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“Keeping Our Beaches Bare”

How Haulover Became An “All-Over” Tan Beach *Haulover Beach Celebrates It’s 10 Year Anniversary*

By David Baum

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From the writings and personal recollections of Kathleen Chittenden, Tom Chittenden, Bruce Frendahl, Shirley and Richard Mason and the author

“Hey, I just found a great spot for a nude beach!”

With that, Tom Chittenden first announced the idea of Haulover Beach being clothing optional. That day in the late 1970’s, he and Kathleen, his wife at the time, were attending a BBQ for fellow MENSA members on the south end of Haulover Beach . During what was supposed to be a simple beach party, a private plane made an emergency landing in the water off-shore and the group ran out and rescued the three people inside. After the rescue, Tom took a walk north and came across a few people and some gay couples lounging undisturbed in a relatively empty area away from the public. He returned to the picnic and told his wife what he found.

An idea was born, but it wasn’t going to happen overnight. A lot of things had to happen first.

It turns out that the beach being used for nude sun-bathing at that time was on Virginia Key.

In 1980, South Florida Free Beaches was created and used the nude section of Virginia Key as its home base.

After city of Miami officials put a stop to the nudity in 1982, South Florida Free Beaches held nude house parties and boating trips and visited nudist resorts and clothing-optional beaches in other parts of Florida, all the while looking into other local sites and opportunities. Haulover was just one of those on the list, and Tom said it should be called “All-Over” (as in getting a tan “all-over”).

Time passed, and the club, led by Tom, continued to spread information about clothing-optional recreation to the public, while creeping ever closer to finding their own place under the sun. By the mid-to-late 1980’s things were changing fast on Miami Beach. European tourists were appearing in certain areas on the beach topfree and wearing thongs and g-strings. Public officials realized that these tourists were bringing in money, so they began to accept such attire rather than attack it.

With SFFB members now able to enjoy local beaches topfree and g-string, they knew that the next step would be to go fully nude; but when and where?

In 1988, Tom stated in the club newsletter that Haulover (or is that All-Over?) should be the next clothing-optional beach. The club even visited there for a beach clean-up. Conveniently located near hotels, hidden from US-1,

away the bad elements.

Meanwhile, SFFB used the 21st Street beach in Miami Beach during 1989, where topfree and g-string “nudity” were easily accepted. Full nudity seemed closer than ever. But, when Tom and some other members began “face-down” nudity, the beach patrol forced them off the beach. It was now clear that 21st Street would NOT become clothing-optional.

At the end of 1989, Tom left the club and new leadership took over.

The next year, Shirley Mason became membership chair and she and husband Richard began calling former members to ask them why they left the group. Most of the answers were the same; there was no clothing-optional beach. The Masons found a section in the club’s bylaws stating that the club’s goal was to establish a nude beach. They wondered “Why don’t we have a nude beach?”

Since the Masons had recently become active , they didn’t know the club had already looked into other beaches. When they began a fresh search, they were unknowingly picking up where Tom had left off!

Most people assumed nudity was against the law, but what did the law actually say? They went to law libraries and were given case studies by naturist activists John Moll and TA Wyner. They found that, while the cities of Miami and Miami Beach had anti-nudity ordinances, the county of Dade did not. Instead it used a state law, Florida Statute 800.03, the “indecent exposure statute.” In general, the statute allows nudity in designated areas but prohibits obscene activity. The case studies showed that “mere nudity” is not illegal.

Now that they knew how to be nude within the law, it was time to relay that information to parks and government

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with ample parking across the street and under county (not city) jurisdiction, the only down side was an “undesirable element” of roving gangs of rowdies. Before presenting petitions and his idea to county commissioners, Tom wanted to be sure that enough people would turn out so that the safety in numbers would keep

officials as well as to locate the site for the clothing-optional beach. The spot could not be crowded or heavily used because a designated area could displace regular beachgoers. They needed a relatively empty area.

To present their case properly, the Masons didn't want to appear before an entire commission during a public meeting where they would only have a few minutes to speak. Instead, they wrote letters to make appointments for private meetings so they could have one-on-one discussions about the law, tell what nude recreation is, and how it is good for tourism. The Masons recommended that the county consider not opposing a designated area rather than pass an anit-nudity ordinance.

