



TOM BJELLAND "AUTHOR SELFIE" (pre-digital!) BALI

Thomas E. Bjelland has a problem. It seems there is rumour and conjecture (floating about) that he is indeed (guilty as charged!): "SERIOUS ABOUT SURFING." Apparently (as has been suggested by the critics) he has opinions that seem to concern motivations and subsequent actions concerning an ongoing pursuit of a life Ocean-Centric. That is to say: I Surf-Therefore I Am(!) Farkin'-A! Touché Monfrère. It's pretty fun though, when considered altogether; especially for the Long Run. Perhaps even a hint towards pursuit Manifesto, in the simplest form of human endeavor—that of: F-U-N!



THE DISAPPEARING SANDS and other stuff

THOMAS BJELLAND

THE dis- appearing SANDS

and other stuff BY THOMAS BJELLAND

In which a five-decade: "SERIOUS ABOUT SURFING" SoCAL Creative argues the fate of beaches, quality of surf, and the ongoing pursuit of a life Ocean-Centric.

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ILLUSTRATION, *PHOTOGRAPHY, WRITTEN, DESIGNED AND PRODUCED IN CALIFORNIA • USA
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[PREFACE/]
intro



preface

Ladies and Gentlemen, gremlins and hodads, shredders, rippers, stylists and wanna-be john-jimmys, watermen, women and grommets, day trippers, nose-riders, side-steppers, chargers, frothers, spongers, long-short and fish aficionados, bruddahs and uncles, mates and brus, amigos and tomadachis, locals and kama'ainas, bettys and sheilas, wahines and chicas, *semi-feral* aussies at Barra (de la Cruz), and random punters: We salute you and bid you hola, aloha, gooday, howzit, bula, apa kabarmu-bagus!, how-ya-goin,' wassup, (and in the good graces of ninety-three years young and *slightly demented* Babs on our send-off to Guanacaste) the word is: Cheerio!

I will hereby attempt to embark in essay the task of informing, enlightening, and persuading the general masses (including some folks who don't want to hear nothin' about it!—and in support of others whose homes/properties/lifestyles are becoming increasingly impacted) of the coming situation facing our shores. That is, the scattering of the sands into the depths of the oceans, the resulting coastline becoming bereft of sand. Beaches gone, no-where to put your towel. Or enjoy a sunset stroll. Fido won't be chasing the driftwood stick or tennis ball into the shorebreak; the grassy dog park will have to suffice. Bikini and umbrella sales will flatten, two-man volleyball be relegated to gyms or silicon plots, trinket-hustlers stuck to the main drag, and all that blessed space between ocean immersion and curbside domesticity be replaced with entry walks or ladders (at least there won't be any stingrays!).

I will put forth fact, experience, observation, example, anecdote, self-anointed wisdom, illustrations, and argument gleaned from five decades of dedicated weather, storm, swell and wave chasing pursuit; and yes, opinions *will* be rendered. And since it's fifty-four years (forty-four to be more forthright when taking things "seriously" into consideration) some Intel is subject to memory, and despite a considerable fairly-unbroken run of self-medication (and fun!) Marijuana use, there's two things (I ain't always right—but) I ain't ever wrong about: Surfing and Art.



INTRO

You might notice the book you are holding is (extra quality!) hardcover. Replete with photos, illustrations (for your added viewing pleasure) and evidence; anecdotal and otherwise, of the joys and possible afflictions of one self-proclaimed creatively-motivated and seasoned SoCAL SurfDog. At sixty-one, you could say: Artist as an Old Man. But having five-decades of dedicated wave-chasing underfoot and embracing the general good health that effort affords physically and mentally; and not even close to exhausting the studio's bulging "ideas" file cabinet—full of creative projects in various states of development—I'd like to throw out the phrase: "Elder Statesman" and see if it sticks. Not even close to tapping-out inspirationally or otherwise; fingers crossed time and fiscal considerations will afford the undertaking to completion.

This compilation (of stuff) while published in hardcover is a creative endeavor and generally subjective in content. However, latitude should be granted for best results in communicating that mantra is up to the individual; my-way-or-the-highway not the goal—take things with a grain of salt (or sand if you can soon find it!)—the simple aim herein being presenting ideas from a different viewpoint or two.

It's Spring of 2022, two-and-a-half years into the mind-numbing, exasperating and confusing new world-gone-crazy called COVID19. And if you would have told me this would still ALL be going on—and with no end in sight—I'd have never believed it back when I was shocked to see empty toilet-paper isles at the supermarket (what the hell?) and I could forget my self-projection of a general level of semi-calm astuteness onto the general SoCAL population. Some good folks seem to have a proclivity towards: friggin' crazy; and damn-it, in some cases seem to embrace, "following protocol" (In This Together-*my arse!*), rather than having a simple thought to-and-by themselves for guidance.

