

“THE DAY I GOT LOST HIKING NUDE”

By Rod W.

Attention all nudists! When you go hiking, always bring a compass...and a towel! I learned this lesson the hard way.



It was late spring in 2001 and I decided to explore the hills above the new Elysium property in Malibu, California. Elysium had relocated just a few months earlier from its 30-year home in Topanga after the daughters of

its late founder, Ed Lange, decided to sell. Betty and Sandy Meltzer, longtime Elysium Board members, had purchased 27 acres of mostly undeveloped land about 20 miles to the west and relocated the nudist resort there.

The Malibu property was adjacent to what hikers know as “The Backbone Trail”, a 100-mile footpath that snakes through the Santa Monica Mountains and rings the Los Angeles basin. The popular trail provides hikers and nature lovers a magnificent way to enjoy the area's flora and fauna in its natural state. This particular day was overcast, yet warm, a perfect day to go hiking, or so I thought. I had hiked the Malibu property and parts of the Backbone Trail many times before and never ran into anybody. Usually I would wear tennis shoes and a baseball cap and carry a bottle of water and a towel (just in case I ran into someone). Today, however, I wanted to be adventurous. I wanted to hike without wearing or carrying anything, to be totally nude! No tennis shoes, no towel, no baseball cap, no water bottle. Nothing but the trail and me.

As I had done many times before, I walked beyond the property line and onto the Backbone Trail. As I progressed on my hike, I began to notice the fog rolling in from the coast. It was not long before I decided to turn around and head back. Perhaps half an hour or so later, the fog had rolled in so that the visibility I had was

no more than ten feet. After another hour or so, I realized I had been walking around in circles. I did not know which way was West (the ocean) and I could not find the Elysium Property. I also started to worry because the temperature often drops dramatically in the evenings in the hills of Malibu.

“What if I can't find my way back during daylight?”

I continued on the trail, now going in a direction I just knew was wrong. After another hour or so, I heard what sounded like farm equipment, a tractor perhaps. Then a house appeared out of the fog. I thought to myself, “I have two choices. If I go down the hill to the house, the people there may call the police. If I stay up on the trail, I may still be walking after the sun goes down and freeze”. I made the choice to go down the hill toward the house.

As I continued down the hill, I saw a man and a woman. I stopped and I yelled “you-who!” As the man and woman looked up and saw me I said, “I'm lost and I need a towel”. I went on to say “I am not crazy. My friends let me hike nude on their property”.

Then I smiled. The woman said that she would get me a towel and walked to the house. The man just looked up at me and did not say a thing.

When the woman came back with a towel and a t-shirt, I continued my walk down the hill and toward their property. I thanked the woman as I wrapped the towel around my waist and put on the t-shirt. I then asked which way was the road. The woman pointed and said, “It's that way.”

I have often wondered what went through the mind of that woman. I suppose she could have just as easily called the police as help me. On the other hand, living up in a remote part of the Santa Monica Mountains, I'll bet she has seen a lot of strange things and met a lot of interesting people that have wandered off the Backbone Trail. I can only speculate what her version of the encounter is when she tells her friends about the day a nude man came down the hill toward their home and asked for a towel and directions. On the other hand, maybe she did not think it was unusual at all. I'll never know.

So if you ever find yourself nude and lost in the mountains, just stay calm, and remember, sometimes a big smile will cover a lot!