

The Unconventional Convention

*EGSA handles its business by mail so that
conventioners are free for fun.*

By Ernie Detwiller

IF YOU ARE TIRED of conventions that are mostly business sessions and committee meetings, get ready for something different. Put on your magic glasses and your pretend hat and come with me to visit in imagination the Eastern Canadian Sunbathing Association convention as I saw it in August, 1964.

The ECSA is composed of a group of clubs that do nearly all their business by mail and whose members don't believe in letting dull routine interfere with fun. Their policy keeps convention business to a bare minimum while sports and friendship reign supreme. But come, let's not waste time. Let us now enter the gates of Glen Echo, home of the Toronto Gymnosophical Society about 30 miles north of Toronto.

The first people we see are grouped around the registration table set under a huge spreading maple tree at the edge of a large parking area. Having paid our six dollars registration (which includes ground fees for three days) we walk out onto a full acre of sunning area covered with lush green grass.

Before we get very far we are invited to have a cup of coffee at the combination snack bar and dining hall. We know only three or four people but we soon feel very much at home.

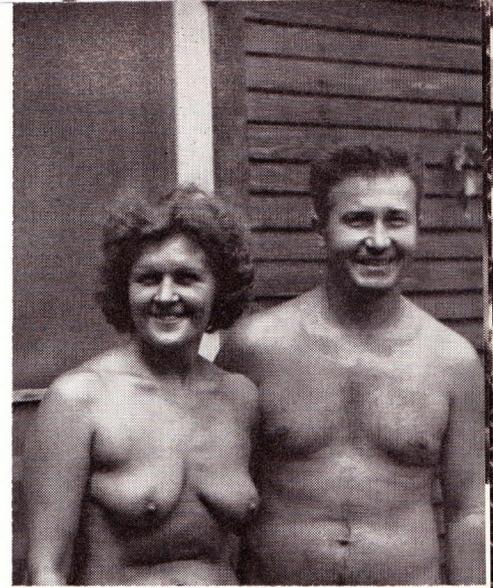
Resuming our tour, we pass a beautiful three-acre lake and come to the main play area where the games courts are located. Close by a babbling brook are the children's play area and paddling pool. Here a table has been set up to display the many trophies that will be awarded to the winners of the various sports events.

Volleyball and badminton are already in progress and in the distance we can see a number of tents and trailers nestled among the trees. Several cabins occupy cleared spaces in the bush where families have their retreats for week ends away from the rush and roar of the workaday world. We can see this is going to be a big week end as there are already two or three hundred people scattered throughout the grounds.

As the day wears on we begin to wonder when the business of the convention will get started. We are invited to take part in an informal chat with John Steegman, ECSA president, and Bill Cameron, secretary. This group also includes Dr. Forrest Emerson, soon to be elected ASA president, and several well known club leaders. But this meeting has nothing to do with convention business. It's just a friendly discussion aimed at broadening the understanding between Canadian and U.S. nudist organizations.

Well fortified with a delicious dinner served in the dining hall, we are about to discover what is on the entertain-

Background of three-acre lake shows why Glen Echo is called one of North America's most beautiful nudist properties. Quietly camera-shy members do not seek publicity. Facing page, youngsters view trophies to be awarded for sports events.



Eddie and Mary bought Glen Echo specifically to utilize on behalf of Toronto Gymnosophical Society. They have invested in it their life savings and eight years of hard work.

ment program for the evening. The weather has turned quite chilly and a huge bonfire throws out welcome heat while the young fry mill around toasting wieners and marshmallows. A movie projector has been set up and there are comedy pictures to amuse both young and old until a nine o'clock curfew signals bedtime for the younger children. Now follows a full-length action-packed movie for an audience wrapped in sweaters and blankets against the chill of the evening.

Sunday morning we are up early in search of breakfast — or at least a cup of coffee. The snack bar is deserted and a sign proclaims that it will not open until nine. We are surprised to note that the camp is quiet until long after eight, and it is almost nine o'clock before the first few sleepy people begin to appear. This is the start of the big day but no one is in a hurry and there is certainly no pressure to get meetings under way.

Soon more cars begin to arrive and by noon there is activity everywhere as nearly 600 people enjoy the glorious sunshine. It's impossible to keep track of everything that is going on. Races for the youngsters, swimming, badminton, archery competitions, and a mighty tug of war between two teams of husky men. This was followed by a ladies' tug of war and then the kiddies kept the crowd in gales of laughter as they hauled each other around with a rope strong enough to hold a 20-mule team. But the volleyball finals created the most interest and we were highly honored to be asked to referee these important games. The TGS team won the trophy for the fourth straight year.

Now let's join the crowd in the main sunning area for the choosing of the royal family. Television men are on hand and this convention highlight will be telecast over the local TV station later tonight. Hundreds of people are gathered by the lake, all looking toward the beautiful

TGS emblem that forms the stage backdrop. Just listen to the applause as the announcement is made that Joan of TGS has been chosen queen and that her son and daughter are the prince and princess. Bill, also of TGS is crowned king.

How time does fly! The afternoon is almost over, the sports events completed and trophies awarded to the winning contestants. We have worked up a good appetite for the smorgasbord dinner now being served.

At last we've finished dinner and the business meeting is about to begin. A large crowd mills around the bonfire. Stillness falls as President John Stegman calls the meeting to order. A brief report of the actions of the executive during the past year is presented by Secretary Bill Cameron. This is followed by his report of the International Nudist Federation's World Congress which he and his wife attended in France. A motion is passed accepting the reports and then some visiting dignitaries are introduced and invited to say a few words.

Edith Church and "Uncle Danny" Boone brought greetings from the National Nudist Council. Dr. Forrest Emerson gave assurance that the American Sunbathing Association would continue friendly and cooperative relations with the ECSA. As president of the Western Canadian Sunbathing Association, I conveyed the greetings of my organization.

And that's the end of the convention business. Out of two full days one hour devoted to business and the rest of the time to fun! That's the ticket!

To end this delightful day we sit around and visit while the teen-agers and young married set dance to the swinging music of a juke box set on the edge of the concrete slab in front of the snack bar. We find ourselves thinking, "So that's the ECSA convention. It may be unconventional but certainly a pace-setter for future conventions." ★