Also, we're still not done with the recent political upheaval that has unfortunately included division of the ranks as a primary directive, and in combination with the C-19 difficulties, as a creative person; I've an overwhelming compulsion to produce work that is *truthful at core*, getting to the heart of the matter in expression, other work seeming decorative and falling the way of superfluous (but disciplined) exercise. If it ain't real—I ain't interested. Period. Except if I need the dough. Ha. I do. My intention in opinion expressed as coincides with content already mentioned is not to state: "Walk this Way," as if by some self-aggrandized moral superiority; but would hopefully include observation and argument interesting enough to ruffle some feathers—in the hope of olive branch or extended handshake.

Perhaps it's a bit lofty or pretentious (fool's errand?) to imagine changing some good folks minds with firmly-entrenched policy confluence ideologies—but it's worth a try. It's just such a perplexing time and turns out: I got somethin' to say—and *need* sayin' it. Might as well get a start on: "Old Dude Rants" sooner than later. Maybe it will even be fun. If not, and offence might be taken in some instance, I'll quote a classic Monty Python line (not that big a fan, but like the sentiment) as to taking things too seriously and in general reply to naysayers: "I fart in your general direction."

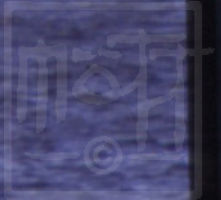
Who cut the cheese?-t'was me. Reverend!

Thomas E Bjelland 4/15/22

[Persons appearing or mentioned in text have no affiliation with viewpoints expressed throughout, and are included because, well—I like them! And hope being different on some issues is still OK? All scenic photography by Tom B.—*except where credited and Mahalo!]

just
GIVE me
SOME
TRUTH

[Trump don't Surf!]





“The Rock,” a little out of focus but in west swell splendor—fast and juicy, circa winter ‘80. I’m on a semester off from Long Beach City College, on my first ever surf trip; and riding a 6’8” custom Bruce Jones single-fin, dubbed “Pink Wonder,” that I foolishly sold to semi-feral Aussie traveler Gordon (seen paddling on the shoulder—the only two guys out in the early mornin’ invitingly warm Tamarindo Bay) before returning home to SoCAL with Big G and Matt the Cat after three glorious weeks of uncrowded surf exploration in the beautifully welcoming country of Costa Rica. Thinking I could have a bit of extra cash and avoid the return flight board encumbrance and fee; turns out it was a “magic” hand-shaped board—pre-CAD—and the replacement stick I ordered wasn’t nearly as good. (Hang on to a good one!)

“Tomas, do you believe in Climate Change?” asked Big G, as we are walking down the beach in Tamarindo at the Sunset Hour, on our way to happy hour beach-bar drinks before any choice of dinner selections. We’d rather be walking back from a fun surf in the oh-so-warm water and slight offshore winds, with the pleasantly sore arms and shoulders, anticipation of a soothing-into-the-evening attendant lite-endorphin buzz and post-surf nasal-drip; but today the waves didn’t materialize yet again towards the end of our twelve-day excursion away from the craziness of Covid California and for me, a two-and-a-half-year lock-down.

We’ve just expressed our astonishment at the multitude of travelers/tourist folks and locals congregated for the sun’s goodbye and blessing of another day in Costa Rica, forty-two years since our first surf trip there when we and Matt the Cat were nearly the only Americans—and surfers—about, and slept on the beach in our board bags right in the same vicinity where the electronica “beat” now blasts out incessantly from the long row of Tourista establishments lining the bustling downtown beach-front.

The other thing we noted with surprise (my reaction now more firmly entrenched in bewilderment) was the fairly shocking diminished volume of sand in this beautiful and tranquil bay; the sheer volume of volcanic rocks exposed now in comparison—even includ-

ing my second trip twenty years since with Sticks and Tosh for comparison—is incredible. Even hard to distinguish the spot we dubbed “The Rock” where on the low of the extreme tides here we enjoyed surfing a fantastic wave on both prior trips just out front. The Rock isn’t breaking this arvo, as the west direction swells that really make it tick in this winter season have all but left and gone away in the last five-to-six years, after a minimum forty years of very consistent pattern.

Not only is the sand depletion in the vast Tamarindo Bay and the reef break a mile south in Langosta where now as a small gathering of elder statesmen we are renting the Casa Colonial Airbnb Villa (fun to note graduating from sleeping on the beach and sparse cabins and eating gallopinto as late-seventies college-age surf zealots; to next staying in the original Hotel Tamarindo [that was already there on my first trip] with hot showers, clean sheets, and the pleasure of eating at the few cheap, fresh and delicious seafood eateries about in the twenty-year interim around the millennial as family men; and now the comfortably isolated Villa with courtyard pool for us old-farts to drink and talk about our ever-varying bowel movements—“Puna Buttah/aka Poomba” started out with sock-splattering diarrhea on the Alaska flight over to finishing-off by clearing both the downstairs bedrooms with his nasal-hair-curling-post-Rib-eye-deuce—¡Ay, caramba!—and

thanks for treating at Patagonia!) remarkable and undeniable, I've been lamenting the similar condition at home; my go-to surf spots disappearing one-by-one in tandem with the sands that made the outside breaks shallow enough to break at their optimum.

