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"Keeping Our Beaches Bare"

A Summer of Education, Defense and Offense

ANATOMY OF AN ANTI-NUDITY BATTLE

By Shirley Mason

Little did I know that plans of spring-cleaning – even at the beginning of summer – and an over due date with the third book in the series of Harry Potter was just about to turn to vapor on the faithful day of June 18, 2003. I received an e-mail message from Dennis Kirkpatrick that provided the web address for another positive article on nude recreation. I made note of the URL to read later and continued on to read the other dozen or so e-mails. Marvin Frandsen's was the next one I opened with a catchy subject title of "Old Enough To Make A Lanyard" from the *New York Times* about a Florida nude youth leadership camp.

By June 19th, I read the article about Congressman Mark Foley's letter to Governor Bush and Attorney General Charlie Christ, giving a scathing account of our nude summer camps for naturist youth. I knew that doing nothing more than contemplating my navel, if I so decided, was going to be put on hold indefinitely.

The anger that I felt at reading what Congressman Foley said was only tempered by the thought of what must be done to defuse this public relations disaster. It was obvious that this was not going to be a passing issue, knowing the tenure of the public's paranoia over nudity in almost any form, equating it to everything sexual. Add nude co-ed children in a nudist resort environment with other adults in proximity, meant instant disaster for the organized naturist/nudist of the entire United States. My volunteer citizen activism in both educating and grassroots lobbying of government officials for nude recreation

since 1990 told me that this would spiral downward quickly. Every instinct said that this was going to spread like wildfire throughout state legislatures around the country. If all of the naturist community didn't work together to take charge of the situation by countering Foley malicious innuendoes and scurrilous allegations bordering on slander and libel, we would be cooked.

In this case, the American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR) was the natural lead organization for this educational campaign because they sponsored the nude youth leadership camps and they invited the press to the Florida Nude Youth Camp. Unfortunately, they were not prepared for the onslaught of mostly negative publicity that occurred as a result. After about 3 days of weak and embarrassing defensive exchanges in the frying pan of high profile national media shows, AANR leadership retreated not to be heard from. Several unscientific polls indicated that Foley's rhetoric had legs and the public sentiment showed 4 out of 5 people believed that nude youth camps were harmful.

AANR's statement to its members and state and national naturist community leaders was that they were advised by their professional lobbyist to do nothing and this thing would go away. They notified us that they would not attend the meeting that I had set up with Foley or attend the press conference the organized naturist leaders had arranged so our correct message of facts verses fiction could reach the public.

NATURIST LEADERS MEET WITH FOLEY AND HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE

South Florida Free Beaches/Florida Naturist Association and B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation had been conferring with one of the top communications firms in Florida, Ron Sachs Communications after the third day of this fiasco. So after a week of this nightmare and when we were informed that AANR would not get out in front of this issue, SFFB/FNA hired Ron Sachs Communications. They immediately saw how important it was to get a clear, uninterrupted message from the naturists on the Foley/Nude Youth Camp issue. A press conference was planned in Palm Beach County and held immediately after the naturist leaders morning meeting with Foley on Monday, July 7th. However, the day before, naturist leaders met with Ron Sachs Communications account executive Carla Lucas Brown for a strategy meeting, review and crash coaching session. *NOTE: Our special thanks to our professional team of John Wark, Carla Lucas Brown and Ron Sachs for working so hard and charging so little for professional services we naturists could never afford.*

The meeting with Foley and his chief of staff was instructive and educational for both Foley and the 15 naturists in attendance. Naturists voiced their extreme displeasure with Foley's actions and rhetoric in a candid but respectfully manor. Things were left with an understanding that the real issue we could all agree on was the need for ALL camp employees and volunteers to undergo a fingerprint and background check done by the FBI for the purpose of identifying sexual offenders and felons. Foley admitted that he was very



bothered by naturist children attending these camps without their parents being with them 24/7. What naturists made clear was that we would not be singled out because of mere nudity and naturist parents would not be coerced into attending nude youth camps with their children in order for these camps to exist. In the minds of the naturists, it is about equal protection and parental rights. If the protection of children was the real motive of Foley and other elected officials, then parents, textile or nude, should have to attend EVERY youth camp program in the country including camps for scouts, church, sports, etc.

The press conference was well attended by a dozen reporters from local, state and national media. We received two full days of print, television and radio coverage. As a result, the Foley meeting and Naturist press conference combined with the Governor's Report of the nude kids camps being legal with no reported complaints or problems in its 10 year history worked to turn the tide.

