

NAKED BEFORE GOD

*A Look at Healing, Self-discovery and
Spiritual Growth through Social Nudism*

by

DANIEL D. ZIEGLER

"NAKED BEFORE GOD combines insight, great humor and fascinating anecdotes to tell the account of Mr. Ziegler's personal quest for self-discovery. Discarding clothing, both a symbol of and fortress for anti-sexual, anti-natural uptightness, Daniel Ziegler has proven that the most basic path to the soul is acceptance and love for the body." —Daniel Blair Stewart, author of *TESLA: The Modern Sorcerer* and *AKHUNATON: The Extraterrestrial King*.

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Acknowledgements

First, I want to thank Doug and Norma Mitchell for hiring me as a member of the staff at they were about to announce to the surrounding community that the neighborhood campground, Turtle Lake Resort, was about to make it's transition from a conventional campground to a nudist park. This was an exciting and nervous time.

Next, I want to thank the other members of the staff who, with their expressed appreciation for my writing, encouraged me to continue. Then there were the individuals whom I interviewed, Cindy, Jerry, Sarita and Crystal, without who's sharing their experiences, this book would not be half as effective in getting my message across.

And lastly, I want to thank the hundreds of courageous individuals and couples who came through the gates of Turtle Lake Resort Family Nudist Park for their very first time—nervous, but curious about the nudist lifestyle. It was the smile on their faces and the sparkle in their eyes, as they experienced the freedom for the first time, that made me feel giving orientations and tours was the best job in the world.

Dedication

To my father,
whose lonely struggle
courageously led the way.

Preface

The events leading to the writing of this book are a demonstration of the Universe's support in living our dreams and fulfilling our missions. When we truly focus on what it is we want to do, and are willing to get ourselves out of the way, the Universe steps in to create its reality. From my first visit to a nudist park, I knew that social nudism was a profound, life-changing experience that I wanted to bring to the attention of others. I began by sharing it with my friends— taking them to the park with me whenever I could, writing short pieces on my computer and generally spending a lot of time formulating my ideas pertaining to the appeal and the benefits of the nudist lifestyle. The more I focused on these, the more I realized that perhaps I was on the path leading to my long sought-after mission.

Shortly after my introduction to nudism, I left my salary job as a security guard at General Motors. I had spent fifteen years at a reasonably good paying job that provided good benefits with which to raise my family, but it also left part of me unfulfilled. The job, however, did allow me plenty of opportunity to read, study and write, and it was

during this fifteen year period that much of my personal and spiritual philosophy took shape. (I was also able to earn a bachelor degree through a tuition refund program.)

In December of 1987, four months after I discovered social nudism, the company offered me a cash buy-out and, unhesitatingly, I accepted. I didn't know what I was going to do next, but I knew I no longer wanted to be doing that. My family was raised, I was now divorced and I felt it was time for something new. I trusted that the Universe would help me find it.

I began looking for opportunities to work within the nudist community. Though there were a few jobs available, most of these were caretaker or grounds keepers jobs, that although would allow me to work in a nudist setting, they were not jobs that would avail me to do what I felt I was most capable of doing—that is writing and speaking.

Still, willing to do whatever the Universe required, I applied for a couple of these jobs. One was a caretaker's job at Elysium Fields, a nudist facility in California, to which founder/owner Ed Lange responded that I was over qualified. Another was a grounds keeper job at Forest Hills, a small nudist park in Michigan, which at the last minute decided against making immediate changes in its staff. Interestingly enough, not being hired in these positions was not disappointing. Something inside told me that there were better things in store for me, that the Universe had a better plan, and all that I had to do was to be patient.

The next six years provided me with some difficult but valuable lessons in being patient, letting go and surrendering. I bounced around the country going through the motions of looking for work, getting turned down for jobs that I really didn't want, staying with friends, selling my belongings, caring for an Alzheimer's patient, living with a college student son, working minimum wage jobs and generally living on the edge of uncertainty. And, I was learning to trust the Universe--several times being faced with not knowing where my next meal was coming from, but never once ever missing one.

Throughout this period, my interest in writing and speaking about the self-discovery and spiritual aspects of social nudism intensified. In my travels, I managed to visit a number of nudist parks around the country and each time my conviction about the positive effects of this lifestyle was renewed and strengthened. Also, as I continued talking to people--nudist and non-nudists alike--formulating my ideas, I was becoming more aware that my approach to promoting social nudism was different than that of many other nudists. Rather than directing my energies toward fighting for our rights, which I feel is somewhat of a fear-based approach, I was focusing on informing and educating--a love-based approach. I was not so much interested in promoting a movement as I was in helping individuals discover who they are. I was becoming a teacher, not a soldier--and the movement desperately needed teachers.

Through my continuing interest and efforts, I was eventually invited to give a talk on nudism to a group of hypno-therapists, and I was asked to speak on nudism as a guest on a public access TV talk show. The talk to the therapists made me realize that.- 1) I needed a nudist park with which I could work closely to follow up the talks with actual visits, and 2) I had to write a book which would be the basis for my talks. The TV interview turned out extremely well telling me that I had an ability to communicate in a direct yet laid-back manner that was reassuring, even inviting.

The serendipitous events that led to the talk and TV interview clearly indicated that the Universe was supporting my efforts, and I was beginning to feel that I was on a definite and *guided* mission. I didn't want to do anything else. I felt it was still necessary, however, for me to continue working at my present minimum wage job, at least for now. This did not seem to be too much of an inconvenience because the job, again, was providing me with time to read, study and write. In fact, some of the material I was writing, I would be using, almost intact, a year later at my next job.

Through the years, I had read many books on motivation, finding your dreams, overcoming fear, self-discovery, spiritual growth, following intuition and other related topics. I also listened to speakers, bought tapes, went to seminars and learned how others were finding their

dreams and fulfilling their missions. These activities continually gave me the encouragement needed to carry on even in the most desperate of times.

A friend had once given me a book that described an exercise in which one writes down what they consider to be their ideal work. I had not done the exercise the first time I read the book, but one day as I was day dreaming, the perfect job came to mind. I again thought of the book and decided to do the exercise. I wrote that the perfect job for me was "*a tour guide at a nudist park*". The book also stated that one need not be logical or practical since the Universe could support any dream that came from a place of love. I certainly wasn't being logical or practical because I knew of no nudist park large enough to require a tour guide; and I was coming from a place of love, my motivation being the opportunity to change people's lives. I realized too, that if there were such a job, it probably wouldn't pay much, but that was not a concern. How I might be compensated, I would leave up to the Universe.

'A tour guide at a nudist park'--I put it out to the Universe.

In September 1993, I once again found myself in a situation requiring change. Fifteen months earlier, with no other place to go, I had temporarily moved in with my brother who was living in a one bedroom apartment. As it turned out, the Universe timed my move perfectly because my brother had just suffered a relapse of a previous health

condition and required someone to look after him. I was able to be there with him during that time, but now fifteen months later, after yet another relapse, we decided that it would be in his best interest if he moved into an adult foster care home. As I felt my move into his apartment was guided by the Universe, now I strongly sensed it was now telling me it was time to move on once again.

I gave my employer a two week notice and the landlord a one month notice. I had no idea what I would be doing next. All I knew was that I had some basic ideas for a book I wanted to write, that I wanted to become a tour guide at a nudist park and that after my last day on the job, I would have two weeks to do whatever I wanted to do before I had to be out of the apartment.

I released it all to the Universe.

After my last day on the job, I decided to drive from Auburn Hills, Michigan, where I had been living, to Oshkosh, Wisconsin to meet some of the people at the Naturist Society with whom I had corresponded discussing some of my ideas on promoting naturism (another term for nudism). I thought this would be a good opportunity to meet them in person. And. I just wanted to get away--it had been a difficult past fifteen months and I was tired and wanted to see new places and new faces.

Arriving at the Naturist society office, I met Nicky Hoffman. We had been talking less than five minutes when she told me of this beautiful park that a couple, the

Mitchells, had just bought near Union City, Michigan, with plans of converting it into a nudist resort.

Two days later, at the peak of the fall colors, I was back in Michigan touring Turtle Lake Resort, a beautiful 160 acre campground/resort, with owner Doug Mitchell as he was telling me of his and his wife Norma's plans to turn what had been a traditional campground into a clothing-optional growth center offering personal growth and self-discovery workshops and seminars within the safe environs of a nudist park.

Two weeks later, on November 1, 1993 I started working as the newest member of the live-in staff at Turtle Lake Resort. My duties included public relations, conducting orientations and giving tours, with my compensation including being housed in a park model trailer over-looking the beautiful Turtle Lake Lagoon.

The following week I would write an article entitled "NUDISM: What's the Appeal?" which, unknowingly, would be Chapter 2 of this book.

For the next year I would live a dream as I touched the lives of many people coming through the gates of a nudist park for the first time. Seeing their change, I would, in turn, be touched--always adding to the sense of duty to write my book. Over this year, the first edition of this book would begin to unfold. I received it all. D.D.Z.

PROLOGUE

AWAKEN, COME WITH ME. Let us return to the Garden where we once lived naked. Take my hand as you disregard your fears, ignore your shame and withhold your judgments; and come follow me. Let us go quickly as others are already there, and await *our* return. At journey's end, we will uncloak ourselves and stand naked before God--in surrender and in celebration--recognizing our Truth and remembering what it means to be free.

Introduction

THE HUMAN-POTENTIAL MOVEMENT offers hope for the human race. Perhaps more than anything else, the very existence of such a large movement demonstrates humankind's desire to survive, grow and evolve. With its millions of people involved in self-discovery, personal and spiritual growth, in its many facets, the human-potential movement offers hope for mankind's ultimate success in avoiding self-destruction and reaching an age of enlightenment.

As opposed to other periods in history, such as the age of scientific discovery or the industrial revolution, when mankind has looked outward for causes and solutions of its problems and answers to its questions, mankind is starting to direct the quest inward, toward self, thus beginning to accept responsibility for its present state of affairs as well as its future well-being. We are beginning to realize that perhaps the answers we seek lie within us.

As evidenced in our book stores, there seems to be a shift occurring in which we are becoming interested not only in how to make a living, but also *how to live*. Whole sections of book stores are devoted to healing, self-help,

self-discovery, recovery, new-age, spiritual growth, wellness, etc., indicating that wisdom and insight are becoming just as important to readers as knowledge and facts.

Perhaps the human-potential movement is evidence of mankind's readiness and willingness to learn how to get along with itself. Perhaps by going inward and learning about ourselves, we can and will learn about each other. Perhaps we will learn that we are not different and separate, but that we do indeed emerge from the same Essence, and that only by truly loving ourselves, can we love each other.

Self-discovery and growth are as much about unlearning, though, as about learning who we are. Indeed, to grow we must shed many old ideas, concepts and attitudes that once served us but no longer work and, in fact, may hold us back. Healing, self-discovery, personal and spiritual growth have as much to do with letting go of the old as with recognizing and accepting the new.

This book is about a lifestyle that offers much in the way of healing, self-discovery and spiritual growth, most of which has to do with unlearning and letting go. It is about a practice that in terms of application and effectiveness can be compared to meditation--a mental exercise of letting go.

Anyone who has practiced meditation knows the powerful affect of clearing the mind. Relaxation, a heightened sense of well-being and often a greater awareness of our spiritual nature result. Group meditation often brings the added awareness of our spiritual

connection to each other. The collective energy felt in a meditation circle can be unbelievable.

Nudity frees the body as meditation frees the mind, permitting us to be who we are. Being comfortable with private nudity requires a certain level of self-acceptance. Social nudity requires yet a higher level of self-acceptance, plus it offers us the added benefit of us being unconditionally accepted by others. It allows us to relate to others without facades, pretentiousness or artificiality. The resulting sense of well-being is beyond comparison. As is meditation, nudism is one of the most powerful tools for healing, self-discovery and spiritual growth available to anyone.

Nudism is a lifestyle that, in and of itself, not only fulfills all the criteria' of a 'growth experience' but also serves as a beautiful metaphor. Indeed, the shedding of our clothes is a metaphor for shedding attitudes and perceptions that may no longer be needed or appropriate, while accepting our God-given bodies is symbolic of learning who we are at levels yet to be experienced.

Nudism has much to offer in the way of growth, but it is seldom thought of in those terms. Unfortunately, stemming from our society's puritanical views of the human body and sexuality, nudism is one of the least understood practices in our society--often falsely associated with promiscuous sexual behavior. Misconceptions, such as these, coupled with a general lack of reliable information, have kept

nudism in the closet and out of consideration as a legitimate form of recreation, therapy or spiritual practice.