The other culprit in my view of the current surf spots downgrade now bereft of consistent quality waves being the abrupt swing of the Jet Stream in this latter—as mentioned five-to-six years and brief in comparison—period has redirected the storms (which create the swells) that used to come off from the Asian continent in the preferred west direction around the area of Japan;

used to come in a fairly direct path after bombing past Hawaii on their way here to light-up my home breaks in Southern California; now veer up in the direction towards the Aleutians or Gulf of Alaska and the swells being too northerly angled generally bypass the window of opportunity for scoring good waves. Really good waves, the kind I've enjoyed for forty of my fifty years of enthusiastic surf-doggery, since I started paying close attention to Ocean-centric atmospheric conditions for producing good surf when and where, and now miss like hell.

For a bit on my background as surfer; it has been pointed out to me

over the years lately by a few knowing friends that I am indeed: "Serious about Surfing." Upon recognition and then self-examination of this observation, I've certainly no argument to dispute the fact (hey—you *have* to be serious to be good at something—if I can boast with a straight-face and live up to the maxim!): I've spent an incredible amount of time and energy following swell patterns over the decades, noting in detail which local breaks are good and when, traveling to distant locations on R&D and enjoyment; even continuing an ongoing attempt at lifestyle/occupation that allows for the scoring of good waves when they do come. Which is surpris-





“The Rock” working again, small but snappy. fast-forward to ‘98 on the trip with Sticks & Tosh (upper-right page). Unidentified rider, the right tide with just a couple fellows out in the line-up to enjoy the relatively calm afternoon. Tamarindo is an immense bay, I hadn’t even noticed it until the recent trip when we golf-carted up the back streets and got the bird’s-eye-view of the whole set-up. The winter season is typically dry and graced with offshore winds, sometimes blasting towards the ocean, and stronger outside of the bay at Langosta, Avellanas, etc, which makes the bay in hindsight so ideal for opportune surf conditions. Now, if the west swells would ever start-up again beyond Hawaii (tellin’ ya-ain’t going to happen in my/our lifetimes) I’d even consider a forth trip. For now: No-Way-Jose!

ingly not as often as one might think for a seasoned waterman with high standards (think powder-snob for ski/snowboard enthusiasts for comparison): swells, wind, weather and timing all need to line-up for quality surf enjoyment—you can’t just book a tee-time at the links or an hour at the tennis court after work or on the weekend (*or smack-dab-mid-week/mid-day for the retirement-enabled-good on ya mates!*)—you have to be “On-it.” “Get it While the Gettin’s Good” a mantra for happiness to the addicted.

It’s bloody miraculous to think that there are now swell forecasting and live camera websites—many with multiple angles of individual spots—readily available with the click of the keyboard in the comfort of your domicile for planning and scoring good surf since the early days of optimistically needing to drive to the beach—if not blessed by living in walking distance to check conditions, many a time ending in disappointment. Not to mention those confounding drives say from Newport all the way to Santa Barbara with hopes of scoring a good winter swell at Rincon point, only to be thwarted by the discovery of poor conditions despite the size; and end-up driving all the way back and paddling out at the starting point in Newps to salvage what’s left of a day-long effort.

I’ve been a Surflife website premium member since day-one, and I’d estimate nearly ninety-percent of my good scores since then on catching good days have resulted with a brief first consultation of conditions on the cams, and then follow-up viewing after the session to compare how it looked on-screen and the



real thing for future Intel. Of course, these sites include a dual-edged sword as many other enthusiasts do the same and cause extra crowding (it's off-the-charts now with everyone off school and work due to Covid restrictions), but I can't imagine doing without it now.

It's interesting to note that of the mates and acquaintances of mine that still have the froth brewing at this "seasoned" stage of immersion, that while all being generally after the same results (fun! and with the lucky benefit of physical/mental wellness thrown in the bargain) we can be quite different in approach towards achieving the goals we set before us, particularly the scoring of good surf.

One awesome fellow whom I won't reveal being of secret identity and of sources confidential, (hint—if you are from HB, think Old Trooper—there's only one! Oops! Just did—GBD, who has further accolade in upcoming chapter) might even be considered from certain angles to generally eschew technological advantage and occasionally as result misses out some. But I'd be remiss and could be accused of finger pointing on one level: my complicity of projecting my seriousness about *not missing* good waves unto surf bro—such as the good fellow not consulting the premium cameras and forecast sight that the pros and WSL uses—even if nefarious forces *could* converge and possibly enable free access (Sean Collins—Legend! GBD deserves lifetime free membership for local citizen/charger in good esteem! But *would* he sign-on—the million dollar question, ha).

