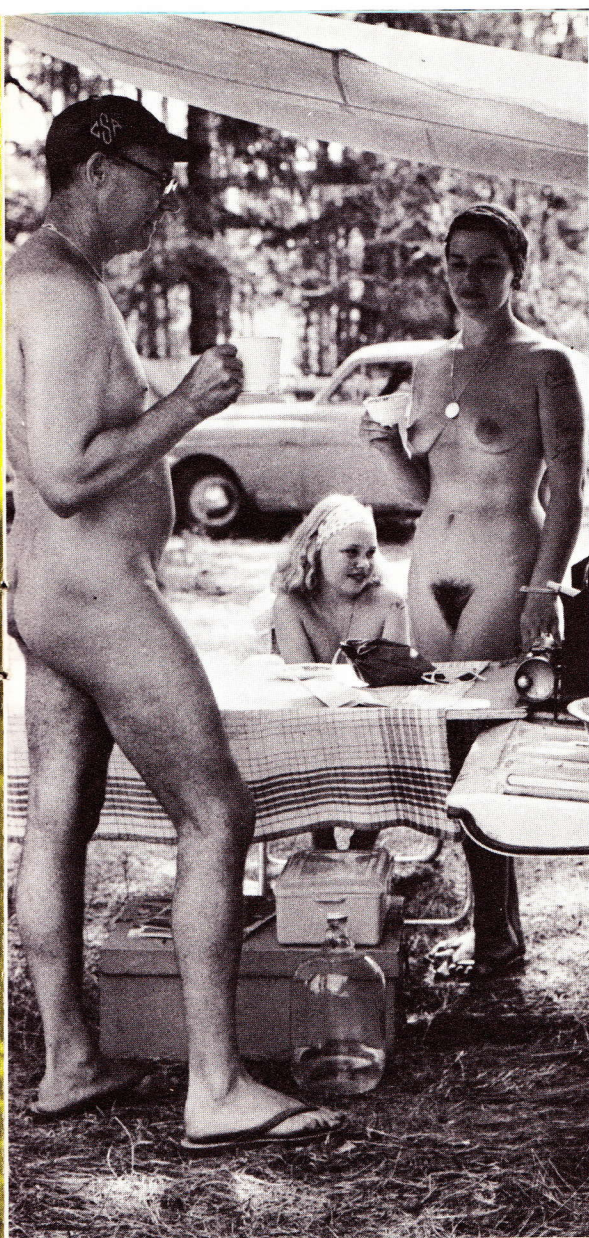


# I BLUSHED IN PARADISE

*By Mildred Harris*







The Connetts have been prominent in Canadian nudism for years, beginning with the founding of the Van Tan Club of Vancouver. At Cobblestone (left) Ray Connett reminisces with Sunny Trails Club members about the early days when he and Mildred organized STC.

