



## DOCTORS CALL NUDISM LOONY

### Warn Cultists to Don Bathing Suits to Resist Sun, Citing the Neanderthaler's Hairy Hide

By Kathleen McLaughlin

**P**ROTESTING squeals from the moralists every summer for the last twenty years have heralded the arrival of the beach seasons. Each spring, noting the absence of another inch at the bottom of bathing suits and the drop of a couple of inches at the top, they have predicted:

"Next year they won't wear anything at all!"

Events of the last few months indicate that at last they may be right. Scanning the court calendars of various states where prosecutions on charges of indecent exposure await the newly revealed devotees of nudism, even a nonchalant observer would be forced to the conclusion that the disappearing point may in fact be closer than it seems.

Until this summer the American public thought of nudism only as a weird fad that had experienced a certain popularity in Germany. Now it is revealed as flourishing surreptitiously in leafy glens and secluded areas on this side of the Atlantic—even, in fact, in close proximity to populous districts—practiced assiduously by disciples of all ages and both sexes.

From coast to coast colonies of the



uninhabited have broken into the public prints recently as the result of rude intrusions on their retreats by hunters, fishermen, or hiking parties. Elaborate precautions of the unclad to keep their frolics and their calisthenics withdrawn from a misunderstanding, unsympathetic, and sometimes raucously amused world seem inevitably to come to nothing. Not even the great open spaces of this continent, it appears, provide a haven where some itinerant will not sooner or later stumble upon the party.

The frequency with which these camps have been so disrupted of recent months leads to the conclusion that the numbers of those characterized by one of their leaders as "the original, noncommercial nudists of the United States" are larger than the average individual of normal pursuits and habits finds credible. Just as the average citizen, trained in the ancient sterling virtue of modesty as represented in sufficient clothing to cover him, finds it inexplicable that men and women will voluntarily shed the last vestige of raiment and mingle publicly for days and weeks.

New Jersey scored the doubtful distinction of harboring one of the earliest of the cults, known as Sky Farm, established near Liberty Corners. Possibly the nomenclature exerted some influence on the founders, but at any rate it is proudly touted by Carl Becker, charter member and secretary, as the largest and oldest in this country. He claims a membership of 220 drawn from the metropolitan district of New York.

Carmel, Cal., gasped when it discovered that a group known as Branch No. 12, of the International Society of the Sun, had moved into its bailiwick and was seeking a municipal license to carry on its activities of nude sunbathing and literary pursuits. Madame Mathilde Baumgartner, head of the colony, rose up in wrath and departed with her followers when the license was denied, even though she had offered to erect an eight foot fence.

Chicagoland, sustained something of the same sort of a shock when, in September, a raid by the sheriff and county attorney, at Allegan, Mich., revealed a camp of more than thirty men, women, and children sporting themselves in a clearing ten miles from town, on Swan creek. Several members hailed from Chicago and others from towns in

Michigan, including one professor from the state university at Ann Arbor. A dancing master named Fred Ring and his wife, Ophelia, of Kalamazoo, proprietors and leaders, are awaiting trial in the case. Charges against the rest were dismissed with leave to reinstate.

In scores of instances, both men and women among the nudists have protested fiercely against donning clothing when the minions of the law arrived. In Allegan they consented only on the firm promise of the arresting officers to hale them into town "as is" and to place them before the bar of justice precisely in that state which they preferred. Trousers and dresses appeared as if by magic.

Such fanaticism is explained by the leaders of the movements on two counts. Health always is cited first. Medical authorities are quoted to the effect that more than sufficient sunlight can be secured by the use of modern bathing suits, which permit a generous expanse of epidermis access to the sun's rays; but the nudist retort is that the bathing suit expresses a false



(Underwood & Underwood photo.)

Below: Beach scene, 1933, approved by the M. D. This much and no more exposure is compatible with both health and morals, in the opinion of medical authorities.