And as just mentioned, since I'm Mr. Serious, it's my hang-up that occasionally turns for me what should be simple fun into something that mildly frustrates, such as foregoing obtaining forecasting Intel from the premium source if it is readily available, since as two bachelor enthusiasts with extra time for shootin'





Langosta rivermouth/reef break in '98 through the dryish-brush with lots of water over the volcanic rock Terra-firma and west swells rolling in. It's nearly impossible to think that there is now a full-fledged hotel, replete with pool & stage/bar parked right on the point next to the river. Catering to many Euro/Canadian cold weather winter folks to thaw out in the hot, dry climate; the lounge chairs spread below the relative shady edge right on the beach, plastic I.D. bracelets passed out and worn to distinguish "paying guests" from any would-be interlopers. The electronica beat blasts from the speakers when live music is not on offer, and the once dirt road to the area is bustling with intermittent traffic. Even on our second trip, there were only vacation villas lining the waterfront, today the area is densely built including hi-rise condos. No launching any aqua-stempkies like we did (for relief & amusement-watch out for floaters!) in the river with no-one about in the early days!

the bull, it comes up a lot in conversation during flat spells in the interim of good action. I can appreciate the supporting of the "Individual Source" alternative, as I embody similar traits in my work, but as mentioned, perhaps I could be called manic in my efforts to score? But fun is fun, and if there's any chance that I can be (I will!) as stoked and pliable in body as GBD when I hit the big-70 (dude's got long limbs, I can detect his stride or paddle on any HB Surfline cam), that's all that really matters if one looks at the big picture—it's all good! Also, on the fun side of getting persnickety, the argument that only living five minutes [as the crow flies] from the beach and not needing such extravagances even exacerbates my silly complaint. "The lemon next to the pie" is supposed to be fun—dang it! Look, I even have a cow if the Surfline site is down and I can't monitor the daily action, could even consider it an economical slice of health insurance; as one could argue a good portion of life-long dedicated surfers are a fit bunch, scoring for me feels staying one day healthier: "You stay a day younger every day you surf."

So, where I am heading to with this background description of what some land-locked folks might consider an enterprise veering on the side of endless folly? You don't produce anything with the act but good feelings for yourself; and it could be viewed as rather selfish when adding up all of the sacrifices necessary to family, girlfriends/spouses, work, etc., the trouble being you can only live off the good days for so long, and always crave more! All of which stated, I'm gathering momentum, and hereby feel compelled to state as irrefutable "documentation" gleaned purely



from daily-weekly-monthly-seasonally-decades-rich-obsessive observation of the only recent changes in beaches/surf quality; and as an introduction to what I'll eventually extol as my humble opinion on the issue of "Climate Change." Even mentioning the phrase may generate a split of the factions and not that I'm likely to persuade some folks once confluence throws up a roadblock—I ain't that dumb! (Dumb Norwegian notwithstanding!) And fool's errand I partake cautiously—who's the crazy one expecting any change? But first let me at least say my peace, and truthfully—it doesn't have *any* alterier political agenda, so reactions may *vary*. Look, I ain't no scientist. Don't have no charts, graphs or timeline spreadsheets, as far as bestowing viewpoint on our issue: I LIVED IT. Ask not just me if one seek further concurrence in the matter: ask a fisherman, farmer, hunter, sailor, or serious enthusiast of weather-related sport or occupation or the like for an opinion—we ain't politicians with any ulterior motivations—WE KNOW!

To those needing credence to accept my arguments from outside the surf world and for those very few other long-time enthusiasts that might even notice such a thing; and who might also share my exasperation of the dual stoke-busting sand depletion and Jet Stream veer-off issues, and what for my purposes is a negative effect on wave breaks that I have an intimate knowledge/relationship in the OC that I've enjoyed for so long and now am whining

about, here are a few examples starting first with my formerly two seasonal go-to spots:

SUMMER: Lower Trestles

It takes an concerted effort to find a place in this line-up, but for the last decade or so that I rarely ever missed a proper Southern-Hemi groundswell at Lowers during an eighteen-year-or-so stretch; when I paddled out from shore, I would proceed to the furthest guys outside and sit a good ten yards past them, becoming the furthest guy out. Unless FurDog was way out there (especially during his prone-phase), then I would split the distance. My "job" was to sit and wait for bombs, I didn't want such a spectacular wave to go unriden breaking outside of the normal crowd. I was a good paddler, and must have caught and ridden the waves well enough to earn what was maybe the biggest compliment a friend could give from local Masaki Kobayashi: "When Tom paddles (for a wave), I don't paddle for that one." Damn, Arigato mate!

Also, I like to welcome the swell that has traveled halfway across the globe personally as I'm not so comfortable hustling cheek-and-jowl in the middle of the main crowd. And being further out, it means letting a lot of mid-size nice ones go by, but having the advantage of a better chance at being able to position oneself just where one wants to catch the wave before it breaks to set up an optimum ride; since one might have the option of paddling a little to either side of where one is sitting, then in to catch it; you won't be paddling out to get to

it, then spinning around last second to catch it wherever you can, a fairly subtle point, but to get philosophical: God is in the details!