Richard and Shirley didn't stop with government officials in Dade and Monroe counties. They also talked with and sent literature to Parks and Recreation, police departments, tourist agencies, and even the U.S. Department of Justice and the State Attorney. Richard spoke to the public defender's office about the law and nude recreation. Everyone got the same information.

Shirley and Bruce Frendahl appeared on two local Spanish television shows where they discussed nude recreation. Shirley and then-club president Mallika Sarrow set up public seminars to educate citizens on nude recreation and to bring in new members.

Meanwhile, the search for the clothing-optional beach had narrowed to about three sites. The leading candidate was Haulover Beach; the same place Tom had talked about! Shirley felt that Haulover's best features were plenty of parking and it was close enough to the Dade-Broward line to be a central location for beachgoers in both counties.

In April of 1991, Shirley became the new SFFB president and quickly put the next part of her plan into action.

Although they had not finished meeting with all of the officials, now that the information was getting around, it was time to begin actually using the newly chosen beach. During the April meeting at Clyde Lott's house, it was new vice president Jeff Busche, who read the announcement that we would begin using the north end of Haulover Beach. We would begin using the beach the same

way tourists had been allowed to sunbathe; topfree and in g-strings.

The plan was that as more people and officials learned the facts about nude recreation and got used to us being out there in a group by ourselves, the g-strings would come off while we were still laying down, then eventually we could stand up nude and walk around. Shirley wanted us to get this beach without arrests.

The official inauguration of Haulover Beach occurred during National Nude Weekend in 1991. The first day, Saturday, July 13, was spent at Seminole Health Club in Davie where the media covered the uncoverage of participating naturists who gave their clothes to charity and spoke to reporters. Bruce spoke on television, holding a baseball cap strategically placed in front of himself.

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Sunday, July 14, belonged to South Florida Free Beaches as we experienced our first day at our "new" beach. The theme was "Nude Under My G-String" with an expected turnout large enough that we had flyers to advertise kids' games, sandcastle building and volleyball contests, as well as a contest for "Most Unusual G-String". At first, about 15 people gathered in a cluster at the north end of the beach across from the walk-over ramp, but later during the day there were 35 people gathered at one time, obeying the "topfree/g-string" rule. A large, blue banner announcing our "quest for clothing-optional beaches" was set up near our table which displayed brochures and literature about the club and naturism. It worked for those who came up to see what was going on and joined the club. There were no lifeguards or even trash

barrels, just empty stretches of beach for about a quarter mile on either side of us.

A local news station showed up and interviewed some top-free members (one member later told me that the female reporter's eyes darted up and down, never quite sure where to look.)

We held the "Most Unusual G-String Contest", which Shirley won in the women's category with a kind of cotton-covered model.

At one point, a few die-hard nude sunbathers talked about skinnydipping, so I half-jokingly told one of them that it would be a neat picture if everyone came out of the water at once holding hands. He told Mallika, who responded with a very enthusiastic "Okay!" and promptly gathered up five people. Things happened so fast I almost didn't get my camera ready. As they prepared to emerge from the waves, two elderly women from the south end happened to walk past, and our nude group remained covered in the water until the unsuspecting couple passed, then walked triumphantly onto the beach. The picture of them holding hands and coming out of the water appeared later in *Nude and Natural* magazine.

Haulover Beach is no longer our club's little secret. There are now thousands of people at one time stretched across the quarter mile of sand.

As we enter Haulover's next decade, many free beach clubs around the country use it as a model for the correct way to create and maintain a clothing-optional beach.

Sometimes I look around and find it hard to believe. The location of lifeguard stand #27 and the Beach Mall table is the spot where 15 of us first gathered by ourselves, with only empty sand all around us, on that inaugural day on July 14, 1991.

I wasn't around during South Florida Free Beaches' first "golden age", in the days when Virginia Key was their nude beach, but I'm proud and excited to have been around when the club began its second golden age with the birth of Haulover Beach and honored to personally know the people who made it happen. ✨