In spite of the relatively small numbers, nudism also referred to as '*social nudism*' or '*naturism*' is actually one of the fastest growing movements in our country, and, according to a recent survey, nudism/naturism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism in the world today.

For lack of a better word, I often refer to nudism as a 'lifestyle'. It is a lifestyle for some, but for others it is only an occasional recreational practice, yet it touches each deeply because in the very act of participating, one moves beyond mainstream thinking to new personal frontiers. In these terms nudism is really an attitude.

But this book is not really about a lifestyle, it is about people, just as the human potential movement is about people. It is about people being healed, people growing, about people discovering, people experiencing, people remembering and mostly about people reclaiming acceptance of their original state.

Nudism. Have you ever wanted to try it? If you have, you're not perverted and you're certainly not alone. There are millions of people, like you, who have fantasized about it, but so far have not taken the plunge. If on the other hand, you've never really given it much thought, you also are not alone. Millions simply don't know about it. This book is intended for all of you.

There are probably two reasons why more people

haven't tried nudism: 1) There is a lack of good reliable information on what social nudism is all about and where to practice it, and, 2) The many misconceptions about what social nudism is tend to scare people away before they even try it. In spite of its continued growth, nudism remains one of this country's best kept secrets.

This book is not intended to be a detailed nor complete picture of the nudist lifestyle. It is, rather, glimpses--insights and experiences, by me and other nudists--that will provide a safe and comfortable background on which you, the reader, can fill in the details of your picture with your very own experiences.

I will not attempt to provide you with a pattern or formula of how to experience nudism; as an individual, you will experience social nudism according to your own perceptions. Please keep in mind, though, that it may be so different from anything else you've experienced, that you may not yet have a framework on which to hang it. And it may take some time for you to process the experience and to interpret, describe or explain it, even to yourself. At first, you may just feel '*something*', '*something*' you can't explain but *something* quite good. Enjoy it, that's quite enough, and take your time.

If you've ever read a self-help book, attended a seminar or workshop, been in recovery, seen a therapist, run a marathon, attended a twelve step meeting, had a massage, gone to a psychic, are a vegetarian, meditated or in some

way been involved with one or more of the hundreds of activities associated with the human-potential movement, then this book is for you. It can assist you in your growth.

Whatever the reason you have picked up this book, it is not by accident. That I am writing these words and that you are reading them and that through these pages we have been brought together, is by divine order. Together perhaps we have already reached spiritual puberty and have begun to understand and accept who we are--spiritual beings having a human experience.

To me, and others, nudism has been a very powerful spiritual experience, touching us at the deepest level of our souls and leaving us changed from the first day we tried it.. I hope this book will shed some light on this lifestyle that produces such a major shift in consciousness in those that try it and I hope this book will serve as a catalyst in encouraging you to make social nudism one of the next steps in your unfoldment, allowing you to experience what we have felt.

If there is something in this book that speaks to you, listen to it, but more importantly listen to your own inner voice as it speaks to you. Free your body and your mind and LISTEN, as together we begin to understand and accept who we are.

BEHOLD *and* **BE HEALED**

*WITH JUST ONE VISIT, YOU CAN EXPERIENCE
MORE HEALING THAN YOU MIGHT EXPECT
FROM YEARS OF THERAPY.*

If you have:

- Poor self-image
- Poor body image
- Fears of not being accepted
- Difficulty accepting others
- A sense of being out of touch with an integral part of yourself
- A feeling of being confined or restricted

You will begin to experience:

- Self-acceptance
- Being accepted *by* others
- Acceptance *of* others
- A sense of physical and spiritual well-being
- A SENSE OF FREEDOM BEYOND COMPARISON

VISIT YOUR LOCAL NUDIST OR NATURIST PARK ...

...Where healing is certain and takes place naturally in a serene and peaceful setting, while you, unaware of the scope and magnitude of the healing, are having fun and developing new and lasting friendships.

Chapter 1

NUDISM AND SPIRITUALITY

FREQUENTLY BEING NUDE around the house, it seems that the nudist lifestyle had been calling me years before I ventured through the gates of a nudist facility for the first time. But, when I finally decided to heed the call, what I experienced was far greater than the "it just feels good" feeling that I had been having at home and that I expected to feel at the park. What I did feel was simply incredible, and now, much later, I realize that I was having a spiritual experience.

These kinds of experiences are not new to me. In meditation, for instance, letting go of my thoughts and concerns, and removing myself from my own judgements and limited perception of myself, I often experience a heightened sense of awareness and a deep sense of belonging.

Being nude, out of doors that afternoon with hundreds of other people, was giving me a similar feeling. But I also felt the most incredible sense of freedom I had ever experienced. I had the feeling that barriers had been removed, a veil lifted.

Indeed they had. Words continue to fall short of describing the healing and the growth that I've experienced since the day that I passed through the gates into a new consciousness. It was the greatest gift I could have given myself.

I have since taken the opportunity to introduce a number of close friends to the nudist lifestyle, some who had always wanted to try it, and others who had never thought of it before, some who were on a conscious spiritual path, and others who considered themselves atheists. Regardless of their beliefs, the experience has always had a profound effect on their lives, and their descriptions of the experience have not been dissimilar. Along with, "Why didn't I try this sooner?", "FREEDOM" is the word often heard describing their feelings.

What is this freedom? It is being free of restrictive clothing, free from societal pressure of how we are to look, feel and behave, and it is being free of shame of our bodies that we learned from our parents or that we were taught in some fear-based religion. It is being free of worrying what others think of us.

It is all of these and probably more. But summed up, it is being free of a lot of old *perceptions* of ourselves and of our world that we have been carrying around for a long time--*perceptions* that we counted on in our former fear-based reality, but no longer are valid in our new-found consciousness. Our new experience has brought us a new found freedom.

What an interesting parallel between nudism and our spiritual growth. Is not our spiritual growth nothing more than surrendering old perceptions of ourselves and who we are and replacing them with God's reality of who and what we are--His perfect creations? Is it not surrendering our old image of ourselves for God's Perfect Image? And is not our spiritual path one of surrendering our will for His?

When we remove our clothes at a nudist park, we are surrendering a false *perception* of ourselves, one that we have created, and we are allowing the real (in physical terms) us to be seen. With that surrendering of our "old image" comes a new acceptance and a new freedom. Not only do we find that others accept us, but we accept ourselves as well. This self-acceptance, at the physical, level leads us to being free of worrying what others think of us.

At the spiritual level, surrendering our old image of ourselves, our ego, or, the long held belief that we are separate from God, allows us to experience our real Self in terms of how God created us--perfect and in His Image. This is *true* Self-acceptance. It is the Truth that sets us free.

The parallel between nudism and spiritual growth continues in terms of the rewards awaiting our surrender. Those of us who participate in clothes-free living know what the rewards are for surrendering our textiles, for "taking it ALL off". It is that incredible sense of freedom that is beyond words that continually draws us back to the

lifestyle.

Spiritually, we also experience an incredible sense of freedom when we surrender even the smallest false perception we have of ourselves. Can we even imagine what freedom we will feel when we dare to surrender to God completely, when we finally decide to "take it all off"? We'll probably say, too, "Why didn't I try *this* sooner?"

To get a glimpse of the rewards in store for us as we uncloak our souls and stand "naked before God", we can enter the gates of a new consciousness right now by taking off our clothes at a nudist park or in some other appropriate place. The freedom felt is incredible and definitely worth the few anxious moments that may precede the experience. But it is only a glimpse of the spiritual freedom awaiting us - a metaphor at best. Never-the-less, it is a good metaphor, one definitely worth trying.

So give yourself a gift, the gift of freedom. Get naked before God.

The blissful feeling of being nude outdoors must be a little like what it feels like to be an angel.

When we begin to unashamedly look at our bodies, we will have begun to see beyond them--to our true Identity, where our Wholeness lies.

Chapter 2

NUDISM

What's the Appeal?

PEOPLE OFTEN SHOW UP their first time at a nudist park not sure of why they came. I know this is true because I've had the opportunity to ask hundreds of people why they've come. Asking them the same question as they return a second or third time often brings answers almost, but not quite, as vague. "It just feels good." or "I enjoy the freedom." are frequently heard from new and not-so-new nudists.

What is the appeal of nudism? What initially brings people to a nudist park and what draws them back? The answers to these two questions are probably closely related. What brings them in the first place? I believe that there is within each of us a desire to return to our 'Original State' - 'Original' referring to our spiritual origin, but including our 'natural state'. Spiritually and physically, we want to return home. This desire is sometimes seen as the 'innocence' to which we want to return or "the child within us" that wants to emerge. Whatever we call it, it seems to be a very basic part of each of us, although the degree to which we let it

express itself varies from individual to individual.

At the spiritual level, meditation, prayer and ritual are often used to return us to that blissful state or our origin. They leave us with a sense of freedom and well-being. By practicing or participating in these activities, we are honoring our feelings of wanting to return to our 'Original State'.

I believe that the curiosity or desire to explore the clothes-free lifestyle stems from the inner desire of wanting to return to our 'natural state'. Skinny-dipping as a child is an example of this desire being played out. Many nudists are drawn into the lifestyle by memories of these childhood experiences. Being nude outdoors, experiencing the wind, water and warmth appeals to our sensual nature and leaves us with a sense of freedom and well-being, and again, we are honoring ourselves.

There is another factor relating to our physical nature that I feel comes into play when someone decides to try nude recreation or the nude lifestyle. This factor is the pressure exerted on us by the textile world. Let's look at what is expected of us:

In the world of textiles, we are constantly being bombarded by Madison Avenue and the advertising industry with messages of how we are to look, act, dress, behave, and feel; and it is implied that if we don't live up to these expectations, i.e., look or dress or act or feel a certain way, there is something wrong with us. We begin to

compare ourselves with the models on the screen rather than real people, and we begin to not like ourselves, believing that only the flawless deserve a high measure of self-esteem.

Next, we often try to fix ourselves--many times with diets or exercises that are ineffective or even dangerous. Then, when we fail in some of these self-defeating programs, we feel even worse about ourselves. Not only do we feel we do not have perfect bodies, but we as a person have failed as well. And often the cycle continues. What a heavy trip.

By the time a person decides to go to a nudist park and take their clothes off, a major shift has already occurred inside them to bring them to that frame of mind. A feeling of discontent, perhaps unconscious, already exists and something inside--that inner desire to return home--is stirring. When we find ourselves in that frame of mind, it is as if we have had enough societal pressure and phoniness and we have decided to answer the inner call. We decide to take the plunge.

What happens there? Something quite unexpected. We expect a shock but there isn't one. The sky doesn't fall, God doesn't strike us dead, in fact *nothing* shocking happens; - absolutely none of the preconceived notions, imagined or not imagined, happen. We're just there, with other people who are also nude and *nothing* has happened. *This* is the adjustment period - a very short period of time it takes to

realize that *nothing* is going to happen. It generally takes less than a minute to adjust. That's it!

After the initial *non-shock* comes the reward for all your anxious minutes, hours or even days of anticipated shock. What you see is more people just like you, some "too fat," "too tall," "too short," "too skinny," some with "too much cellulite," others with missing parts, some tanned, some wrinkled, some young, some old, some *this* and some *that* and somewhere among all those people is the you that you once didn't like very well.

But perhaps for the first time in your life, you're not thinking about that. The sun and the breeze on your skin are your conscious thoughts, while at deeper levels are feelings of being free of thoughts of how you are supposed to look, and free of the untruths about yours, or *anybody*, being ugly. Now you see just bodies— no perfect bodies and no ugly bodies, just bodies, each housing a beautiful spiritual being who is interested in *you*—not what you're wearing or what you do, but in *you*, interested in JUST YOU, GOD'S CREATION. And you realize, " I'm okay. I'm really okay. I'm okay just the way I am. I'm OKAY!!!"

And somewhere inside you say, "I'M HOME." A healing has taken place. To suddenly see oneself as OKAY is to be healed.-- "It just feels good" and "I enjoy the freedom" now take on more meaning as we now have the answer to the second part of the original question, What draws people back? *Being healed*, and that *does* feel good

and the sense of freedom sometimes *does* seem overwhelming.

Beyond these words, however, it is very difficult to pinpoint all the feelings that come into play and just as difficult to put them into words. Words often leave us short when it comes to describing profound experiences. Then too, most nudists don't feel a need to explain it further--to themselves or to anyone else. It feels good, they feel free, so they honor themselves and just do it.

*Each time one participates in nudism
the ecstasy seems new and unbelievable,
because the extent of the feeling is so
immense that the memory cannot grasp
its magnitude.*

*Naked people was God's idea...Thank
you, God!*

Chapter 3

NUDISM

From Sin to Therapy to Normal

"I HAVE A small penis..." This was my reply to my friend Nancy who told me that she could never go to a nudist park because her breasts were too small.*

"...and a big belly," I added. "If I can get up the courage to go to a nudist park, you can too." This has since become my standard response to people who feel that their bodies "are not good enough" for them to ever try nudism.