My boards were custom designed a couple inches longer, a touch wider, on the gunny-side—but not thick—I have bird legs and don't like not being able to bury a rail on a turn, specifically designed for outside peak, as I had made that my Shangri-la. Preferrable to me is and was the late morning session, usually getting in a few hours of early a.m. concentration-best work, letting the dawn patrol locals get their share as I was a regular, but not a San Clemente resident. And during that period (with apologies to any locals I've not seen/included in the mix) I'd hope to have been up-there in the tally of outside waves ridden decently; even surpassing regular ripper Cordell Miller, who is my vote for best lefts ridden, since I only ever saw him go right once. I caught as many good rights as lefts, and while never getting a proper barrel there—which was never the point of this type of rippable cobblestone point—loved leaning into a ten-plus-yards backside bottom turn followed by a carving cutback and repeat, when the set wave days were on offer.

And luckily for my preferred agenda, not that many guys *wanted* the outside set waves. Sometimes a Long brother or other keen fellow would venture out and show us how it's done, or the single most dominant *player* Chris Ward would take/be given any wave he wanted. He once jumped out of a boat off in the "channel" between the lefts and Five-O's, and called me off an outside

set wave while he was still twenty yards away and paddling over to his "right." Good stuff! (Fortunately, he wasn't out that much when I surfed, but the dude was King any time he was in the water). For my part, and it's a little hard to fathom now the cheek I summoned then from this distance; I twice called heavy-hitting visiting Hawaiians off of bombs, Big Ben Aipa and Andy Irons! (RIP Legends both) Both gave me a similar gracious reply to my hoot/claim; "Then Get 'Um Brah!" which could also be interpreted another way of saying: OK regular, you put in the effort for being able to be in the best position for dis-one, but this is a one-time cordiality, and don't press your luck!" ha.

For me, contrary to the sometime expressed opinion that Lowers doesn't hold its shape when too big, I'd promote the one penultimate swell on my list during that time; the swell during the '09 US Open in Huntington when it was macking and they had the jet-ski assist paddle-outs. The waves during that swell were breaking way outside the normal outside takeoff zone at Lowers. Incredibly there were only three of us takers out back; one being visiting ace/legend Reno Abellira, who I said hello to on the beach prior, but noted his board being nice but a touch under-volume for the paddle; and being such a big playing field that day, never got to see him ride a wave. The first day was a bit grey and overcast, but upon catching a wave way out there, it felt like you could do two complete long drops and lay into the longest bottom turn(s) you could ever want even before hitting the regular

LOWERS 2012

Early season southwest (is best!) 225 degree New Zealand high interval groundswell - you can tell it's the high-end juice by how the board wake on the bottom half of the wave is compressed. **Outside peak bottom turn** with seventy-five yards of tapering wall ahead; I'm stoked off my nut riding my (age fifty-one) version California "Winterboard" - a 7'4" custom Terry Goldsmith Rusty. It's a stretched out version of my usual Lowers 7'0" "Summerboard." I ordered/developed this shape over the years specifically for this wave starting at a 6"8" around age thirty, went up to 6"10" at forty, and then 7'0" at fifty. **Cheers!** to catching a few at sixty! -TB

SHAPE	TERRY GOLDSMITH			
MODEL	CUSTOM		74 TOBI	
LENGTH	74	WIDTH	20	2.6 SBA 784
DESIGNER	TOM BJELLAND			158110

photo: richard holcombe

Interlude

The following five spreads are a hip-pocket documentation of the awesome beach that makes up the general Trestles vicinity shot on iPhone one summer morning and photoshopped together for fun. I'd stopped to snap the image(s) on my way to Lower's (walking of course, I'm of the last holdouts never biking or now ebiking in—maybe I enjoy the stroll and the wind-down before hitting the surf for a contemplative review of current goings-on in daily life, or to enjoy a whiff of sage or anise [licorice!]; or more likely just like keeping things simple—the rack-and-all adds that one more element, despite the time saved down the paths and back—though I'd likely get one if I lived there close enough to eliminate the drive and parking) simply because I'd never seen (or realized!) the vast volume of cobbles that actually make up the joint to this degree.

Seen and enjoyed them of course, and being a keen artist have a fairly good ability to visualize what the bottom always looked like beyond what is evident. But on this low tide, hadn't ever recalled there being such a prominent “structure” underfoot, and fascinated by the thought that each stone had rolled down San Mateo Creek during heavy winter rain storms one-by-one, mostly smoothly rounded-off, and somehow deposited themselves in near-perfect mostly triangular formations for waves to break over in such a streamlined peeling precision. Just how many are there? And how many centuries passed in the making? Incredible! (Too bad the local

*Gabrieliño Indians didn't surf with their village site just up the canyon and in their—what one would guess—nirvana of mild climate and ocean/shoreline bounty there for the taking. Maybe they surfed their *tomols* [plank canoes]—surely at least a few adventurous fellows had an inkling and a go at riding a few peelers!).

