

# M i d w i n t e r Festival

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**T**ransitions. We all have either had them in our life, are currently going through one, or can expect to experience one someday. It is a part of the rhythm of life. Being sensitive to those rhythms and going with the flow is what makes the difference in its effect upon us.

I attended The Naturist Society's Mid-Winter Festival, February 14-20, 2013 at Sunsport Gardens as part of an around the country tour, literally, circling the USA. Changes in my personal life have led me to visit friends and family around the country as well as meet new folks.

This, as it turned out, was to be my transition period. I couldn't have picked a better place to experience it. I've wanted to attend since becoming a card-carrying member of TNS back in 2007. I couldn't have picked a better year.

One thing I have learned over my lifetime is that there are a lot of hurting and confused people in the world today. The 'world' hurts; it takes, kills and destroys. People are searching for answers. They are looking for places of serenity; places where they see a peaceful existence lived out every day. They are looking to find ways

to resolve the conflict that will ultimately occur in their lives.

A look at the workshop list that included numerous spiritual sessions from Bible believing Christianity to yoga/ tantric harmony exercises, chakra studies, interpersonal relations, Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) healing, music and dance classes, healthy foods/diets, feng shui, astronomy, native plants/ecology studies, Sunday morning worship services available for any and all. People of Wiccan/Pagan, Christian, agnostic/Atheist, Buddhist, Hindu religious practice all coming together in the common theme of health, happiness and wholeness, not just physical but emotional and spiritual as well. Oops! I almost forgot the famous 'Pudding Toss' (laughter is indeed good medicine).

It is no wonder that one would come away from the week feeling fully refreshed, rejuvenated, informed, healed (if necessary) and ready to face the world again. Speaking from personal experience, the culmination of the week at the drum circle/fire was a spiritual re-awakening and healing time that I thank God for. That and the canuding trip where I was able to swim in alligator infested waters. If I can do that, I can face whatever else life throws at me.

It makes sense then, that a place and event where others who have found that peace and wish to share it with others would be so popular. The 25-year track record is proof positive. The fact that the staff of Sunsport is responsive to the needs of the attendees' suggestions each year as well as the menu items that include vegetarian/vegan choices at very reasonable prices adds to the credibility of the festival.

I arrived two days early so I could settle in; get a good campsite (which was



photos by Carrie Ann Kozar

The hiking trails at Sunsport Gardens are well-maintained and very interesting.



TOP: The youngsters marched through grounds in costume.  
MIDDLE: Shirley Mason, Ted Mozino, Nicky Hoffman, and Richard Mason catch up on the latest news at Haulover.  
BOTTOM: A hammock strung up between the branches provides a shady spot for a nap.

taken care of for me as I registered early) so they gave me a premium site. Take note folks, for your visit next year, arrive a few days early and meet some regular residents before the crowds descend. Good decision as I felt like a regular by the time the festival started. A circle of friends was established, and it expanded as the week progressed. Even the vendors became part of the community, not just there to do business. One family who had a booth was obviously new to nudism, yet they got in the spirit of the festival and participated with everyone else.

Making friends with the regulars, I found that they interacted well with the festival go-ers as they reached out to make them feel at home. So much so, in fact, that I decided to extend my stay for a week. A most definite mellow mood and good vibes were evident to even a casual observer. As the week progressed, I spoke with diverse people from all over the country, some traveling thousands of miles to attend, and the same thoughts were verbalized by everyone.

The two days of rain and cold (by Florida standards) weather did not dampen our spirits. Volleyball games continued, children played, the workshops were moved indoors, and the sauna and Jacuzzi were well-attended—big surprise there.

One thing that struck me as I write this two weeks later, is how such a diverse group of people can participate in serious discussions on such an array of topics as science, religion, philosophy all while everyone including the presenters are fully nude and it all seems so right, so normal! I suppose it is testament to the rightness of the nudist philosophy/ lifestyle.

I think I will even try my hand at presenting a workshop myself in 2014. I do know a thing or two about a few subjects. Keep the circle going, reach out and be a blessing even as I have been blessed. Isn't that what it's all about?

So, any of you out there looking for a good time next year? Seriously consider putting the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Mid-Winter Festival on your agenda. Get with the rhythm, go with the flow. **N**