Usually when I say this to anyone, I get a nervous laugh in response. But at the same time they are laughing, hopefully they are beginning to realize that whatever they consider to be their 'flaw' is no 'worse' than mine or anyone else's. Later, when they have an opportunity to see hundreds of naked bodies, they will begin to see the tremendous variation among them, and what they once considered their flaw, will be just one of the many variations that bodies come in; and most importantly, they will stop comparing themselves to others. That is the therapeutic power of nudism at work.

It is interesting to note that many individuals whose

bodies come the closest to resembling the ‘perfect bodies’ with which the advertising and fashion industries bombard us, often have the most difficult time trying nudism. While they seem to have 'above average' bodies, they also appear to have below average self-esteem.

Perhaps these individuals, many who go to extreme measures to maintain their shape, identify more closely with their bodies than those of us who have learned to live with ourselves just the way we are. We have accepted and, in a sense, transcended our physicality, and regard ourselves to be much more than bodies. We see our value as human beings as personalities capable of interacting with one another, not only at the physical level but emotionally, mentally and spiritually as well.

The key word here is *accepted* or *self-acceptance*. Self-acceptance, not just at the physical level, but including the emotional, mental spiritual levels as well, is the difference between someone with low self-esteem and someone that is confident, assured and self-actualized.

Although the advertising and fashion industries thrive on our general lack of self-esteem by selling us products that supposedly *improve* it, they are not to blame *for it*. I feel that many of our negative attitudes about ourselves stem from sexual repression of traditional of Western religion. As opposed to Eastern thought where God, man and nature are seen to be one, Western thinking places God at the top, nature at the bottom and man struggling somewhere in between. God is good, nature is bad, and it is

our physical nature, our bodies, inherently bad (according to Martin Luther and others) since Adam's fall, that pull humankind down-ward into sin.

Not only are our bodies bad, sinful or at the least disgusting, so is every pleasurable act associated with our bodies, especially those associated with our sexuality and the natural functions of our sexual organs. These negative attitudes, particularly dealing with our sexuality, are so deeply ingrained in us that while we accept violence, including the worst violation of human rights possible--murder--on TV, we don't allow showing a mother nursing her baby because the bare breast is associated with having sex. It is in fact against the law in many cities for a mother to nurse a baby in public. This, indeed, is a sick state of affairs brought about by sexual repression and traditional religious thinking that is based on fear, power and control.

This kind of negative thinking about our bodies, particularly our sexuality, is responsible for much of our shame and resulting low self-esteem. It has left behind a trail of psychological disorders that keep us from functioning as wholesome human beings. A host of problems including anger, violence, sexual disorders, eating disorders, communication problems as well as such conditions as shy bladder and even constipation and hemorrhoids can often be seen stemming from shame and disgust directed toward the human body and its functions.

Nudism can be of great therapeutic value with many of

these disorders. I first became aware of this a number of years ago after a personal experience. I had been going to a nudist park only a couple of months when I realized that an aggravating problem that had plagued me for years was suddenly gone--without me consciously having done anything about it.

I had been raised in what I would consider a fairly typical lower-middle class household. Our family attended church just about every Sunday and at least in my very early years, observed all the traditional teachings and customs associated with covering of our bodies. It was all right, for instance, as children, for my brothers and I to see each other peeing or naked taking a bath, but beyond that, to see a naked body or to be seen naked was a sin. It wasn't so much what was said that implied that nudity was a sin, but more so what was practiced. My parents, for instance, *always* closed the bathroom and bedroom doors and were *never* seen naked.

Perhaps the problem existed earlier, but at least from the time I started school at the age of six, I was faced with the difficulty, if not impossibility, of urinating in a urinal--obviously because others could possibly see my penis. School is my first memory of this row of strange white, pee smelling porcelain monuments that stood nearly as tall as me and offered no privacy for what until now was supposed to be a private act. What happened with peeing in the toilet--alone? Who changed the rules? What was more

confusing was that this was in a parochial school of the same religion that taught us that seeing someone else's private parts or being seen by someone else was wrong in the first place.

I had the not so uncommon problem of having what is referred to as a shy bladder. I lived with this problem, like many other mates do, avoiding urinals, waiting until there is no one else in the men's room or going into a booth even if it meant waiting in line.

This is an extremely frustrating problem because we see many 'normal' males having no problem 'taking a leak'. Sometimes, frustrated, we try--standing there faking it by continuously pulling the flush handle. After a couple minutes of pure hell, watching out of the corner of our eye while two or three 'pullers' and 'shakers' relieve themselves, we walk away with a bladder ready to burst, strategically planning our next trip back--hopefully alone.

In school, I would avoid the restroom at the beginning or end of recess because those were the busy times. Instead, I would walk in from the playground at a time it appeared that everyone else was out on the playground. On a couple occasions, I remembering wetting my pants out on the playground and walking straight home wondering how I was going to explain that to my dad. Ball games, concerts, plays, etc., were always a problem--sometimes avoided--because of 'my problem'. It was hell as any one with a shy bladder knows.

There were a couple times in my adult life that I almost sought therapy for my shy bladder (by this time I knew what it was called, having read about it in Ann Landers or some advice column) but I never actually sought help for it because I felt too embarrassed about it, and because of the stigma attached to 'being in therapy'. And by this time, I had developed a pretty elaborate system of dealing with it using my avoidance and timing techniques.

I had been visiting the nudist park and enjoying my new-found feeling of freedom for about six weeks when one day I discovered I no longer had a problem. I had been using the urinal in the restroom at the park successfully--that seemed only natural to me, after all, we were all nude, what difference did it make if anyone saw me? With a few successes at the park, I decided to try using a public restroom urinal at a restaurant. SUCCESS! All I had to do was pretend I was at the park and that I and everyone in the restroom was nude. A few successes that way and then I no longer had to do any pretending. I WAS CURED! What a feeling that was. I wanted to shout from the roof top. "I CAN PISS!" I thanked God I could piss.

My shy bladder no doubt came from shame and guilt, the shame with which most of us grow up. It affects people differently, not everyone has a shy bladder but we all have some issue or issues that stem from the shame of our bodies that we learned.

I say *learned* because we are not born with shame. It is taught to us. Even when efforts are made to avoid teaching

shame to our children, it seems unavoidable to some extent because of our society's ingrained attitudes and because of our customs.

Once I arrived at the realization that my body was not sinful or shameful, I was still faced, however, with the feeling of inadequacy, of not measuring up' to male standards as imposed by a culture that views *bigger as better*. As a teenager in the locker room after gym class, I became aware that I simply wasn't 'hung' like a lot of the other guys. This no doubt contributed to my shy bladder problem. This was also a major concern of mine before ever visiting a nudist park.

Fortunately, *listening* to something inside me urging me to go, I finally said, "What the hell. I'm going. Even if it's only once." It turned out to be a very rewarding experience, helping overcome my hang-ups of sin, shame and inadequacy.

The psychologist Abraham Mazlow once made a simple statement to the effect that nudism, that is being naked in front of other people, is good therapy in and of itself. I highly recommend an excellent book entitled *Therapy, Nudity and Joy* by Dr. Aileen Goodson that deals with the topic of nudity as therapy. It also contains a brief history of naturism and nudism in Europe and the United States.

For me, as well as many others, nudism has gone from being a sin, to being therapy, to becoming normal.

Fortunately nudism can be used as effective therapy with situations like mine, but it is also unfortunate that it even has to be used as therapy. It is only by not regarding nudity as normal in the first place that many of these disorders exist, creating the need for therapy. I cannot say this strongly enough--if nudity were considered normal in our society, many of our problems, including much of our low self-esteem, stemming from shame and guilt, would simply not exist.

My friend Nancy , overcame her shame, guilt and fears of not 'measuring up'. She did visit the nudist park with me and learned that her problem was not her breasts but her perception of them. Nancy now likes her breasts, they are just right for her.

As for me, I have a small penis and a big belly, but they are just right for me--and so are urinals.

*There seems to be a difference between how men and women express their fears and concerns that their bodies are not perfect and therefore they cannot visit a nudist park. Perhaps this a reflection of our childhood training and/or our society's 'gender expectations'. - Men have no problem expressing their concerns that they might get an erection--a macho symbol (and something that rarely happens)--while they are almost never heard saying that they are afraid they won't 'measure up'. Men's fears of inadequacy are usually covered over with statements like, "I'm not interested in nudism." or "I'd rather watch football or go fishing."

Women, on the other hand, are usually less afraid to express their fears of inadequacy, such as my friend did when she said her breasts were too small.

Nudists know instinctively that their lifestyle is physically, mentally and spiritually healthy.

*Social nudism reminds us of all that was
once good--and again could be.*

Chapter 4

SOCIAL NUDISM

Evidence of Another Way

FEW EVENTS IN LIFE are more auspicious than one's first experience at social nudism. Returning to the natural state of our birth, for the first time in a social situation, can rightfully be called a born-again experience. Bringing about a major shift in perception, nudism is often the beginning of a new life.

It is difficult to analyze or even describe the blissful feeling that practically everyone experiences with their first visit to a nudist park, but it is even more than the satisfaction one experiences at having tried something over and over and finally getting it right. Socializing in the nude feels right; it feels satisfying; it feels complete. It is a feeling of 'finally arriving home'.

These feelings may very well have to do with the fact that, almost immediately, one feels a strong sense of community. It is similar to, but perhaps stronger than, the feeling of community experienced in other social institutions, such as churches, where one often feels part of a family. Here there is an obvious difference, however:

There are no artificial barriers between people; there is no covering of the body for concealment or adornment--no fashion shows; and there is no pulling of rank based on style or cost of one's wardrobe. Without these barriers, relating to others, takes on a new level of intimacy--a new form.

Experiencing this new form of community, even for a short time, shatters an old paradigm of how we relate to each other--one based on image, artificiality and judgment--and replaces it with a new model based on honesty, truth and acceptance.

Relating to each other, to nature, and to themselves, without having to maintain artificial barriers or facades, or create false impressions, is extremely relaxing--it is freedom. For most people this stress-free atmosphere is a welcome change.

Those who choose not to return to a nudist park, after their initial visit, usually make that choice based on a number of issues including family acceptance, location, cost, etc. Those who choose not to return, never-the-less, have been left with a lasting impression. They have, at the very least, been presented with evidence that perhaps there is another way.

Those who return to the nudist lifestyle are drawn back by this new found freedom and deep sense of community. For them, it becomes the basis for a new paradigm that literally reshapes their lives.

While nudity remains the essential ingredient in the nudist community, it is so natural that it often begins to feel incidental after just a few minutes.

“I’ve never seen so many people with such beautiful eyes.” --Jacqui, with her first visit to a nudist park.

Chapter 5

sNAKED

NUDISM HAS AWAKENED ME to my spiritual connection with nature.

The following incident, had it occurred a few years earlier, may have had a much different outcome. Prior to my nudism influence and the shift in consciousness that resulted, I probably would have reacted quite differently. But now, as a part of me stood back and participated as an observer, I was aware of a change in perception that had taken place within me and of the significance of what was now taking place. It was a friend, however, witnessing the incident, that helped me to place the experience within a larger context.

In the Spring of 1989, Shari, a member of a study group that I had been facilitating, and I drove from Michigan to Angel Fire, New Mexico to attend a forty day seminar. The seminar had been billed as a “Forty Day Wilderness Retreat” but in reality was being held in a very lovely and comfortable resort hotel. Although there was a certain amount of free time during which we could leave the air-conditioned environment and venture into the outdoors, it

was not enough for me. I had driven all that way and something inside of me was crying for more adventure. The wilderness itself seemed to be calling.

I began skipping sessions, and instead, drove around the country side exploring the outskirts of Taos. I knew there weren't any nudist parks in the area but I also knew that, like in many parts of the country, there would be some secluded areas where people enjoyed outdoor nude recreating. I was right. A phone call to a traveling nudist organization, and I was headed to the Black Rock Hot Spring a few miles outside Taos.

The spring itself is at the bottom of the six hundred foot gorge, the 100+ degree water flowing out of the rocks into the Rio Grande. Rocks have been placed around the spring forming a tub or basin six or eight feet across and perhaps two feet deep with the cold river flowing by not more than two feet away. Local residents, including a whole families, as well as an occasional tourist, would drive the narrow switch-back road to the bottom of the gorge, hike another hundred yards or so, leave their clothes on the rocks and commune with nature at what the Native Americans consider a very sacred spot.

