

SCNA Hall of Fame Biography



Gary Mussell (1948-)

Social nudity was always on Gary's Bucket List but he didn't get to experience it until he was in his mid-30's on a dare from a co-worker after discovering a nude beach by accident. To his surprise he enjoyed the experience and soon after became a member of the Elysium Fields naturist park in Topanga, California and also the Au Natural club, made up of alumni from Cal State University, Northridge. He had graduated from there in 1973, having survived the tumult of the late 1960's as a reporter for the school newspaper and as a regional youth coordinator for the Robert Kennedy for President campaign.

Professionally, he worked in three very different careers, starting as a retail store manager, an insurance agent, and then as a compute instructor where he rose to become manager of training for a division of Intel. On Sundays, he quietly put the business aside and enjoyed his anonymity at Elysium until the 1997. His life changed when he volunteered to re-write poorly designed Elysium web site and on-line store. The park was going through difficult times after the death of its founder, Ed Lange, and Gary brought his business experience to the newly-formed Members Advisory Board, finding ways to turn around its financial losses and dwindling membership numbers. He was soon asked to join Elysium's Board of Directors. Using all his learned political skills, he joined with Betty Meltzer to kick the Lange daughters off their own Board, and together they rebuilt the park back into the black. Unfortunately the Lange daughter had the last word, selling the land out from under Elysium after a gallant two-year legal battle led by Gary and Betty.

Betty and her husband purchased a new 22-acre site in Malibu to relocate Elysium but it required too much infrastructure rebuilding and the venture soon ran out of money. Gary took the confidential list of member names, called a meeting, and formed the Southern California Naturist Association in 2002, hoping to redefine Ed Lange's vision for the 21st Century.

It worked. SCNA established itself as a stable and successful non-landed naturist club serving the greater Los Angeles area. Gary held the post of President until July 2012, a ten and a half year run. During his term, SCNA incorporated as a non-profit 501c7, found homes to use for monthly pool parties, created a business plan and annual budget process, joined the Chamber of Commerce, started a monthly newsletter which started winning awards from the American Association for Nude Recreation, started a web site which won similar awards. SCNA became a respected voice in the national nudist community. In 2005, the club joined the fight to re-establish several nude beaches along the California coast that were lost during the 1990s.

Along the way SCNA has seen some incredible volunteers donate their time and skills to making everything happen. Gary now enjoys the best title of all: Past President. Gary remains a tireless volunteer for naturist causes. He is Director of Friends of Bates Beach and coordinates the Beach Ambassador program in the southern part of Santa Barbara County. In 2013 he became a Trustee of the BEACHES Foundation, a non-profit corporation in Florida. In 2014 he was elected to the Board of Directors for the American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR) Western Region, co-chairing their Government Affairs Team (GAT). He also serves on the AANR national Public Relations committee.

In 2013, the American Association for Nude Recreation named him their "Man of the Year." In both 2008 and 2014, Gary was given the Bob Page Memorial Award for "Outstanding Nude Advocacy and Community Service."