Then, I got to thinking, why hadn't I noticed this before in the last couple decades? And the only conclusion was that the sand was not covering-up the cobbles nearly as much as previously; perhaps the decline was over a several seasons, but it seemed pretty stark to be so noticeable. It is fairly well known by some older surfers that the sand (and maybe smaller cobbles?) has moved around over periods; say when Lower's was only a right and then the left appeared, but that's moving—not *gone*. So where had it gone? And, why doesn't outside peak break as consistently as before on better souths? There may be big days that waves break outside just due to size, but more like big wash-throughs and without the defined peak like before.

Sure, there have been drought dominant seasons of late, and there probably isn't much sand washing down the creek and out to the reef for replenishment due to decades of urban sprawl and likely obstructions or extractions upstream. All-in-all though, I just can't shake the feeling: *Something ain't right!*

trestles
SAN CLEMENTE, CA



*Gabrieliño: Spanish regional name for the local tribe, who fun fact from DP (State Parks Rep and friend/brews aficionado); are buried standing erect.

trestles

barbwires

cottons

← panoview to left

A panoramic view of the Trestles zone, starting at the top of the trail in, with Barbwires and Cottons just beyond view, Summer of '17 (perhaps only a couple E-bikes in sight?—human powered! Imagine now there are kids today who will grow-up never having walked the trail!)

uppers

barbwires

trestles

← panoview to left

Your cobblestone heaven awaits! View of paddle-out area with Uppers top corner at the left (and out of view) page. An average/low expectations smaller swell day. Low tide, semi-glassy and overcast.



trestles

uppers

← panoview to left

Uppers line-up, small scoot through the inside for a regular foot, as mentioned a below average day. But I've never driven there from Costa Mesa without paddling out—Rule #1 (if you want to get serious about it).

outside lowers

five0's

trestles

← panoview to left

The very end of Uppers on the right page, Five-0's (named from the classic TV show's intermission roping barrel, as the lefts here reel-off on occasion, but look better than they actually surf—a lesser spot) not breaking since it's a straight south (needs some west) direction day. I've never actually tried it!

trestles

lowers

And if this little stretch of cobblestone Nirvana wasn't enough, Middles (lesser off-season spot) and then the awesome-on-it's-day Church(es) are in walking distance just out of view! Don't forget San-O and Trails after that! A bloody Surfing Reserve, all-in-all. Thank you Mother Nature (and the Marine Corps for access)!

Lowers point sticking out from the edge middle-left page, the inside and main peak area at far right page with small specks-surfers in the line-up. How many cobblestones are there and did it take a millennium(?) for them to individually roll down San Mateo Creek during winter storms to rest in near-perfect formation to transform walls into peeling gems...awesome!

outside take-off zone, then the finish good and long to the inside. The second day was slightly smaller but cleaner—bluebird: cerulean sky, blue sets outside turning into green peaks peeling in both directions and just hella fun!

And besides the quality of turning otherwise Southern-Hemi walls into peeling gems, the natural essence of the place is quite appealing to the senses. One of my favorite sounds ever—and I actually heard one Aussie (Otten or Bottle?) pro state the same in an interview one time—is the musical tinkling sound of tiny pebbles pinging off the larger cobbles while duck-diving on a paddle-out; being underwater the acoustics have their own particular charm. A sensory delight, one only experienced by a few enlightened of us surf tribe.

So, the details of my likes of Lowers are expansive (and the tootin' my own horn—hey—who else is going to?). Sorry, but here's one more worth noting. One larger day the sets were far out, but coming in at a slightly more west angle off to the right, instead of the usual sometimes slight veer from south to north when approaching. I didn't see anyone way out there, so paddled out to have a look around and posted-up where I guessed might be right, and shortly thereafter a solo macker appeared right in my cross-hairs. Paddled hard, caught-it, and dropped down-and-down, got to the bottom and had to stall for the rest of the long shoulder to catch-up with the peak I'd just flown down. Being backside on the right

breaking wave—my back facing the wave as per right-foot forward stance—goofy-foot; as opposed to left foot forward chest facing the wave—regularfoot—I then linked up all the sections, through the normal zone, ending-up way inside and down the beach seemingly nearing middles, a fun and exhilarating wave. That was a nice session ender, and walking back up to my backpack and towel, I said hello to waterman Jeff Kramer, who was hanging outside his lifeguard truck and whom I was an acquaintance of having seen him there and at the ASR Trade Shows over a few years. “Best Wave of the Season!” was what he replied. Dang! I felt it was a good wave, and yes, quite likely the longest upon deliberation; but I hadn't that consideration topmost in effort, and must have done alright turn and style-wise for such an accolade. I didn't fully register the charge until recently when considering never having the chance of a repeat; but he didn't say best of the session, or of the day, or of the swell, he said Season! Shoots, thanks brah! What a nice pat-on-the-shoulder, and ultimately what brings me the most happiness as well upon later reflection; is that on top of the Ego stroke, of how the waves in those seasons were so good and often, it may *have been* better—but by certain degrees more; and also the rumination that the overall effort to score was well rewarded: “We Had it Best!” and bring us nearer to my personal conundrum—but first let me up the ante and state my love for all of the Trestles-vicinity breaks.