Eager to share my version of a wilderness retreat with my new friends back at the hotel, I began inviting others to join me. I did not want to offend anyone with nudity, so I would always explain that the local custom at the hot spring was clothing-optional', which meant some people

opted to wear clothes while others didn't, and that I would be nude. They could wear a bathing suit if they chose. I made sure they understood what they would be encountering before we left the hotel. A number of people accepted my invitation, including Shari.

Although only one or two of my friends eventually opted to go nude themselves, the others seemed to have no problem with my nudity. In fact, someone would occasionally comment on how natural it seemed to see someone *nude in nature*, and how comfortable and at peace I seemed to be.

Indeed, I was at peace. The choice I had made to follow my inner voice and skip the sessions had led to finding this beautiful and sacred place, and the opportunity to extend this experience to my new friends all contributed to an incredible sense of well-being. I felt spiritually connected to All-That-Is and apparently my friends also delighted in enjoying the wilderness, as evidenced by their repeated return visits with me.

One afternoon, as Shari and several others were sitting around the rocks, and I, alone, was naked in the spring, soaking in the peace of the setting, a snake swam out from behind the rocks less than a foot from my right shoulder. Now, I had never seen a snake like this before, which is not surprising since I don't know anything about the snakes in the southwest part of the country. I didn't know if it was venomous or not, but I immediately knew IT WAS NOT A

GARTER SNAKE. Shari saw the snake emerge from the rocks the same time I did.

My first thought was, 'This is its home, I am a visitor and I am honored to be able to share this place with its resident'. There was no panic, no thought of killing it and no thought of jumping out of the water. I felt that the snake and I were one, not separated in any way and that we were on equal terms sharing this sacred space.

The snake swam a foot or so out away from the rocks and then turned toward me. It reached my side just behind my right arm and, gently making contact with my skin, it slithered along my back until it emerged on my left side just behind my left arm where it eventually broke contact with my body and swam off into the rocks several feet away.

I cannot describe what I felt except that I felt total PEACE. I cannot say I felt grateful for not having been bitten because that thought had never entered my mind. I can only say that I felt that I was an integral part of something *awesome* and that I had been *welcomed and accepted* by the snake in its home, and even by all of nature. I felt that I had been welcomed and accepted because I had joined with nature--equal and on heir terms--NAKED.

Shari, witnessing the incident displayed an expression on her face that was a combination of gratitude it wasn't her, fear that it might have been, and disbelief that I hadn't reacted differently. The only words she was able to utter

were, "You just passed the test."

To this day I haven't concluded that it was so much of a test, as it was an initiation or perhaps graduation--having arrived at a place of awareness where I could appreciate nature through an experience to which a few years earlier I would have reacted with fear. Because of what I had learned and how I had grown, I was now reacting with love instead of fear--love for the Universe, for nature, for the snake itself--and for myself. It was a welcome change in my life.

The positive effects of nudity and social nudism extend far beyond what we can imagine, but that does not seem surprising when we consider that our natural state is nude. It is returning to our natural state that restores our harmony with nature and our awareness to our spiritual connection with All-That-Is.

... I am (still) LIVING proof ever since the day at Black Rock Hot Spring I was sNAKED.

Social nudism offers an opportunity to deprogram the mind, making healing and growth possible.

*To those who practice social nudism, the
benefits are self-evident.*

Chapter 6

PRAY NAKED

I HAVE A FAVORITE SPOT on Lake Michigan that I go to whenever I can and there I take off my clothes, surrendering completely to the elements. I discovered this special place several years ago when I spent sometime in West Michigan living *with* and caring *for* an Alzheimer's patient. It was a very difficult time in my life. I couldn't find a job, I was not meeting my bills. My patient, typically not realizing that she needed help, resented my presence in her home and this would show up in the form of quiet tension throughout the day. There was no place to escape from it. I felt I had no other place to go. All in all, things seemed pretty hopeless and I felt totally helpless.

I've always been drawn to the water, feel most alive when I'm *near* it and unless it's frozen, I have to *go in* it. Perhaps I had been drawn to that particular situation so I could discover the power of the lake and maybe, more importantly, the power of surrendering.

I had some years before discovered the incredible feeling of surrendering my clothes and the feeling of freedom that comes from being nude out of doors,

particularly when sharing the experience with other like-minded people, such as at a nudist park. I have introduced several close friends to this experience and they too have felt the power, this power of freedom, that results from surrendering our textile image.

Often, during that difficult time, I would drive to the North Muskegon Beach, find a secluded place and splash naked in the crashing cold waves of the afternoon or in the calm water at sunset. Then I would walk, feeling the wind or- rain or sand blowing on all parts of me. It felt good, real good. It picked me up and I thanked God for the opportunity to be there at the beach.

One evening, after a particularly difficult day, I drove to the beach, took off my clothes and, to my surprise, suddenly began to cry. Just a little at first but then harder, until it became almost uncontrollable. Finally, after a while, I realized that I was tired, angry, lonely and in a lot of emotional pain. "Why is my life so difficult?" I began asking. "Why am I going through this? Am I doing something wrong? What is it I have to learn from this? Why God?" I asked. "What is this all about?" I cried for a long time.

I have always had a strong feeling that some day my life would be an a mission, an important mission, one that would change people's lives. I had the feeling that everything in my life was leading up to this, that I was being trained for it. I had a variety of jobs and many

valuable life experiences that all somehow seemed tied together by an unseen thread in an unfinished tapestry that I was not yet privileged to see.

"If only," I thought, "if I could only find out what my mission is and get on with it. Is all of this leading me to it? Is this part of it? Why God?" I asked. "Why can't I find my mission and get on with it? Why does this have to be so painful?" I cried. I prayed. I screamed at God. And finally I got down on my knees and, praying naked in the sand, I surrendered to God--again. I say "again" because I had surrendered before. In fact, God and I had talks in which I would agree that certain changes would have to occur in my life, that there were certain things that I would have to do to keep my life moving ahead or on target. I had surrendered, at least surrendered little parts of me before, but maybe not all.

The nudist experience has taught me that unless you take off all your clothes, you will experience only a hint of freedom. Not until you shed the last piece, can you really begin to experience the incredible feelings we nudists talk about, that are in store for you. Then, almost immediately, it begins to literally change your life because it changes your perception of yourself.

This evening, on the beach, I was tired, felt hopeless and helpless and did not want to go home. So there, on the beach, crying, I shed the rest - my pride, my ego. I uncloaked my soul and spiritually naked, prayed to God.

Within minutes, I began to feel better. Something had lifted. I felt lighter and I began to feel free.

The nudist experience has also taught me that "shedding all" has such profound and far reaching effects that it often takes years for a person to realize the full impact it has made on their lives. Almost immediately, I began feeling the freedom and I began to see things in my life a little. But it is only now, looking back, that I can see that events began to take place that showed me that I already knew of my mission, and that I, in fact, had already begun living it.

After that evening, I began taking small steps working at the things that make me resonate. I began meeting people. I entered a relationship, which although brought some pain, taught me to go with my intuitive feelings, and listening to those feelings, I began writing.

I did something else, something that I had done before, that had always brought me a great sense of joy and that I dreamed of doing again, whenever I could--*I introduced a friend to social nudism* (Nancy from Chapter 3). As I knew from the past, it was an experience that would change her life. It did. I saw a self-pronounced atheist have what I would describe as a profound spiritual experience. And I... I had a most incredible awakening. I realized that not only was I living my dream, I was fulfilling my mission. Peoples lives were indeed being changed.

That was several years ago. A lot of events have taken place in my life since then. Events that eventually were to

lead me here to what I'm doing now. Some of the events that have taken place have been those incredible coincidences that the Universe provides, that put us exactly in the right spot at the right time. I can't begin to tell you how often this has happened to me in the past several years and I am no longer surprised when it does, in fact, I expect it to happen. What a good feeling that is.

It still is difficult at times, especially when, coming from a place of fear, I try to manipulate or control events in my life, or when I fail to surrender, when I hesitate to "take it all off". Each day is a new challenge for me to "take it all off". I never know what to expect but it always turns out just fine, and I am living my dream and fulfilling my mission.

The mission or quest, for all of us, is to uncover or *discover* who we are spiritually, to discover our Truth - the Truth that sets us free. That takes a surrendering. To discover that we are God's perfect creations and to learn, just as with the nudist experience, that there is nothing wrong with us just the *way* we are or *where* we are - that is the mission for all of us - total, unconditional surrender.

My personal mission of informing and educating people about social nudism is merely a metaphor, but a good one. It has changed my life and the lives of many others and, it serves as a constant reminder to me that the rewards for disregarding fear and discovering ourselves, by surrendering all, are awesome indeed.

I return to my spot on Lake Michigan, whenever I can,

to frolic on the beach and to celebrate my surrender. I also return to that inner place of surrender where I uncloak my soul. I invite you to find that place and to join with me in surrendering as we, together, PRAY NAKED.

*Social nudism can be a new frontier
along your path of self-discovery.*

Nudity is to the body as meditation is to the mind.

NOTE: Following is a series of interviews I conducted with people, who like myself, participate in social nudism. I began doing the interviews and writing subsequent articles to better inform the public about this often misunderstood lifestyle that has such a profound effect on people's lives. A total surprise to me was that the interviewing process itself had a profound effect on the persons interviewed, as well as on myself.

As for me, I have been deeply touched by each of their stories as they shared their pain and their healing, and I have come to realize that the nudism experience has an even greater effect on the lives of the people than I had previously imagined.

As for the people I interviewed, looking back, with the help of the interview process, each now feels that nudism miraculously came into their lives as exactly what they needed when they needed it, as if the Universe knowingly handed them each a gift. And perhaps, more importantly, uncloaking their souls, through the interview and article, has had a similar healing effect as initially baring their bodies did--a new and more confident person has miraculously emerged. That I have been privileged to be part of this process, has been a gift from the Universe to me.

One final note, out of concern for the private lives of the individuals interviewed, in certain cases I have not used their real names. DDZ

Chapter 7

STEP 13--Baring It All for Cindy

I HAVE LONG BEEN AWARE of the therapeutic value of nudism. For those that are ready and willing to try nudism, the effects are profound and long lasting.

While working at Turtle Lake Resort, I decided to interview certain members of the park to see what effect it has had on their lives. I selected mostly women because they seem to have a more difficult time feeling comfortable with their bodies.

Asking a likely candidate if she would be willing to be interviewed, she quickly agreed, saying that she wanted to relate how the nudist lifestyle has been an extension of her alcoholic recovery. I was delighted that she wanted to share her story.

It became quite clear to me, shortly into the interview, that to paraphrase her words would greatly diminish the strength of her message. Her story could best be told in her own words. So, other than minor editing, the following words are her words. It is her story, her message.

Cindy, a certified nursing assistant from Clearwater, Michigan is an attractive, somewhat shy, unassuming forty-

eight year old divorcee. I first met Cindy shortly after coming to Turtle Lake Resort. The park was in the process of converting from a traditional campground into a clothing-optional nudist resort. I had just joined the staff to help with public relations.

Cindy, having recently become friends with Cathy, an acupressure therapist on our staff, joined the staff one evening for dinner. After dinner, she was invited to join us in our usual nude evening swim in the pool. It was an evening that we knew would change her life, but none of us were to know to what extent or, in fact, how her life was already in the process of changing. Since that time, I have been privileged to witness a remarkable transformation taking place. Here is the beginning of her story. The rest is yet to unfold.

Dan: You mentioned that you see nudism as an extension of your recovery but give me a little bit of your background.

Cindy: Well, I guess like so many people, I've had a lot of walls built up, a lot of guilt feelings, a lot of repressed feelings and I started drinking, like a lot of kids do in high school--to experiment at parties and things like that.

I got married the first time and had my son. Then my husband was killed the following year and I just didn't handle it. I was never good at letting my feelings out. I've not been good at opening up to people or even being

around people. So I handled it with alcohol.

I started drinking heavily in my early twenties and I drank for a long time. I got married again out of convenience--a way of drinking in safety.

So my kids grew up around an alcoholic and in trying to help my daughter with some of her problems, I put her in touch with a psychologist who in turn wanted to see me because her problems obviously were connected to me.

I went in for a couple of sessions and that was the first time I admitted to anyone that I was an alcoholic. It just came out. So, after that, I started seeing the psychologist as a patient. We worked on a lot of things. A lot of my problems have all been built up over the years-- non-communication and being in my own world--it just kind of evolved that recovery was the next step. I came to the fork in the road where you either stay where you are and kill yourself, or you go to the better path.