Subsequent polls following the media coverage reversed in favor of parents having the right to decide to send their children to nude camps.

The residual result of the media coverage led to invitations to appear on several shows and event engagements. The two I've selected to expound on are as follows:

CAPTIAL TIGER BAY CLUB, TALLAHASSEE FLORIDA – LUNCHEON

As a self professed irreverent group of political junkies, the Tiger Bay Club is made up of business, professional and political leaders of the community which is more than 30-years old. Tiger Bay Club groups can be found in cities throughout the country and was originally started for Democratic Party elected government leaders and business oriented members. This has changed over the years and it does allow people from other Parties to join as well. The Capital Tiger Bay Club speakers are a virtual who's who of the rich, powerful, famous and infamous, ranging from foreign dignitaries to social, professional, and political celebrities. To quote from their Club biography booklet:

"Members and guests must be wary of tribal traditions. Having stood the test of time, these ceremonies bring great joy to many while inflicting great pain on others. Certain rituals even involve the roasting of unsuspecting tribal members and speakers. You may prepare yourself for this, but understand that there is no escaping the inevitable if it is your time...then it is your time."

In sorting through the maze of media calls of inquiries and interview, I received an enthusiastic request by the club's executive director to speak before this prestigious group. On July 30, 2003, the Capital Tiger Bay Club paid for me, as executive director of B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation, naturists activist and camp volunteer Marion Hofmann, and her grandson Kyle, who attended the youth camp in question at Lake Como, to fly to Tallahassee. Paul LeValley, president of the Tallahassee Naturists and the person who created the Florida nude kids camp program, was a welcome addition to our speaking team.

Here is the announcement the Tiger Bay members received:

*"Aaaahhhhh -summer time is here. Hopefully, a little R & R, a little fun in the sun. The ideal time of year for individuals and families to spend time at the beach and summer camps. That is unless you like going to clothes-optional beaches (i.e., go in the buff). In case you have not followed it in the papers, U.S. Congressman Mark Foley has created quite a stir among the naturists/ recreational nudists community with his requests for investigations into nudist camps for children in Florida. He claims that he is concerned with the safety of the children and that "kids are not in contact with undesirables." Attacks on constitutional privacy rights, harassment, and political aspirations are among the accusations expressed by B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation Executive Director Shirley Mason, our next speaker for the Capital Tiger Bay Club. More pointedly, Ms. Mason is convinced of a movement within the Florida Legislature, as in some other states, to try and ban this type of activity in Florida. Make no mistake about it, "nudity is a political issue" and "it's a fundamental freedom in this country to make such personal choices." Now **THIS***

would make for an interesting Special Session next year."

Greeted with friendly smiles and poster-size cartoons poking fun at Congressman Foley, we knew we were in friendly territory and it was going to be OK. We reciprocated with two giant posters of our own showing our sense of humor and pride in our form of recreation with the kid cartoon character "Calvin" running and the phrase, "Life is short, Play Naked" placed next to Foley's cartoon. The other oversized poster was of the clothing optional section of Haulover Beach on Miami Beach and was placed on an easel in the front of the room next to the dais head table – Nothing subtle here.

We spoke at the luncheon for about 45 minutes and receive a warm welcome and response from its members. Approximately 300 members were in attendance and were told that this was their largest turnout for a summer meeting, when most of their members are on vacation. Local and national print and television media covered the event and favorable press followed.

Our team skillfully blended the serious repercussions of anti-nudity legislation, economics of nude recreation, information about the logistics of a typical camp experience with lighthearted remembrances of the history of skinny-dipping in the Tallahassee area and the traditional campus annual streaking events that began at Florida State University. So when the question was asked, "Who has ever skinny-dipped?" At least half the members raised their hands. They could relate.

This two-day trip to Tallahassee afforded me the opportunity to meet with a few key legislators' staffs and pow-wow with Ron Sachs and members of his staff. I was even invited to enjoy a complimentary dinner with one of his newest seasoned professionals – Art Carlson, former lead anchor in Miami with the ABC affiliate television station.

After several stress-filled lobbying trips to Tallahassee over the past ten years, I can honestly say this was my first enjoyable encounter with that town. Guess it's a different place when it's not in Session.



INSULT TO INJURY / INSULT AND INJURY

Foley had received national media attention over this issue, probably for the first time, and he loved it. No doubt, Foley was star-struck and feeling very important. But the attention was waning by the end of July. Some of the national coverage by a few of the cable talk show élites didn't find his hysteria to be worthwhile and said so. I suspect that Foley felt somewhat humiliated. So, when he learned about the former president of AANR, sWalt Zandonoff, selling nude recreation and travel videos on the Internet, he couldn't resist the opportunity to gain more attention. He could now go back to those that wouldn't fall for his scare tactics, and say, "I told you so," these people are peddling child porn and attracting pedophiles. He went back to the Governor and the media with his new find. This time the governor sent in the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and even the FBI got involved.