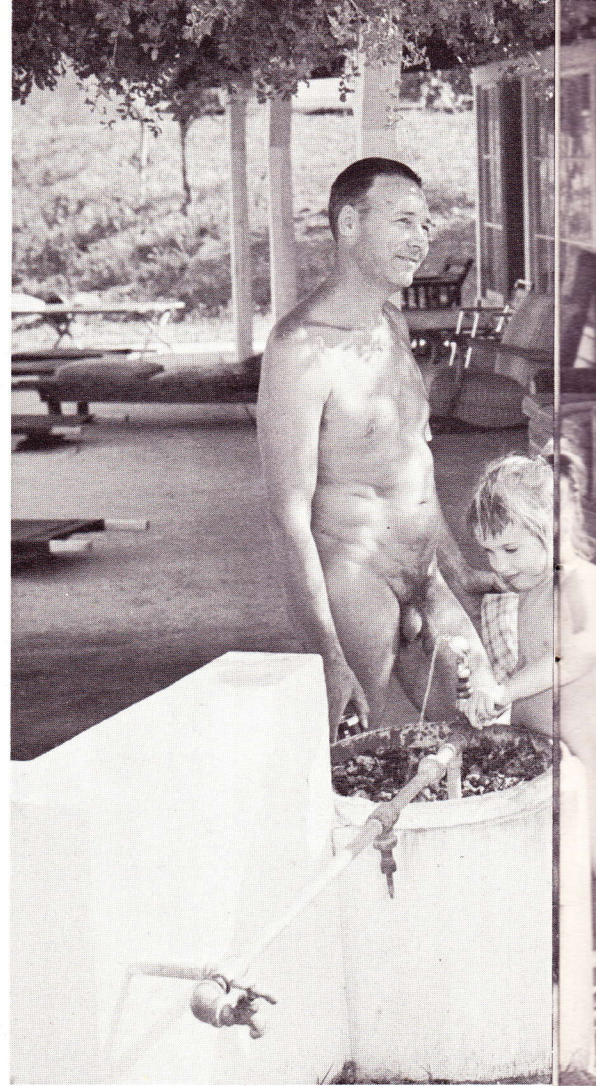


**WHEN** he wants to be an old meanie my husband still entertains folks with the story of our first nudist outing. That was a long time ago, more years than I like to count, but they have been happy years in the sun. We had answered an ad in the local paper, something like "member of ASA wishes to meet others with view to forming local club." Back in 1939 such an ad had to be mysterious, the papers would have refused any mention of nudism, or even perhaps of "sunbathing." I remember that there were two couples and two single men on that outing and we had gone to look for suitable land for our future club. We had explored a number of isolated sites when it came time for lunch. The whole idea of social sunbathing was so new to us that we had remained clothed as we ate our picnic lunch. Afterward the men disappeared, though we could hear them talking, a few yards away. After we cleared up the lunch and packed the dishes the other girl and I started toward the men but stopped and tiptoed back out of sight when we saw that they were all *nude*! My companion had been an artist's model and it was she and her husband who were helping to start the club, so she quickly set an example for





*Public appearances for nudism have included a late television show, in which Ray and Mildred charmed the audience with their easy answers.*



me by stepping out of her clothes and into the sunning circle. But 25 years of being taught that a nice girl should always be suitably covered could not be lightly cast aside, so it seemed at least five minutes before I managed to join the rest of the party. The way my husband always tells it, the conversation stopped when I came through the bushes into the open glade where they were all lying discreetly on their tummies. In front of me I held a huge bath towel, with a corner over each breast and the rest screening me completely to the knees, and I was blushing red over every part of me that was visible. Quickly I collapsed into the long grass and never once moved the rest of the afternoon. Needless to say I was another kind of red from head to toe when we went home . . . but only on my sunburned backside! From that outing grew the oldest nudist club in Canada, the Van Tans, and through the happy busy years which followed I have watched a daughter grow up clean and clear-eyed, undisturbed by the fears and fancies of false modesty. And I have helped scores of other bashful girls through their trying moments of indecision about our way of life. Some have blushed, and some have trembled, but always they have said afterward, "We should have done

this years ago, why did we waste all this time!" Since that first day in the sun, when I blushed so profusely as I stepped into paradise, I have become a writer of sorts. I did a Woman's Page for a Canadian magazine and in the past ten years I suppose I have answered letters from a thousand worried women who were sure their men were wrong about this wild idea but were willing to write to "that woman" (me) to prove that they were open-minded. And in between those brave gals a few thousand hopeful husbands have sandwiched letters of despair, asking for help with hesitant wives who wouldn't even write. When we got that middle-aged urge to travel my husband and I qualified for U.S. residence and headed south with a travel trailer which was to be our home for the two years it took me to acquire an ulcer. Then, forced to settle down, we naturally chose to live in a nudist park and that's where you can find me today, and almost any other day of the ever sunny year, living in the house at the entrance gate of Olive Dell Ranch 70 miles east of Los Angeles, and showing new couples around the grounds. Whether they are thinking of visiting Olive Dell, or writing from far away, there is an almost universal fear expressed by ladies who write to me. "I just couldn't take my clothes off in front of a bunch of strangers." And my answer is





Since becoming U. S. citizens, the Connetts frequent nudist parks this side of the Canadian border. Mildred acted as judge at Cobblestone during an ASA convention; she and Ray visit the Dofers, near the Palm Springs desert in southern California.



always the same. I need a rubber stamp to say, "You don't *have* to!"

There may be a handful of clubs across the land which require both man and wife to disrobe before entering the main sunning area, but I have never visited them. And I hope I never shall, for I would not want to be in such a concentration camp atmosphere. To me, the matter of dispensing with hot sticky garments in suitably private surroundings, among like-minded folk, is a precious privilege. It is not something to be forced upon others. They must *want* to be nudists. In our park, and this practice prevails in the majority of American sun clubs, we show a new couple around the ground with their clothes on. We show them the clubhouse, the sundeck, the pool, the camping area, and introduce them to a few friendly folk along the way. Thus the initial shock of seeing great gobs of nudity for the first time passes and is replaced by another feeling. After five minutes among people who are obviously clean, wholesome and moral, and enjoying a relaxing day in the sun without clothes, the urge to be "like all the others" overcomes a lifetime of convention. Often the man will be out of his shirt before he comes to the pool, and there he will say pointedly, "My, that pool looks so inviting!" By the time we get back to their car he is ready without further



urging to "conform to the dress of the majority," which is our requirement of the menfolk. To still the butterflies in a fluttery female tummy we say, "There is no rule about ladies joining in our nude activities." We say this tongue-in-cheek, because they rarely wait more than a few minutes before shedding the shorts and halter they had intended to keep on all day long. Suddenly the inhibitions fade, years of teaching seem unimportant. The sun is so inviting, and these are so obviously the sort of people you would want for life-long friends. Clothes are no longer necessary or desirable and so you too step into paradise, where I blushed once so long ago.