Incredible to think San Mateo creek having flown for millennium(?) with the shoreline gradually extending seaward—depositing all the cobblestones into perfect formations to cause the symmetrical peeling of the waves along with the attendant sand is near perfection. My trouble is that in the past five-to-six years, most all of the sand that covered a good portion of the reef has gone away; especially on the outside, so it's not shallow enough out there for set waves to break like they used to, and they mostly all roll into the main peak; which actually could be argued is an even better wave now since the sets break right in the sweetest spot, but now we're in the main crowd, the “bait-ball,” and that's not my cup of tea. Can't and don't care to compete neck-and-neck with the influx of young rippers, God bless 'em. Especially with the fore-mentioned overwhelming new crowds since the C19 school and work closures, (hey, if they want to paddle out after walking across the minefield of exposed cobbles on the rights instead of the much easier local knowledge entry on the side past the lefts, who cares?) E-Bikes zipping to-and-fro in a bustling mini-highway on the blacktop paths and parked side-by-side by the dozen(s) at each distinct spot. Sour grapes aside, thinking back, I/we enthusiasts back then scored it so good!

As a side note, although my favorite spot was Lowers, there were plenty of south-westerly days when Uppers was the ticket, and I was fortunate to

surf Church(es) on a (west of course! and with Randy S. and Barry M. who coincidentally made the good call) winter-day back in the 90's that was dubbed Big Wednesday; and linked-up with size, was one of the best waves I've ever surfed. All good! Recently I have switched to Cottons the past said term, still there are outside waves there, although harder to surf—which I like about it—less takers (and I won't reveal how engaging the inside left grinders can be once over the sand, after the long ride through the linked-up sections of reef from outside in. Oops—don't tell anyone.) but woe if the sand all along the beach-front going on those lefts doesn't also seem to be splitting the scene; it's getting sketchy to go left as the season goes on unless you have that confident reserve gear of being able to paddle your way out of most any situation—post-sixty, my brain says yes, but the arms say no, err on the side of safety—since the inside waves are breaking directly on the railroad rocks, and also hoping that your leash won't break—say goodbye to the board and get ready for an arduous swim in your wetsuit all the way outside and around the entire break. Also, it looks like all the awesome beachfront houses with staircases will soon enough end not down at a sandy semi-private beach, but abruptly at the tracks. Dang!



HB Southside 2010

Huntington Pier **Southside**
2nd peak over, my wave of choice
there on a straight west swell in
December.—TB

photos: tim montag



HB Northside 2009

Huntington Pier **Northside**
2nd peak over, the wave on offer
on a north/northwest swell in
April.—TB

WINTER: Huntington Beach Pier

Huntington is by far the most consistently good wave in Orange County, and in the title I've specified winter; but the window of seasons I liked to surf there was from the beginning of fall through spring, around a six-month stretch, pretty much when the summer Trestles season is winding down (from an also six-month-or-so period), and it is always a welcome change from riding the ripable, but non-threatening walls in San Clemente, to now including the chance of getting a zippy tube in the faster and hollow-at-times beach break of HB. It could be easy for some surfers to write

off HB as an summer-contest-circus-walled-concrety-hippity-hop-to-the-shorebreak annoyance if that was mostly all they were exposed to, but locals and regulars who sampled it the rest of the year are in the know; it gets bloody good on its days, and mostly back more when some angle of west swell was in the mix. I'm calling it world-class beach break on those certain special events, and I wish I could have a replay of the top-ten days out there, or even the ten best waves. (Maybe in Heaven you get that once-a-month? Any more would be too much!) I've never been scared surfing Trestles (except the recent Cotton's

OUTSIDE!

You'll never hear that exhortation from the crowd at the pier today. You may hear hoots of warning and frothy anticipation of an incoming set—but it AIN'T BREAKING OUTSIDE.

The above two photos were shot when there still was an "outside" at HB. A sampling of each side of the pier featuring yours truly: clear (white)-board, black-wetsuit SoCAL "soul surfer" (I ain't no tall-poppy, mate! tryin', but the big fella says—not yet?) On a weekday, the joy of paddling out beyond the normal crew and catching some center-stage; hopefully not embarrass myself and exude some style.