But as expected, Foley didn't care that these were videos of nudist facilities in Europe that contained footage of children engaging in normal activities such as innocent sport competitions, "beauty" contests, swimming, socials, and typical kids play. He now got his second 15 minutes of fame by causing more havoc for naturists in general and Mr. Zandonoff in particular.

Once again, AANR was not prepared and handled this new revaluation awkwardly at best. They totally disassociated themselves from a loyal member and former leader.

In mid September, Walt Zandonoff was vindicated, but not without his reputation being ruined, loss of precious privacy and income to supplement his retirement income. Florida law enforcement authorities reported to Governor Bush that the videos were not sexual in nature and were not a violation of the law.

JOHN WALSH TV SHOW: ROCKEFELLER CENTER, NEW YORK CITY

On August 27, 2003 a contingent of nine naturists from Florida and Arizona were flown to New York City to did a taping of the John Walsh Show on August

28th. The show aired on Tuesday, September 9, 2003. I was called the week following our press conference, did an interview, and subsequently selected to participate on the show.

Instead of making my personal comments about the experience, here is the write-up from the John Walsh Show as seen on the show's web site:
<http://www.johnwalsh.tv/cgi-bin/topics/today.cgi?id=274>

TEEN NUDIST CAMPS: HEALTHY OR HARMFUL?

Did you know there were nudist camps for children ages 11-18? Believe it or not, Youth Leadership Camp at Shangri-La Ranch in New River, AZ, as well as nudist camps operating in Virginia and Florida, are just a few of an increasing number of nudist camps for children ages

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11-18. Since many of these children attend the camp without their parents, the camp has raised concerns among state officials and lawmakers. Nudists argue that these camps are good for teens' self-esteem and that nudism is NOT about sexuality and exploitation. But opponents, like Florida Congressman Mark Foley, are concerned about sexual or lewd behavior between campers, as well as the background checks and the application process for camp counselors, volunteers and staff. First, John talks with four nudist pre-teens and teens – Ali, 12, and her sister Amanda, 15 & Justine, 11, and her brother, Kyle, 16. Kyle and Justine say they love going to nudist camp because they feel secure and are not judged based on what clothes they have on or what their bodies look like. Ali has gone to the

nudist camp for 3 years and says she enjoys it because going to camp makes her feel good about herself, and kids really get to know each other – and care about what's on the inside. Amanda has gone to nudist camp for 6 years; she insists that people have the wrong idea about the camp. Eric & Kathy, Ali & Amanda's stepfather and mother, say that nudist camp has helped their daughters have more confidence and higher self-esteem than they would have at a regular camp, and say opponents of the camps should really investigate before they condemn nudists' way of life. Marion, Kyle & Justine's grandmother, is also here to defend the existence of the camps. She's been a nudist for 15 years and even worked as a volunteer this past summer at the teen nudist camp that her grandchildren attended. Patty is the manager of Shangri-La Ranch, a clothing optional resort just outside of Phoenix, AZ, which recently hosted a teen nudist camp that her three children – ages 11, 14 & 16 – attended. Patty explains why she thinks kids benefit from the nudist camp in the studio. Next, Florida Congressman Mark Foley shares his major concerns regarding these camps and why he thinks they are potentially dangerous for children. Then, 22-year-old Steven, who was a counselor at a teen nudist camp this past June, tells us why he's tired of hearing all the misconceptions about nudism. Finally, Dr. Jeff Gardere, a clinical psychologist, weighs in with his professional opinion on the topic.

KYLE, 16, & JUSTINE, 11, are siblings who say they love going to nude camp because they are accepted and not judged based on what clothes they have on or what their bodies look like. They say going to nudist camp has improved their self-esteem and has made them feel good about themselves. The siblings say they have made really good friends at camp and say they never feel threatened or uncomfortable in regards to their safety when they are there.

ALI & AMANDA

Ali, 12, and Amanda, 15, have been going to teen nudist camps for several years – and they love it! They say that they like the way everyone is treated



equally – without material judgments. Ali has gone to the nudist camp for 3 years and says she enjoys it because people don't make assumptions about her based on her clothes or how she looks – they care more about learning who she is on the inside. Amanda has gone to the camp for 6 years. She insists that people have the wrong idea about the camp and defends her nudist lifestyle.