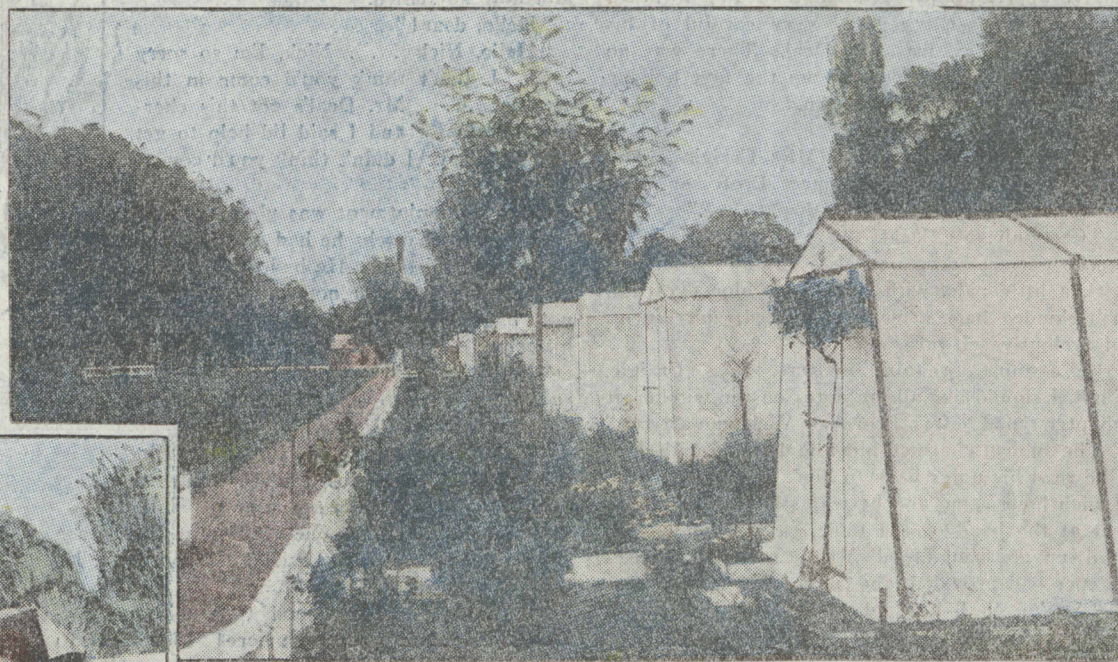


At right: Science approves Louise Robertson's sun bathing kiosk at Palm Beach, Cal. Koppas shells from the Philippines filter the sun's rays.



attitude of modesty, and is actually more immodest than no clothing at all, because "the only way to get rid of the sex taboo is for both men and women to appear completely undraped."

"Otherwise, you see, the presence of a certain amount of clothing only stimulates the imagination," explains the Rev. Henry S. Huntington, Presbyterian minister, who has been one of the leaders in the movement and is the editor of a magazine on nudism. His explanation is accom-



With the spread of nudism in Germany, such tent colonies as this have become familiar sights in certain areas.

panied by a pitying smile for the prudish, unconvinced majority.

Such contentions are worse than unscientific, "medical" authorities retort; they are downright foolish.

"Plain tush," an eminent Chicago physician designates the nudists' plea that bathing suits be discarded. "Centuries ago the Neanderthal man roamed about in some such fashion as these people want to adopt. But he could stand it. Nature had toughened him, and his way of life kept him impervious to intense rays of the sun that today would sicken most individuals. His body was hairy and his skin was thicker than ours."

"If you're a health enthusiast, get enough sun, but don't get too much. One extreme can be just as bad as another, and all the



"Undress parade" in a nudist camp near Lake Village, Ind., to which several Chicagoans retire each week-end during the summer. Newspapermen were invited to visit the camp, but the photographer was an intruder.

exposure this generation can stand is supplied by modern swimming suits. As for the psychological influence of going nude, I might intrude on the other fellow's field long enough to say that human nature doesn't change much from century to century, and until it reaches a higher plane of morality than we know now, we'd better follow tradition and common sense, and stick to clothing."

The trend of the times, however, extends beyond "noncommercial" nudism and into the strictly commercial phases. Chicago has had a generous dosage of the latter at A Century of Progress, with attendant publicity redounding to the financial credit of one Sally Rand and numerous imitators.

There was a day only a few years ago when Faith Bacon, a performer in the Hollywood concession at the Fair, scandalized the community with her original and sensational version of the fan dance, in an edition of Earl Carroll's "Vani-ties" at a New York theater. Police raided the theater and arraigned the entire cast in court, where the blonde star convinced the judge and jury that even if it didn't look that way, she was wearing a costume under her fans.

When Sally Rand, who was a chorus girl in that production and handed the ostrich feathers to Miss Bacon, according to the latter's version, staged a similar performance in the loop recently, she made no pretense of such a plea. On the contrary, she trumpeted the accuracy of the accusation to the four winds via the press.

Late in September, however, a jury figuratively knocked the breath out of Sally by returning a verdict that she was guilty of performing an obscene dance in a public place, and the jurist stunned her by passing a sentence of a year in jail and a fine of \$200. Just when she had signed theatrical and movie contracts and was preparing to reap further harvests. She was badly scared and didn't make any secret of the fact. Also she expressed indignation at such lack of appreciation for the beauty of her "art."

But her attorney stepped in and saved the day for the dancer, temporarily at least, by obtaining a stay of all orders against her, and securing a hearing, set for Oct. 31, on a motion for a new trial. With the fan waver in Hollywood preparing to appear in a film, the matter rests.

When the Rand headlines began to blossom with such regularity, Faith Bacon made a dash for Chicago to establish her claim to priority in this phase of exposition attractions, only to find herself eclipsed by the fame of the younger and more daring blonde, Miss Rand. Old Mexico, another of the concessions at the Fair, had a whole

battalion of fan dancers, and others made their bids for notoriety from the locale of every other night club in the city.

So it is not to be marvelled at if the policeman who next spring arrives at the beaches with his measuring line, to determine whether the bathing trunks of a beach siren comply with certain city ordinances and are not cut short of the prescribed number of inches from the knee, finds himself with nothing to measure. The increasing complacency of the rising generation toward scanty attire adopted for athletic freedom conceivably may find such starkness outside the pale, but to date there is little to indicate just where the limit lies.

A reporter assigned to inspect conditions in a nudist camp near Lake Village, Ind., departed from Chicago not long ago with alacrity, in a kindly disposed frame of mind toward the Venuses and Dianas he expected to see and to admire. He returned with this disillusioning report:

"I talked with a middle-aged fat lady who was typical of the group there. She told me how marvelous it was to have one's body washed by the air and washed by the sun. But they seemed to have forgotten all about water. I never could stand dirty ankles, and I saw too many of them."