But before I went into recovery, I did a lot of praying and I started coming to the realization that God was the only one that could help me because, at that point, just before I went into the recovery program, I was ready to die. That was it--there was nothing else in life.

So I spent three weeks in a recovery center which was difficult for me because group things tend to really shut me down. It's real hard to open up. It was a difficult process for me but I dealt with the alcohol.

I got rid of the alcohol but I didn't get rid of a lot of other

things. When I got out, AA was hard for me because of the group thing--and strangers. So I went to a psychiatrist once a week for a while which helped me because I could get a lot out with one person.

I still have trouble with AA. It rattles me. I just climb the walls. It's still the group thing. And that is where I think a lot of this [my problem] is.

I had been having my little talks with God and I'd been saying, "I need something else in my life. There is something... I need something. Send me something... a sign that I'm going to be okay" because I was starting to stagnate again. I was afraid that I was going to fall.

D That's got to be awful scary.

C Yeah, it is. But I think deep down inside I know I'm not going to, because I don't want that life again

I met Cathy and she mentioned that she was a nudist and I thought, 'This is different and I'm trying to start a new life and I've wanted something...'

D Did you think that this might be the answer?

C Yeah, I did. It was in my mind. I had thought that this might be what I'm looking for and 'if you back away from it now, if you pull yourself back into your shell, then you're going to lose it. You're going to lose again, your going to fail again. You've got to try,'

So I went over there...(Laughing)

D ...With nothing to lose...

C (Laughing) ...With nothing to lose. I guess not,

D When Cathy mentioned 'nudism' and the resort to you, do you remember what came to your mind? What was your reaction?

C When she first started, I kind of said, "Yeah, I can come out." And then thinking to myself, 'I could never do that.' (Laughing)

D What kind of image did you have of the nudist people? Any ideas at all?

C No, I hadn't really thought much about it. I really didn't have any idea. When I thought 'nude' the only thing I thought of was laying on the beach. I mean that to me was the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of people nude. But I thought I could never socialize in any way.

D So, to her you were saying, "Yeah, okay, I'll try it." And then on the inside you were saying just the opposite.

C Inside I was scared. I thought, 'I'm not that type of a

person. It would be too vulnerable. I'd be too vulnerable to criticism or whatever.'

D How did you feel about your body at that time?

C I was born in California and my mom had me outside naked all the time, so, somewhere inside there must have been something that I was comfortable with, but as an adult, I wasn't comfortable with my body at all. There again it was that if things weren't perfect, then you don't want somebody else to see less than perfect. If you took your clothes off, people are going to see that you aren't perfect. So I'm thinking that I couldn't do that kind of thing, that I wasn't comfortable enough with my body.

And then another part of me was thinking, 'Cindy, you've got to get out of this, you've got to go on. You can't go forward without experiencing the things that bring change into your life.'

D So, what happened then? Cathy talked you into coming out there?

S We talked on the phone a couple times and she invited me out for dinner. She showed me around and of course, there weren't many people around--it was just getting started. Then, after we spent some time talking, she said, "Well, you want to go for a swim?" And it was... 'Okay!' (laughing) I thought, 'Okay, this is it Cindy, you are going

to either do it, or you're going to turn around and walk away,' because there was nowhere else to go--I mean I had to do something.

When she started taking her clothes off and I started taking my clothes off--and others were around--all of a sudden *it was fine*. It didn't bother me. I was probably just a little uptight, a little nervous... 'Is anybody gonna look or whatever?' But after a few minutes, I was quite comfortable with it and I was realizing that I could sit there having a conversation with people and I was enjoying myself and everything's really okay. It felt good, it felt free, it felt warm, just kind of comfortable, a warm feeling and a kind of a freedom. It's just hard to describe. It just felt good. It felt comfortable, like being at home.

D How did you feel afterward?

C 'That's over.' (Laughing) I felt glad that the first time was over, because I knew that it would be okay after that, that it would be easier. I realized that it wasn't as hard as I was making it in my mind and that I liked the people that I met and the feelings that I had.

D Did you feel, grateful that you had done it? Like you had made a breakthrough?

C I felt like I had done the right thing for me--that it was

what I should have done and I did it. I felt like I had followed my own feelings, my own instincts about something and it turned out very well. I felt that it was a breakthrough. I let go of myself, I let me out. That was it, I just opened the door and let me out.

D Were you happy with yourself?

C Oh yes! (laughing) Yeah, I was very happy that I did it and I'm very happy that I kept going back.

D What surprised you most?

C It surprised me most that I didn't connect anything sexually. I thought maybe I would connect it sexually. So I was real surprised that I didn't connect it sexually in any way.

And I was surprised because I had thought, 'Are you going to stand there and gawk, Cindy?' You think that you might do something stupid like that. But I was really surprised that I was that comfortable.

D Okay, so the first experience is over. You felt good about it. Did you tell anybody about it?

S Well, first, I wanted to go back. The next day, after the first time, I wanted to go right back. It was like a magnet. It kept pulling me. That place does. It keeps pulling me back.

Yeah, I was *dying* to tell somebody about it. (laughing)
Yeah, I was really wanting to because I felt *so good*. *I did* feel that it was kind of a breakthrough for me. I felt that it opened up another whole world, so I was just dying to tell somebody about it.

My sister was the first person I told. She was a little surprised because she figured, like I did, I was the last person that would do that. I don't think she understands because it's something she hasn't done. I don't think you do understand unless you do it. That's just it, you've got to do it. But she's fine with me doing it.

I've told my daughter and she's comfortable with what I'm doing. I haven't really told my son. I've come out and said, "I have a friend Cathy that lives at Turtle Lake Resort." I think he knows though, but he's kind of cool. He doesn't say anything. He figures Mom does what she wants to do.

And I've told a few people. I told my boss the other day and we were talking about it and she said, "That's fine, I couldn't do it, but whatever makes you happy." So you get a lot of that "I couldn't do it" reaction from people.

D When you hear them say that, what are you thinking?

C I'm thinking, 'I said that too.' (Laughing) I couldn't do it but I did it, and it came *easy*.

D Let's go back a little bit now to your recovery. You've

participated in this lifestyle for a couple months now. You've attended a number of nudist functions. How does this tie in with your recovery?

C Well, I feel that it's given me a different life, a new life away from the alcohol and the old life, away from the old feelings because it's opened up new feelings for me. I'm more secure with myself which helped me open doors to be able to communicate with other people that I just didn't do before. I'm finding out that I can communicate with other people.

D Why do you think that has changed?

C I think a lot of it is that I did something on my own, for myself, just for me, that didn't involve anybody else. And now I feel better about myself. I'm more comfortable with my body, with myself. I've shed a lot of those old fears. I feel that I can say and do what I please. I'm beginning to gain more self-confidence.

D Has this experience changed your values?

C I'm doing something that I used to think was probably a wrong thing to do, but I found out that it was okay to do it. But I think with regard to my 'rights and wrongs' or 'do's and don'ts, I was already starting to evolve--learning more about myself, what I think is right and wrong *for me*.

D So, this almost seems like it was a natural step in your evolution for you to experience this. It seems to fit in with what was already taking place.

C Yeah, it was another step because it brought me out of myself. It was like, 'Okay, I'm naked in front of everybody' and, 'Here I am, this is just me and I'm not putting on airs.' You can't put on anything. (laughing) You can't pretend, you can't cover anything up. You can't cover places you don't want people to see. You can't hide behind other things and I think that it is good therapy.

D Do you see this as a spiritual experience or an experience that relates on a spiritual level?

C I think I see it as a continuation of my spiritual growth because out there I'm communicating with other people, so I'm learning, I'm growing and I also feel spiritually closer to the earth, to God. So naturally, this just fits in.

D What's next for Cindy?

C I get these feelings inside that now is the time to do something else. 'Okay, I've conquered this and I've got to go on and do something else,' I mean along with nudism. I feel that I would like to share some of my alcohol background where it might help. I would like to do that. So

it might be one of the things that I'll do in the future.

D Do you think somehow nudism could be part of a recovery program... Step 13, maybe?

C Oh, I definitely think that. I really think that it could be part of recovery. I really do. * * *

*Behind every nudist smile is a story of
courage and healing.*

*It's relaxing to be around people who
like themselves.*

Chapter 8

JERRY'S MESSAGE

NUDISM IS A TOOL for nurturing self. But most who try nudism for the first time, have already nurtured themselves to the point where they can participate fairly easily, and with enjoyment, almost from the start. For them, there are no more growing pains associated with gaining confidence that **THEY ARE WHO THEY ARE**. There is only the enjoyment of having already arrived.

Unfortunately, nudism is seldom recognized as a tool for nurturing, and therefore seldom tried by those who could benefit the most. Only occasionally does a doctor or therapist understand the value of social nudism and prescribe it as a treatment for low self-esteem or for a variety of stress related illnesses, including heart disease.

Such was the case, though, for Jerry Conklin of Colon, Michigan, whose heart specialist prescribed a dose of nudism as part of his treatment after his second heart attack. He had no trouble swallowing this pill, however, because Jerry and his wife had already practiced nudity around the house and on camping trips. The medicine for him was like eating candy and his recovery is proof that the treatment of

choice, for him, was successful.

But that is not the end of the story for Jerry. It may be only the beginning, for Jerry's growing appreciation of the nudist lifestyle led him to telling others about it, "to spread the word" so to speak, including to the minister of his church.

Now, this kind of "confession" is probably not all that common, but probably does little more than draw comments like, "I don't see any thing wrong with that." at best to, "It's wrong, stop doing it." at worst. But Jerry is no ordinary parishioner, he had more to risk and so the response to his admission was also not ordinary. Jerry was an ordained minister and had served his church for seventeen years, four of those as assistant minister. So because of *his* admission of participating in the nudist lifestyle, he was relieved of his duties and stripped of his ordination. That, for Jerry, was a bitter pill to swallow.

But Jerry is no ordinary person either. Having had to deal with such hardships as losing his wife of thirty seven years to cancer, has given Jerry a respect for life, while having been honored as an entertainer (magician) on the road for over thirty years, has given him an appreciation for living. Jerry has learned to live life and to live it from his heart. His participation *in* and love *for* the nudist lifestyle comes from his heart; from his love for life and for living.

Life often closes doors behind us, but, at the same time, it opens doors in front of us. Jerry recognizes this fact and,

so as not to dwell on the past, Jerry is already thinking of starting his own church based on his strong Christian beliefs and his conviction of the wholesomeness and, indeed, holiness of the human body.

His conviction is strong and his message is clear as he demonstrated Easter Sunday, April 3, 1994 when he conducted a worship service at Turtle Lake Resort, a clothing-optional recreation facility near Union City, Michigan. His message emphasized love and honesty as taught by Jesus and practiced within the nudist community.

Jerry's improved health is an example of the nurturing power of the nudist lifestyle. His courage to risk his position in his church demonstrates that HE KNOWS WHO HE IS, and his willingness to charter a new church, should he "receive the calling," means many others will hear his message.

*“I like being nude because you don’t
have to worry about what you look like.”*
—*Jamie, age 9.*

Nudism, paradoxically, takes the emphasis off the body.

Chapter 9

A SOMEBODY NAMED SARITA

SOCIAL NUDISM IS FINDING THE FAMILY she never had for Sarita Kaye Conklin of Ceresco, Michigan who grew up being shunned by her mother and spent a lot of time as a child playing by herself.

"As a child, my mother never held me, I never sat on her lap and she never told me that she loved me. At the nudist parks I see a healthy interaction between adults and children, particularly between parents and children, and it's fun being a part of that. Most of the places we have gone, there have been lots of kids and many activities for them. The fact that nudism is family oriented is definitely the attraction it has for me.

"My first experience at a nudist park," she continues, "was seeing a heavy set man lying on a lawn chair and this little boy came running by just laughing and playing having a good time. For some reason this sticks in my mind."

That memory and others of Sarita's and her husband Jim's first visit to a nudist park is still fresh in her mind. "I had no problem taking off my clothes. Even though we never really practiced nudity around the house, when Jim

first mentioned the idea of us going to a nudist park, I had no problem with it." She adds laughingly, "I never knew there was a nudist community--I guess I led a sheltered life--but if Jim wanted to go," she continues, "I had no problem with it. I was never afraid of undressing in junior high like a lot of girls. It was never a big deal with me."

Sarita has never been self-conscious about her body nor is she shy about telling others about nudism. "I tell everybody," she says. "A few people have given me a hard time, but I don't live my life for anyone else. I think Jim has told all the guys he works with and when you walk into our house you can tell we're nudists. We have a sign that says 'Party Naked' by the hot tub."

When talking to Sarita, it becomes very clear that the attraction for her *is* that social nudism is family oriented and that the presence of children is so evident.