PATTY FABER is the manager of Shangri-La Ranch, a clothing optional resort just outside of Phoenix, AZ, which recently hosted a teen nudist camp. Patty's three children, ages 11, 14 & 16, attended the nudist camp held at Shangri-La this summer. Patty says she believes kids benefit from the nudist camps in several ways – it gives them better self-esteem; it makes them more comfortable with themselves and their bodies, and it even makes them more confident in school. She insists that the children are protected since all counselors and employees at her camp get background checks.

ERIC & KATHY

Eric, who is Ali & Amanda's stepfather, says the teen nudist camp has been a big self-esteem booster for his stepdaughters, and that they've developed close friendships with other teens who are involved in the nudist lifestyle. Kathy, the girls' mom, says that the nudist camps have given her daughters confidence and the freedom to be who they are, no matter their social status or class, because underneath it all, all kids are equal. Eric says he and his wife are totally comfortable and confident that their children are safe when they are at camp, and the couple defends their lifestyle against their opponents.

MARION is Kyle & Justine's grandmother. She's been a nudist for 15 years and volunteered this past summer at Lake Como's teen nudist camp, which her grandchildren attended. She says that Congressman Foley needs to educate himself about teen nudist camps before jumping to conclusions about the safety of the children who attend, and they debate this issue in the studio.

CONGRESSMAN MARK FOLEY of Florida says that letting nude teenagers of

such a varying age range engage in activities together is potentially dangerous. He says he is concerned that these camps could expose kids to pedophiles and other dangers, and he has urged state officials to investigate them. Congressman Foley believes leaving kids alone in camp without their parents' supervision leaves the children open to exploitation, and wants to see extensive background checks conducted on all nudist camp members and staff to make sure the campers are safe.

STEVEN was a counselor at a Lake Como's teen nudist camp this past June. Steven grew up in a nudist environment and says it has helped him with his self-esteem. He says critics of nudism don't take the time to learn about the lifestyle, and says there are many misconceptions about the types of safeguards that are in place at the camps.

DR. JEFF GARDERE is a Clinical Psychologist who says there are dangers with teen nudist camps. He agrees that teens who attend these camps may have a more positive self-image, but he says his issue is that nudist parents are imposing a lifestyle on children that they may not be prepared to deal with. Dr. Gardere also says that putting 11 year olds and 18 year olds together, naked, could be "a disaster waiting to happen" because some children may not be developmentally mature enough to handle it.

SHIRLEY MASON is the Executive Director of the B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation Institute, a Florida group that supports clothing-free beaches. Shirley is a supporter of teen nudist camps and says that people are too quick to equate nudity and sexuality. She says people don't realize how much adult supervision these camps have and says that none of the legislators, including Congressman Foley, have taken the time to learn about the nudist lifestyle and family values. She feels these opponents are overacting to society's fears regarding sexual abuse and pedophilia.

www.house.gov
Congressman Mark Foley: Florida
www.drjeffgardere.com

Dr. Jeff Gardere

www.beachesfoundation.org/AboutBoard.html

B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation – Shirley Mason, Executive Director

www.gop.gov

GOP.gov: "Foley asks Bush, Crist to investigate nudist "camp" for kids"

www.cwfa.org

Concerned Women for America: "Teen Nudist Camps Increasing"

<http://observer.guardian.co.uk>

The Observer – International: "Bush blushes at teen nudist camps"

www.enterstageright.com

"Nude camping: It's not just for adults anymore"

www.faithandculture.com

"Culture: Nude Family Values"

www.intellectualconservative.com

"Don't Ban Nudist Youth Camps"

by Marvin Frandsen

**IN CONCLUSION?
NOT YET.**

As of this publication printing (September 25, 03) there has been at least one other state bill in Texas (HB 50) that has been introduced and one hearing has taken place. A Florida bill has been drafted for introduction during the 2004 Florida Legislature – both as a result of this Foley/nude camp episode. Other officials in Arizona, Virginia and Georgia are doing the same with the help and backing of far right politically religious organizations. South Florida Free Beaches/FNA director and volunteer activist, Richard Mason has been calling on South Florida legislators, educating them about this issue.

Naturist/nudist must get prepared for a long, costly and protracted battles in the war to stop non-sexual nude recreation on both public and private lands. We more than likely will end up in federal court after going through the state court process in several states if anti-nudity laws should pass and/or a restriction on our children participating in family-oriented naturism. We have no choice. So, stay tuned.

Guess Harry Potter and spring-cleaning will just have to wait. ☆