and under the protection of local sheriff officers!*

*The article below was written by June Lange, the wife of Ed Lange at the time. It was printed in the San Francisco Chronicle and was reproduced many times in dozens of local newspapers and nudist magazines of the era.*



Illustrated by Ed Lange

### NUDISTS BASK ON OCEAN BEACH

By June Lange

**Davenport Landing, June 29 – Sixty men, women and children nudists spent this weekend enjoying the sun and the sea on this warm, sandy beach 12 miles north of Santa Cruz.**

**This was the first time in the nation that an organized group of nudists has spent a weekend on a beach within public view.**

**The group, all members of the American Sunbathing Association, included nudists from San Francisco, Hollywood, Fresno and other California communities.**

**The adults took care to avoid the central area of Davenport Landing, a privately-owned beach about a quarter of a mile long. Each end of the beach is protected by high cliffs, but the central area is visible from Highway 1.**

**The group has been for some time trying to persuade the Santa Cruz and San Mateo County Boards of Supervisors to grant permission for weekend use of an ocean beach. Results being so far negative, it rented the private beach.**

**This weekend, one spokesman said, was given unofficial sanction by the Santa Cruz board, sheriff and district attorney. There were no incidents, and the group was disturbed by neither the public nor the law.**

The above story by *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Sam Vestal of Watsonville, Calif., was reprinted in newspapers all over the country.

It is essentially correct, except for two minor points: Whenever you have 60 adult nudists, you can invariably count on having a pack of children too - so it was over 100 men, women and children nudists. Secondly, the beach at Davenport Landing is not visible from Highway 1. A separate county road leaves California Highway 1, dips down toward the beach, then returns to the highway. From that side road the center portion of the beach is visible.

It was that Davenport Landing road that caused the nudist sponsors of XB-58 (so named as the first experimental beach outing in America) the greatest concern. All the people who would normally come down to use the beach (at 50 cents per car) drove down that road, only to be confronted with a sign informing them that the beach was not open to the public that weekend.

But to those of us on the beach, sensitive to every strange car driving past, it seemed there was also a little traffic from cars whose drivers did not slow down to read the sign. Some of those cars came by more than once, and they were the cars that had us worried.

About 9:00 A.M. on Sunday, one of those automobiles pulled up to the gate and asked to see the people in charge of XB-58. They informed the gatekeeper that they were from the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department.

Stan Sohler, Sol Stern and Ed Lange, the three sponsors, hot-footed up to the gate. During the next few suspenseful moments, those of us who had heard the message gathered nearby, impatiently awaiting the news.

After a few anxious moments, we heard Stan's hearty laugh, booming out over the rumble of the conversation, and we relaxed. Soon a jubilant trio returned from their conference with the sheriff's team. Ed, Stan and Sol reported that the sheriff had received an anonymous phone call the day before, reporting that some nudists were using Davenport Landing. Because of the call, the sheriff's office, using plainclothesmen in unmarked cars, had been patrolling the Davenport Landing road all the day before, trying to see if any nudist activity could be observed from the public road.

They had come to the gate to let us know that they had checked out the situation and were satisfied that we were not violating any regulations. Also, they wanted the group to know they would keep patrolling the road all day long to make sure any unauthorized vehicles kept moving.

The anonymous caller had not registered any complaint. He seemed only to want to let the sheriff know of the situation. But of course the sheriff as well as the Board of Supervisors and the District Attorney already knew of it.

Clearing XB-58 with the officials of Santa Cruz county was the last step in a long chain of events, carefully planned to make sure that the right answers would be forthcoming whenever officials were asked the question, "Why not a nudist beach?"

During his term of office as President of the American Sunbathing Association in 1956, Stan Sohler had first asked the question of California's Governor Goodwin Knight. President Sohler was careful to point out that nudists were not asking for the moon - they did not expect to be given a choice beach, the loss of which might offend the public in general.

On the other hand, Stan's letter reasoned, with all the miles of isolated beach relatively difficult for the general public to reach, he felt that there might be some little-used area in the public lands where the nudist public could swim and sunbathe on a "bathing suits optional" basis.

The Governor's polite reply, referred the matter to the California Department of Natural Resources, Division of Beaches and Parks. Shortly thereafter, Stan received another very polite letter from the head of the division, suggesting that the problem first be taken up with local authorities to insure its successful and legal operation.

Armed with these two official letters, Stan then began checking out some of the counties of California with beaches suitable for the project. After almost a year of searching, planning and discussing, Stan finally decided that the safest way to demonstrate (to nudists as well as to the public!) that nudists could use a beach without offending anyone was to find a private beach where none but nudists would be allowed - and where the rules used in ASA camps could be enforced.

An ideal beach for the purpose was located in Santa Cruz county-screened from public view, accessible at only one point through a gate, and available on a private rental basis. That was Davenport Landing, about a mile and a half north of the tiny town of Davenport.

Carefully checking through the chains of command, Stan held discussions with Hulda McLean, Supervisor of the Third District, where the beach is located. Supervisor McLean in turn checked with Francis Silliman, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, and on May 10 wrote Stan giving him the green light, and suggesting that he also check in with the Sheriff's office.

To insure careful compliance with ASA principles and standards, Stan sought as co-sponsors of XB-58 nudists who would share his interest in maintaining ASA rules. Stan felt that his fellow ASA Trustees from the Western Sunbathing Association would be the logical choice. The trio, Stan Sohler, Sol Stern and Ed Lange, accepted the responsibility of co-sponsoring XB-58 in an unofficial capacity, agreeing in advance to make compliance with ASA rules a condition for all who took part.

Each of the three made himself responsible for recruiting ten families. In less than a week the word had spread so quickly that the quota was filled. From the numbers of people who had to be refused

participation, it would seem that interest in beaches for nudists guarantees the success of similar projects in the future.

Such interest will grow even more as nudists learn of the wonderful time enjoyed by those lucky enough to take part in XB-58. The sensuous joys of nature at the seashore - the blend of sun, sea and sand, and the majesty of the mighty Pacific Ocean - seemed even more impressive when these pleasures were enjoyed naturally.

"We should have done this years ago," one father said, watching his kids contentedly building sand castles.

Another nudist said, "Our family loves the beach, but we never felt safe going nude in the ocean before. Whenever we get the chance to enjoy beach life without the nuisance of soggy bathing suits, you'll find us ready. It's one of our dreams come true."

A dream comes true - that's the way most of us felt, enjoying not only the physical pleasures, but relishing as well the significance to nudists everywhere of XB-58.