"Maybe it's because of that part of my childhood that I never really had or because we don't have any children of our own, that I'm drawn to this lifestyle that places such importance on children. In fact," says Sarita, who joined her husband in bicycling and who belongs to five bowling leagues, adds, "it's one activity in which children do play such an important part.

"The kids that are included in this lifestyle are well behaved. They're not snotty. They say 'please' and 'thank you.' I think they are raised differently because they're closer to the families. They have that close communication.

The interaction between kids, and between parents and kids, is wonderful. That's what I like. Very seldom do I see a parent interact with a child in an abusive manner. In society you see that all the time."

Child-like, but not childish, Sarita is full of energy and adds vitality and freshness whenever she's in a group of people. She has a way of getting around and speaking to everybody and leaves no one untouched by her smile, her laugh and her sparkling eyes. "Sometimes I feel like a space cadet," she says, "going from table to table and not finishing a conversation."

A space cadet, she is not. She has very strong values, a definite order of priorities and a deep appreciation for living. And, Sarita, who as a child decided that she was going to grow up 'being somebody' and have a quality life, is very confident about voicing her opinions to non-nudists and nudists alike. "Life is too short to waste yourself away." she says.

Sarita is very vocal about her feelings of including children in all the activities at a nudist park. "This lifestyle has so much to offer children in terms of self-acceptance and feeling good about themselves. Kids *are* our future and *should be* included. If the activities or someone's behavior is not appropriate for children, then you shouldn't be doing it out there."

She is definitely looking forward to the summer months when many more children attend and she can help out with

their activities.

In the fourteen years that Jim and Sarita have been married, they've been through a lot. Jim has undergone surgery, radiation and chemotherapy for Hodgkin's disease which showed up less than two years into their marriage. Sarita herself has sought therapy to deal with childhood issues that were seriously affecting her life. "We've obviously had a lot of stress in our lives just keeping Jim alive--and we find at the nudist parks we can totally unwind and relax with the friendly people. We just love the people. In fact," she adds with her infectious laugh, "It's so hard getting dressed and going home."

When they do go home, they are missed by those who *they've* touched with their friendliness, and when a weekend goes by that they can't be at the park, invariably someone will say, "Where's Sarita and Jim?"

Sarita feels that the nudist lifestyle, particularly *because* of the friendliness of the people and the involvement of children, has been very beneficial to both of them. She sums up her feelings about nudism this way, "Nudism has helped me in dealing with a lot of my childhood issues by helping me find a family again."

Making one last point, as if the words themselves spoke from the deepest part of her soul, she unhesitatingly adds, "Children are the most important thing you can have."

*The difference between 'clothes-less'
and 'less clothes' is by comparison the
same as the difference between 'lust-free'
and 'free lust'.*

People undressing at a nudist park for the first time are, in a sense, waking up to who they really are.

Chapter 10

CRYSTAL: Thursday's Nudist

"THURSDAY'S CHILD HAS FAR TO GO" is how Crystal relates to a feeling that she has a specific mission in life. Although she, feels she's not at her destination yet, nor does she quite know specifically what that mission is, she has a definite sense of a purpose for being here. "I'm definitely on a journey," she says. "I find myself in certain situations at work, for example, that I have very little control over, that are not part of my job description, yet when I walk away from the situation and look back, I realize that something has been going on, and that I've had a positive effect on people. It's like I'm a therapist or a motivator who gives people permission to feel. I feel that I'm being groomed for something--something to do with people--but I don't know what it is."

Crystal continues, "I used to be afraid of my mission, of the responsibility that went with it, but as I get older I'm more accepting of it. I'm no longer afraid of myself. I'm not afraid of my gifts. I know that I'm being guided--that I can't escape it, nor do I want to anymore. I'm not afraid of this intense feeling that there is something specific I am going

to be doing."

A nudist for six years, Crystal feels that nudism will have a big role to play in fulfilling her life's mission, "I feel that nudism will have an important part in it because nudism gives people permission to like themselves and I want to teach people that they're okay."

Nudism has already played a big part in her life, she feels. Growing up as an overweight child and feeling that she was "missing something on the attractiveness scale", she always felt that she had to overcome it by creating reasons for people to like her. "I had to be smarter, funnier, a better athlete. I had to be better at things." But she says that she was on a path of starting to like herself better but that nudism has been the icing on the cake. "It has helped to speed up the process. I've learned to accept me for myself."

Crystal was in her fourth month of treatment for thirteen years of eating disorders--two as an anorexic and eleven as bulimic--when, as a reporter, she was given an assignment to interview a couple who were hot air balloonists. "When I made arrangements to meet them at a certain park, they informed me that it was a clothing-optional park. That meant nothing to me so they explained that it was a nudist park but that I wouldn't have to undress if I didn't want to."

Reflecting, she continues, "I had never really given the word 'nudist' much thought. If I had any preconceived ideas, it was that of swingers. I certainly never pictured children. Of course, since then, my thinking has changed."

"When I got out there to the office, I saw this woman--totally nude. I had seen nude women before because I played sports but this was different, a bit strange at first. She then directed me to the people I was to interview--who were also nude. I felt a bit strange at first but everyone else seemed very comfortable and relaxed, and friendly. I began to feel very comfortable too.

"We talked about nudism for a few minutes and they suggested that I might want to try it too. I had worn a bikini top under my blouse thinking I might feel comfortable in that, but, as they were telling me this, I was already taking off my shirt and top. Then, a few minutes later, thinking, 'I'll never get an even tan this way, the shorts came off. A little later on," she adds laughing, "some other people came over and asked the people I was interviewing if they had seen the newspaper reporter yet."

Crystal, having this strong sense of purpose in life, had long ago come up with a personal motto: 'Life is too short to be spent as just an average person.' "It helps me," she says, "when I'm trying to decide whether or not to do something." That motto, plus her willingness to try new things helped her to take that step into nudism; and her strong sense of 'always being guided' put the experience into perspective for her. "It could easily have been some other reporter assigned to that interview--I had only been on the job for short time--but it was me. I felt there was a reason for that. I feel there are no accidents in life."

When asked what she remembers most about that first day at a nudist park she replied. "I remember diving into the pool with nothing on. It felt so good. But what I remember even more was getting out. There were a couple of people sitting around reading magazines and they didn't even look up when I got out of the water. There was no sexuality at all in the situation, and if I were to have thought otherwise, I would have definitely been in the minority."

Thinking, afterwards, about her first nudist experience, Crystal relates, "What was so profound about it was that it wasn't a big deal. It reminded me of losing my virginity-- nothing felt any differently and I looked the same in the mirror. Then, later I thought, 'that's a lot of fun, I want to go back.'"

A few weeks later she did go back. "Again I was drawn to the people; they were open and friendly. And I realized, 'THEY HAD SEEN ME NUDE AND THE STILL LIKED ME.' I then began accepting *me for myself*, perhaps for the first time.

Crystal says that being at the nudist park takes a lot of pressure off. "I had always been a perfectionist. I remember doing my nails and being late for work because I had to re-do them until they were perfect. I would switch purses several times to make sure my outfit would match. Now, I could just roll out of bed and go. I was on the path of self-acceptance.

"I found that at the nudist parks I could just be me. I

didn't have to be a 'human doing', I could just be a 'human being'. I had always been around people that were achievers but now I could just 'be'. People liked me and were interested in me as a person. There were no barriers, no pulling of rank like in the clothed world. People were people first.

"The friendliness reminds me of the *Cheers* theme song where "everybody knows your name" where people care about you. It really feels like family--family of choice as opposed to family of chance. It also reminds me of support groups where there is commonality and the door is always open. The commonality here is self-acceptance. I find that the people who participate in the lifestyle feel good about themselves, or are on their way to feeling good about themselves."

Like many others, Crystal feels the nudist experience has been part of her recovery. "Definitely," she says, It changed my perception of myself. Instead of thinking, for instance, that I needed to adjust my weight, all I needed was to change my perception of it. For the first time in my life, I felt that my body and emotions were connected."

Crystal feels that part of her mission has to do with helping people adjust their perception of themselves and feeling good with who they are and where they are, teaching them to bloom where they are planted but to transplant themselves if need be.

Crystal's new-found perception of herself has brought some changes to her life--some of which have been painful.

She is currently going through a divorce. Philosophically she says, "I've never had growth without some pain, but, in a way, I feel like a kid in a candy store because I know more about myself than I ever have. After my divorce is final, I'm looking forward to new relationships again."

These new relationships, Crystal feels, will be different because nudism has given her a new way to relate to men. "The men at nudist parks are sweethearts," she says. "They are gracious and you don't have to worry about them wanting to get into your pants," she adds laughingly, "when you're not wearing any." She agrees with many nudists that, paradoxically, the absence of clothes takes the emphasis off the body and sexuality. "Definitely," she says. "It's not a sexually charged situation. There is more genuine intimacy and caring. I can be playing volleyball in the pool and look around and I'm the only female. Any other place that would be a sexually charged situation but here it's not."

"Even though nudism takes the emphasis off sex, however, I don't feel it diminishes sexuality. But it does encourage one to put friendships first. As a result, I feel that the sexual experience is definitely enhanced by the nudism experience because the initial focus is off sex and there is a healthier mixture."

"Nudism has restored my faith in men and also in dating. I would feel more comfortable meeting or dating someone at a nudist park and getting to know them through group activities where the focus is off sex than on the outside where it seems every situation is sexually charged. Then

sex might follow but it's nice to get to know someone without sex getting in the way."

As a sub-mission but not a sexual temperance movement, Crystal would like to eradicate sexuality from where it doesn't belong. "I see a lot of stuff happening to people in our society that's full of sexually charged messages."

Along with a new perception of herself and new hope for relationships, Crystal says that, through nudism, she has learned to trust. "The nudism experience has helped me develop more trust in people. I used to not trust anyone. If I trusted you, you were the exception. I used to spend a lot of time sizing up people trying to figure them out, but because of the friendly atmosphere and genuine caring at the nudist parks, I've learned that I don't have to do that. Before, you had to earn my trust. Now, it's a lot easier--you start out with it."

Continuing she says, "Now that I am okay with myself, I'm meeting people that count. I've met more people who matter since I quit letting the little things matter. Being myself has put me in touch with other people who like themselves. When I'm at the nudist park, I'm surrounded by people who are blooming where they are planted and are accepting life on its terms. That feels healthy."

Crystal obviously has grown as a result of being introduced to nudism but does she feel that it has brought her closer to finding her mission? "Definitely," a word she

likes to use. "It all fits together. It's part of my healing and part of my mission. As I said earlier, it could have been any other reporter assigned to the story, but it wasn't. I feel I'm always being guided. I feel that nudism is part of it, but there is a bigger something--self-acceptance, love, spirituality--nudism is just a faction of it. There are lots of other factions and everything is so connected."

And so are her many talents connected--they are all forms of communication. Crystal, who works within the criminal justice system and is a former counselor, plays the piano, sings and, in school, wrote plays as well as performed in them. She continues to write and she has taken a sign language class.

When asked if she has any dreams she says, "Yes, I'm in graduate school now and I really like the program I'm in, but every once in a while I have this fantasy of dropping out and going to clown school. I love to perform. I don't think people are happy enough and I'd like to make them happier."

Crystal's genuine concern for people is obvious as she adds, "I also like to teach people. I think that anybody can learn anything if we find the right way to teach them. I also teach people to question things, that there is more than one way to look at things. I teach people that they're okay. I think anyone can learn self-acceptance. It's a matter of how you approach it. For some it may be through therapy; for others, it's nudism."

Crystal admits that even though she is more in touch

with herself than ever, all is not easy for her. "There are times when my faith waivers, when I cry, feeling like a lost soul." When asked how she gets through those times, she says, "I like to lie in the sun, it energizes me--like a cat. And I pray--not to have things changed but to help me see what I am to see. Helping others, though, is the best way to get through painful times."

What is she currently doing to find her mission? "Right now, I'm in the process of buying a house. I looked at a lot of houses but when I walked into the one I'm buying, I knew it was the right one. It had a lot of openness and would be perfect for gatherings, although I don't know what kind of gatherings. I also have six couches and feel I can't get rid of any of them so I need all that room. And right now I'm also obsessed with finding the right drapes. It may be that the gatherings will have something to do with nudity. I feel like Kevin Costner in *Field of Dreams* only it's a *House of Dreams*. 'Buy it and they will come.' But that's all I know and I've learned not to question these things. I'm just going along for the ride.

There is no doubt that Crystal feels she is being guided and there is no reason to think that she's not. Her life demonstrates that if, indeed, we get out of our own way, we are guided to the things that we need. She was guided to nudism when she most needed (but perhaps least expected) it.

Thursday's child may have far to go in terms of purpose

and a mission, but for Crystal, she has already come a very long way.

Crystal has one pet peeve and that is people offering opinions on things without first trying them. "Nudism might not be for everybody, but before anyone judges it, they should first try it."

Definitely, Crystal.

To learn who we really are, the nudist experience is elementary but essential.

*Nudists are clothed in the fabric of
freedom woven of honesty and
acceptance.*

Chapter 11

TAKING OFF

THERE ARE VARYING DEGREES of comfort with nudity among people. If you have practiced nudity around the house or apartment, in your backyard or perhaps with a friend in a hot tub, you are probably ready to venture to a social setting such as a nudist park or beach. If, however, nudity is not something with which you are yet comfortable, you have much to look forward to, but you may wish to begin a step or two back.

Remember that with each step you grow. What at first may feel uncomfortable and awkward will very soon begin to feel comfortable, even pleasurable; and the rate of progress will increase with each step, perhaps the earliest seeming the most challenging. Remember too, that growth often requires that we step out of our comfort zone, but growth is the most fulfilling aspect of life--the meaning of life itself.

If nudity is not part of your lifestyle except when essential, such as bathing, you can begin by remaining nude for longer periods of time after your bath or shower.

The idea is not to freeze so you may want to turn up the thermostat. Walk around your house or apartment nude for a few minutes before getting dressed. Have a cup of coffee or tea nude, do some housework nude (a very popular way of doing housework), dance nude or talk on the phone nude. (If talking on the phone nude makes you feel self-conscious, think about it and then laugh at yourself.)

One of the most freeing experiences for anyone is to sleep nude. If you have not done this before, it may not feel comfortable or secure at first, so put on an extra blanket if necessary and give yourself a chance to adjust. It will not take long before it will feel comfortable and unrestricted. Those of us that sleep nude, can't imagine sleeping all twisted up in night clothes.

If you do not live where you can spend time being nude outdoors, perhaps you have window in which you can sit in direct sunlight. You will be amazed at how good this feels. Allow yourself to feel the warmth of the sun on all parts of your body, especially those parts that have never seen sunlight before. This may arouse you at first, but just enjoy it, and be assured that by the time you are ready to explore social nudism, this will not be a problem.

Being nude outdoors for the first time is one of the most memorable experiences you will have. If you have privacy in your back yard, begin there, perhaps first after dark if you are more comfortable with that. Feel the breeze on all parts of your body. If you know of a secluded place in the

woods or on a beach, join in with mother nature there. And most of all, DON'T LIVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE NEVER HAVING STOOD NAKED IN THE RAIN.

If you haven't done any of these things before, one of your concerns may be 'What if someone sees me?' Chances are you will be overly concerned about this thinking that neighbors a quarter mile away will be able to see in you window and see that you are not wearing anything. Take reasonable precautions, but don't think for a second that your world is going to end if someone gets a glimpse of you nude. Go outside and check around your house or apartment and see what you can see looking in your windows from a street or sidewalk. Probably less than you think. And remember that many families practice practical nudity in their homes.

A practice that is very beneficial in gaining body acceptance and self-esteem is to spend some time each day naked in front of a mirror. In doing so, observe all of your parts. Notice which ones you like and which ones you dislike. Then, as you make your evaluations, release them realizing that in reality, you are not your body any more than you are your name. In a short time, you will begin to become very comfortable with looking at yourself. As this occurs, spend more time looking at your eyes, the windows of your soul, and when you begin to see your light, give yourself a wink.

The whole idea of practicing nudity is to begin a process

with which we stop judging out bodies, and to learn to appreciate them for what they truly are--temporary housing, or temporary vehicles. Our bodies are temples that house our beautiful and perfect spirit. The process of gaining this awareness and self-acceptance begins as we begin to change our lifestyle--even ever so slowly at first.

The step from private nudity around your house or apartment by yourself or with a partner, to social nudism at a nudist park or beach, is a big step, but by all means, **THE MOST REWARDING**. Being free of hang-ups you may have had about your body and being totally accepted by others is truly a wonderful experience. As mentioned earlier, this experience changes most people's lives.

Instead of writing this part of the book, I wish I could personally take each of you who are reading this to a nudist park or beach for your first time as I have with a number of close friends. To see the expression on your face as you first begin to experience the freedom or to have you come to me later in the day and say that it's harder to put your clothes back on and go home than it was to take them off, would warm my heart. Unfortunately that is physically impossible to do, but, I know that at some level, that has already occurred.

If you know specifically of a nudist park or beach that you would like to visit, or have friends that are already involved in social nudism, that's the best place to start. If not, your best approach to finding a suitable place to begin

is to contact one of the national organizations. They can give you specific information on local parks or beaches. These organizations also publish magazines and news bulletins with information about nudist activities around the country as well as directories listing various facilities.

Two organizations to contact are:

The American Association for Nude Recreation

(Formerly The American Sunbathing Association or ASA)

1703 N. Main Street

Kissimmee, FL 34744-3396

(800) 933-7577

On the web <www.aanr.com>

The Naturist Society

P.O. Box 132

Oshkosh, WI 54902

(414) 426-5009

On the web <www.naturistsociety.com>

Each of these organizations will be happy to provide you with information on where to get started as well as material pertaining to their purpose and agenda.

The American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR) publishes an attractive and well organized nudist park guide called *THE NORTH AMERICAN GUIDE TO NUDE RECREATION*. It lists established nudist parks along with the activities available at each, as well as travel

clubs with maps, addresses and phone numbers. It is published by Elysium Press and can be ordered through most book stores or directly from AANR.

The Naturist Society (TNS) publishes THE WORLD GUIDE TO FREE BEACHES AND RECREATION which lists clothing-optional beaches throughout the world.

Both the American Association for Nude Recreation and The Naturist Society offer mail order services that carry books and videos pertaining to nude recreation. To begin, I would recommend the videos “Welcome to Our World” by The American Association for Nude Recreation or “The Beginner’s Guide to Skinny-dipping” by The Naturist Society. Both of these videos are well done and give the beginner an idea of what to expect and how popular nudism and naturism are.

Through these organizations you will also gain access to information pertaining to special interest groups, travel information such as nude cruises, and a host of other related aspects of clothes-free or clothing-optional living. A whole new wonderful world awaits you. So, TAKE OFF!

Stepping out of one's comfort zone and into a nudist park for the first time is no less than a willingness to give up something familiar for the possibility of something better.

Chapter 12

MARY'S FIRST TIME

THE FOLLOWING is reprinted from a book entitled I DIED TO REMEMBER written by Dr. Mary Violet McMurray. Mary is a psychologist, writer and workshop leader. Her book is a personal account of a near-death experience and how it has given her a new appreciation for life and living. In this excerpt Mary shares with her readers her first visit to a nudist park and what she found. Mary was one of the first friends I invited to the park with me. DDZ*

NATURAL

I drove down the highway pressing beyond the speed limit because I had left late for a very important date. I was certain I knew the way. So certain that I over looked the sign for my exit. My certainty was certainly in error.

I had left home heading for the Whispering Oaks--a nudist resort and a new experience for me. I was to be a guest of a friend. It was easy to convince myself that missing the exit was fate telling me that nudism wasn't meant for me today. So, I went home, sat down with a book

and told myself that if I had gone, I would have been running away from myself because it was really meant for me to have a day of solitude. BUNK!

Besides July 8 and 9 was National Nude Week-end, so I wanted to see what it was all about. So, two hours later I started out again, this time arriving at the gate of the resort--alone, since it was too late to connect up with my friend Dan. But by now I was so determined to go through with it that I persevered in pressing the gate intercom button at least eight times before I heard a relaxed male voice say, "Hello there, " through the small metal speaker.

I confidently said, "I'm a visitor, a friend of Dan's, could I come in?"

"Sure, " said the anonymous male voice. "Come an in, stop at the office and I'll show you around."

I drove through the gate as if I was driving into any park, not really thinking about what I was going to see and experience. It all felt very NATURAL now that I had spent my anxiety in two hours of procrastination. I parked next to a couple of golf carts and got out of my car being greeted by a man wearing only a t-shirt.

"Hi, I'm Gary, maybe I can find Dan for you."

Gary turned toward the lawn where numerous people were sunbathing. Just then Dan started to walk toward us. "Does Dan wear a white hat?" Gary asked with a little lighthearted lilt in his voice.

"I guess he does," I said, since that's all he was wearing.

I felt a smidgen of uneasiness at this point. But my discomfort was dissolving as quickly as it came because the atmosphere was definitely easy, NATURAL, light, comfortable and confident.

While Dan showed me where to leave my car for the afternoon, he told me that as soon as I came through the security gate at Whispering Oaks, I had left the textile world, as nudists would say. But he also reassured me that although practicing nudists enjoy being as natural as a newborn, they are also quite practical. "For example, " Dan said, "we wear clothes while frying bacon."

As I walked from my car to begin my tour, I immediately felt out of place in my shorts and t-shirt. Dan must have read my mind because he said, "When you're ready, you'll probably be more comfortable if you take your clothes off.

"I need a little time, okay? " I returned with a slightly nervous giggle.

As we walked in the sunshine and cool breezes, I saw green trees, a small pond, breasts bouncing on the volley ball court, sunburned derrieres, a blue water pool, and bare-skinned babes playing ball.

By the time we reached the club house, I was feeling more and more like I was wearing an Eskimo parka on Waikiki Beach. My simple, light cotton shorts and top had begun to feel weighty.

In the club house was a large hot tub. "Now here's

something I'm more comfortable with, " I thought to myself. And since I had a couple occasions to skinny-dip in a private hot tub in my past, I decided that this would be the most comfortable place to plunge into nudism. I pretended that I was in the home of a friend, undressed, laid my "textiles" on a chair, and haughtily stepped down into the hot steamy water. The haughtiness was an act but it got me through the gateway into my first adventure of nudism.

At first, I imagined that the water veiled my NATURAL way, but my fears quickly melted with the warmth of the water, the people, the place, and the general atmosphere.

We continued my tour, and I was pleased to find canoeing, swimming, fishing, nature trails, tennis, volley ball, and a softball field. But I also saw, just as naturally, tennis shoes, tattoos, sunglasses and bare, gold chains and flip-flop shower shoes, softballs-- volley balls--tennis balls-- and others, bathing bodies in the open air; a man and woman showering on the porch - sudsing and rinsing the residue of the day as naturally as the rain washes the dust from the flower and quenches its thirst.

I saw striped sunburns running vertical from head to toe from not turning over, an appendectomy scar, the tender flesh of a sweet innocent little girl climbing the stairs of a slide on the playground, and yellow and red life jackets above oars resting on bare cool thighs in the summer sun.

I saw Lincoln Continentals, golf carts, Ford pick-ups, a fish stocked pond, a wooden bridge, mosquitoes biting

where you couldn't itch, baseball caps and nude naps on green grass with a bonnie lass, fishing poles in the water holes held by little boys feeling the freedom of the NATURAL spirit, and a sign that said "SPEED LIMIT 5. I saw tents, umbrellas, trailers (permanent and transient), family picnics, and the American Flag waved strongly on the bill above it all.

I met Lloyd - an 80 year old man who has been enjoying the freedom of nudism at this particular park since 1971. Lloyd says, "It's all quite proper, you know. "

I met Sandy and Dave who say they took to nudism NATURALLY (It's first names only here, a natural respect for privacy.) I shared the hot tub with 7 or 8 young people, ages 9 to 14, who bared it all, from the chatter of sports to their own natural selves as comfortably as a bee nourishes itself with the nectar of wild iris.

I heard someone say, "Have you seen Sharon? and the response was, "I'm not sure, what color is her towel?" And best of all, I bugged a tree and felt my breasts embrace the bark of a 60 foot oak. A tree, one of God's "natural creations. A tree grows from the inside out while it's firmly rooted and reaching into the heavens at the same time. A tree ... a tree is as natural as me.

As I stood in the parking lot and dressed by my car, I realized the relaxed freedom I'd felt for the past several hours, and "textiles" (clothes) seemed more functional than social to me.

After moving through my fears, I found the courage to experience a new happening. These were families who were raising their children to accept their bodies as beautiful and natural creations of the Almighty creative Love. They had avoided programming their children with negative and fearful thoughts and inhibitions about their totally natural vehicle the Almighty Creator has given them to embellish life with--their bodies. When I drove out of the gate I was thankful that I had moved beyond my world of rigidity and resistance and into a world of nature and nudism.

... and the American Flag waved strongly on the bill above it all."

**I DIED TO REMEMBER* by Dr. Mary V. McMurray is available through Mallard Publishing Company 8374 SW 101 Pi Road Ocala, FL 34481

Whatever else you may find at a nudist park, you'll find yourself.

Chapter 13

NAKED BEFORE GOD WEDDING CEREMONY

Nude weddings are very special, particularly when the spiritual significance of the nudity is recognized and included in the ceremony itself. I have written this ceremony for that reason--to bring appreciation to the spiritual significance of the nudity, rather than leaving it as incidental or as a novelty. The portion of this ceremony addressing the nudity can be inserted into most traditional wedding ceremonies. Couples wishing to create their own ceremonies may find some of my ideas helpful.

Convocation

(Groom) _____ and (Bride) _____,
we are all privileged on this special day by being asked by the two of you to participate in this very significant event--your wedding ceremony. We are honored and blessed by being able to be here to share in your love and to be able to extend our love to you. The love of All-That-Is and the spirit of togetherness felt here today make this, your

wedding day, a very auspicious occasion.

Invocation

Let us be still for an instant and know that the love of All-That-Is is always with us--we need not call upon it but to call upon ourselves to be receptive to it. Let us be open to Love as we are reminded that Love, which creates us, is what we are.

(This portion, addressing the significance of nudity, can be inserted into most standard wedding ceremonies.)

Address

That we are here nude today seems proper and fitting...

(If there appears to be some discomfort among non-nudists guest, a humorous statement can be added here taking advantage of the term "fitting". Humor can often break the ice and help people laugh and relax. An example follow.)

...and I use the term 'fitting' loosely, however I do not mean 'loosely fitting' to nudists, that, of course, that would be a contradiction, nothing seems 'loose fitting' to most nudists.

(Smiling) In any even, it does seem appropriate that we are here today nude to witness and celebrate the marriage of *(Groom)* _____ and *(Bride)* _____.

It is appropriate for two reasons: First, the original vows between many couples, that is the promises made privately between the two of them which ultimately bring them to the marriage alter, are often shared, during a moment of intimacy, while nude. It somehow seems fitting, then, that the vows exchanged publicly before friends, relatives and witnesses be made in a similar state.

However, the second reason why it seems proper that we are here today, unclothed, maybe much more significant. Standing here naked before God and before each other, in all our glory, baring it all so to speak, can be thought of as a metaphor for baring our souls, for hiding nothing and for being all that we are.

(To bride and groom) Certainly *(Groom)* _____ and *(Bride)* _____, in getting to know each other well enough to want to enter into marriage, you, no doubt, have bared your souls to one another, more than once. And no doubt, as your life together continues to unfold, the relationship, in order to survive and grow, will require of you to continually bare your souls to each other, to be totally honest with one another. Sometimes painful, other times a bit uncomfortable, but always worthwhile, it will be

necessary to 'hide nothing' if the relationship is, indeed, to grow deeper. So let their memory of our nudity on this your wedding day be a reminder to you, as well as to us, of the freedom and bliss that can be experienced by being honest with ourselves, with each other and with our Creator.

(End of nudity portion)

Marriage has been described as the best and most important relationship that can exist between two human beings; the construction of their love and trust into a single growing energy of spiritual life. Marriage is a commitment to togetherness that requires daily attention if the benefits of the togetherness are to be reaped.

Yet marriage is also a nurturing matrix in which two individuals can continue to expand and develop, so they can fulfill their individual destinies and offer their gifts to the world. In this view the focus is not so much on the couple and what they undertake together, but more on the power of the individuals and what they have to contribute through their lives, and how their union serves to enlarge and develop each of them.

Reading

Let us read from *The Prophet* on marriage:

“You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.

You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.

Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness,

And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:

Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

“Fill each other’s cup but drink not from the same cup.

Give one another your bread but eat not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each of you be alone,

Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they may quiver with the same music.

“Give your hearts, but not into each other’s keeping.

For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.

And stand together yet not too near together:

For the pillars of the temple stand apart,

And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other’s shadow.”

While this view of marriage may appear on the surface to be an unromantic vision of love, it is a view that holds a

relationship in the highest spiritual regard--a holy relationship, if you will--for it has as its underlying assumption that our passing through time and space is not at random, that each of us is alive for an important purpose and that our encounters with each other are holy encounters. Marriage then, enhances that capacity for individual participation, contribution and fulfillment.

Expression of Intent

(*Groom*) _____, knowing the joys of marriage but also its challenges and responsibilities, do you agree to take (*Bride*) _____ to be your wedded wife, and do you intend to love honor and cherish her in accordance with the will and purpose of your highest calling? (Answer, "I do")

And (*Bride*) _____, knowing the joys of marriage but also its challenges and responsibilities, do you agree to take (*Groom*) _____ to be your wedded husband, and do you intend to love, honor and cherish him in accordance with the will and purpose of your highest calling? (Answer, "I do")

Exchange of vows

Please hold hands and (*Groom*) _____, repeat after me "(*Bride*) _____, I give myself to you as your

husband to love you; to work with you and to play with you; to laugh with you and to cry with you; to sing and pray with you; and to be your friend, your companion and your lover so long as it serves our highest good.”

And (*Bride*) _____, repeat after me “(*Groom*) _____, I give myself to you as your wife to love you; to work with you and to play with you; to laugh with you and to cry with you; to sing and pray with you and to be your friend, your companion and your lover so long as it serves our highest good.”

Blessing of Rings

May we have the rings?

May these rings be blessed as the symbol of this affectionate unity. These two lives are now joined in one unbroken circle. Wherever they go, may they always return to one another in their togetherness. Through this marriage, may (*Groom*) _____ and (*Bride*) _____ find in each other and in themselves the love from which we were all created. May they grow in understanding, compassion and purpose. May the home which they establish be such a place that many will find there a friend. May these rings on their fingers symbolize the spirit of love in their hearts.

Exchange of Rings

(Handing ring to groom) (*Groom*) _____, in placing this ring on (*Bride*) _____'s finger, repeat after me “(*Bride*) _____, I give you this ring as a pledge of my love and as a symbol of our marriage.”

(Handing ring to bride) (*Bride*) _____, in placing this ring on (*Groom*) _____'s finger, repeat after me “(*Groom*) _____, I give you this ring as a pledge of my love and as a symbol of our marriage.”

In as much as (*Groom*) _____ and (*Bride*) _____, standing here together, (naked) before God and these witnesses, have consented in marriage; have pledged their faith and declared their marriage by giving each other a ring--and now are joined in mutual esteem and devotion, I as an ordained minister and by the power vested in me by the State, pronounce that they are husband and wife.

The Kiss

Benediction

May all that you have already become, which has brought you to this day and all that you will become as a result of it, be a demonstration of your divine origin and purpose. May

this marriage bring you beautifully and steadfastly into the presence of yourselves, one another and your creator. May your life together be happy, fulfilling all that you are.

I present Mr. And Mrs. _____.

Chapter 14

A FEW WORDS TO NUDISTS:

Are You a Teacher?

TO THE AVERAGE PERSON, the idea of nudism seems strange. We nudists are often thought of as a bunch of strange people with some sort of perverted need to prance around without our clothes. Beyond that, and perhaps a mild curiosity, the average person probably doesn't think much more about it.

And why should they? What information is available that explains or describes the lifestyle any differently? Sure, there are some nudist magazines written *by* nudists *for* nudists but they are not the kind of material you could find on the news stand. I couldn't find any information at the library. I've never found any mainstream magazine articles on the subject. I didn't find any listings of nudist 'colonies' in the yellow pages. The only information available to the general public is the occasional 'weirdo' who makes the rounds on the talk shows clad only in a towel looking for attention and being ridiculed by the host and audience. It's no wonder we have such a poor image. (Since the time this was originally written, we have had the

introduction of the Internet where thankfully there is a fair amount of information now available.)

I don't know why the secrecy of nudism exist except that to talk about it in this country, where our views of the human body are not much higher than that as a vehicle for sin, one risks being thought of as sex offender, child molester or, at best, an exhibitionist. Probably to most nudists, it's not worth the trouble to explain it, let alone defend it. How unfortunate.

But what about this lifestyle whose followers' divorce rate and rate of juvenile delinquency is far below the national average? What is the attraction to this lifestyle whose adherents frequently say, "I wouldn't give this up for anybody." What's this lifestyle about whose participants talk of 'honesty' , 'self-acceptance' and 'freedom' as if they have a corner on the market. And what about this lifestyle whose practitioners know it is excellent therapy for stress related diseases or someone suffering from low self-esteem and low self-acceptance. Is not such a lifestyle something to truly shout about?

Fellow nudist, it's time to speak up, not just to fight for out rights. More importantly, to teach. We need teachers; we need educators. We have soldiers; but where are the teachers? We need to inform and invite, not just defend. (And let's keep in mind too, that fighting for something only causes the oppositions to dig in and strengthen its stand.)

LET'S EDUCATE AND INFORM--not as zealots determined to save humanity from all its problems, but as a group of like-minded individuals who recognize the value of our wonderful, healthy lifestyle. Let's talk about it like we talk about our businesses, our churches, our hobbies or our children and grandchildren. Let's spread the word about this lifestyle that honors the most magnificent creations on the planet--and brings the best out of them. That's all we have to do, and if we do our job well enough, the level of awareness, the critical mass, will tip the scales in our favor so that we will no longer need to fight. Let's put our energy in a positive direction. When we have done our job right, our image will have changed. ARE YOU A TEACHER?

Chapter 15

GRIN AND BARE IT

Twenty Hints to Practical Nudism

1. If it's too tight, take it off.
2. If it's too loose, take it off.
3. If it just doesn't feel good, take it off.
4. If it doesn't look good on you, take it off.
5. If you don't think it will look good on you, don't put it on.
6. If it's wet, take it off.
7. If it's going to get wet, take it off.
8. If it's too hot, take it off.
9. If you get sunburned, put it back on.
10. If you're perspiring, take it off.
11. If you think you might perspire, take it off.
12. If you're cold, put it on.
13. If you can't stand the heat in the kitchen, take it off.
14. If you're going to fry bacon, put it back on.
15. If it itches, take it off.
16. If it's scratchy, take it off.
17. If you want to be scratched by someone, take it off.

18. After you take it off, you can always put it back on.
19. After you put it back on, you can always take it back off.
20. After you take it off, always check for navel lint.

* * *

Some Principals of Nudism

--Becoming a nudist does not necessarily result in breaking all old habits. Most nudists will still run for shelter when it begins to rain.

--There is a definite order of difficulty in removing individual articles of clothing at one's first visit to a nudist facility: e.g. it is more difficult to remove your pants than your shirt.

--The level of anxiety one experiences at one's first visit to a nudist park is in direct proportion to how long one waits before undressing.

* * *

FAQ From Would-Be First Time Nudists

- Q. What if I see someone I know?
A. Say "Hi."
Q. What do I do with my hands?
A. Shake the hand of the person you know.

Q. What do I do with my eyes?

A. Watch where you are going.

Q. Where do I keep my change?

A. There is no need to change you're not wearing anything.

Q. Will I become aroused?

A. Will it snow in the Sahara? If it does, it surely won't last long.

* * *

Statements Never Heard At A Nudist Park

* Don't play in the mud.

* Don't get your clothes dirty.

* Don't spill anything on your clothes.

* I wonder if this stain will come out.

* I don't have a thing to wear.

* It must be in my other pants.

* All my clothes seem to be shrinking.

* This bra is killing me.

* I think I'm over dressed.

* She's the one wearing the blue dress.

* Let me change clothes first. It will only take a second.

* Do these match?

- * I must have a hole in my pocket.
- * You look good in red.
- * I didn't bring a bathing suit.
- * Hang up your wet bathing suit.
- * What are you wearing.
- * (To a child) You're not going to wear that!
- * (To an adult) You're not going to wear that?!
- * I think someone is at the door, quick put something on.
- * When are you going to do laundry?
- * I don't have any clean underwear.
- * Your wrinkling my dress.
- * Your fly is open.
- * Button your shirt (blouse).
- * Why don't you put on some music while I slip into something more comfortable.

EPILOGUE

WELCOME HOME. You have traveled far to come to this place, and your journey has not been without peril and loneliness. But now, at last, you are with friends with whom you can rest. Sit in the cool grass, lie in the warm sun or bathe in the sparkling waters, and soon you will feel rested and refreshed.

A feast is being prepared, and soon you will be rejuvenated with nourishment for your body and soul. When you are ready, come join with those of us who have arrived before you, and tell us of your many travels and adventures, and of what finally has brought you to this place. Tell us what language the Universe speaks to *you*, and what message It brings, and share with us *your* truth. Then sit back and listen as others share *theirs*--while all heaven joins together standing naked before God in celebration--recognizing our Truth and remembering what it means to be free.