There's relatively deep water under my board since we're far out, if I don't make either wave (c'mon—I did, ripping' brah! ha), I may have a nasal-stuffing underwater brief rinse cycle; but I'm not worried about hitting the bottom. Never happen again in my lifetime; the vast sand deposit out there gone, Gone, GONE! *To where? No-one knows.*

TB-'22



I painted this 24" x 36" Acrylic on Canvas "SSWesty" in '99 during a great stretch of surf in HB. A semi-self portrait, depicting a fall weekday when SoCAL is clear, clean, dry and cookin' just offshore—had to have some west direction in the mix. I'm solo, sneaking in a session out of the studio for some fun between work. There's probably a fair share of regulars out, but not too crowded.

There was a stretch of time before this image when they never even patrolled the then metered parking lots. Not many folks other than fishermen and few work-out folks or the like parked there besides surfers, rarely ever crowded. But don't dare to be lackadaisical for even a minute now-a-days, you will be promptly ticketed by the vigilant patrollers, a significant "revenue generator" at 41 bucks a pop. Welcome to HB! (Surf City and all-not!) and thank you for your contribution to our fine "community."

Welcome To
Surf City USA
Sat Jul 18, 2015 09:08 AM
PIER PLAZA 33
PIER PLAZA 33
Sun Jul 19, 2015 08:40 AM
PIER PLAZA 33
PIER PLAZA 33
Sun Jul 19, 2015
PIER PLAZA 33
PIER PLAZA 33

Pay to Play

I hereby willingly and of my own accord will commence to paddle out on Northside. I cannot expect to avoid nearly every conceivable infraction to surf etiquette that can possibly be committed and promise not to lower myself to getting upset or groveling. It is possible that I could catch a few gems that will sustain me from want until the next time in my present condition.

Since (that bitch—who I enjoyed a two day tryst with at Cottons) Hurricane *Marie* scraped away what remained of the sandbars from what was left after the big storm of the previous winter, I'm afraid the Emperor has no clothes. What can and hopefully will be again world class beach break is an imitation of something—resembling its former glory, but not quite the cat's meow. The crazy thing to me is how few people share this idea with me. I could be a bit picky.

After all, there are a lot of other good waves in the world! If you can get to them is the question. But it's always been nice to have HB as a dependable option since the first time I bellyboarded there forty years ago.

TB 9/25/15

Welcome To

rocks issue—strange having a danger element there now), but I’ve been plenty scared surfing Huntington on certain days over the years, and in reference to round-things-out; I’ve been fortunate to surf in Hawaii, Fiji, Bali, Australia, Japan, Costa Rica, Mexico and up-and-down California, so have had my share of decent-size waves exposure. Since I’ve lived most of my adult life in nearby Costa Mesa, HB is in easy striking distance, and as mentioned pretty darn consistent for something decent to ride.

However, around the pier area, you’ll be exposed to the no-quarter giving crowd and entrance comes with a price. Good-enough surfers on Northside who ride a longboard their entire career, and need a wave of every set; but then commit the egregious sin of standing on the tail the entire ride, never once a stroll to the nose—they are just riding the board and not the wave—boring! and NO, they will never let a shortboarder have one if they can help it. Not to mention the never-ending stream of talented rippers that dominate the pier bowls, only to be pushed over to the next peak every five years-or-so by the next-upcoming crew of shredders. But I’m sayin’ it was good for that three decades-plus I regularly enjoyed it. My trouble now, again in that latter five-to-six-year period, the changes which I first noted the winter before hurricane Maria’s summer barrels lit-up the scene; was that all the sand on the outside went bye-bye, and there hasn’t been an outside wave since, because it’s not shallow enough to cause set waves on “normal” good days to break out

there. They all roll into around the inner T-area of the pier, where they lurch over without slowing, and coincidentally right into the shoulder-to-shoulder crowd in fairly shallow water. And if you try to ride to the bottom of the wave for that splendid above all set-up bottom-turn, the wave has already reeled-off down the line without you. You have to angle into the face and start pumping down the line immediately, and for a lot of quick-reflexed younger rippers, again you could argue it’s still a really good wave, even better for those of such agile froth. But not how I liked it. It used to break maybe a hundred-or-so yards out further then; and the ride was diagonal, you rode in towards shore as well as horizontally down the beach. Some big days it was so far out on Southside, you could almost order breakfast at Ruby’s on the end of the pier! Now, if I sit just outside (as in my longtime modus operandi that I never thought about, but was pointed out to me by a friend one day) the main line-up area, if a set comes; my natural instinct is to take a couple paddles out further, but I’ll be too far out and the swell rolls right on in to the mostly competent crowd for further dissemination. Of course there are still swells big enough to break far out, but the structure of sand not being around out there is just not the same for the shape of most waves to be consistently good, a lucky lined-up section in a very selective and paddle-intensive session is still fun and all for the takers, but I’ve got those “better” decades for comparison, so hence the lesser review.

Also, to be nit-picky, the one advantage of the pier besides breaking-up many of the otherwise walled-up waves in winter for example; is the “dry hair” paddle-out oft afforded even on good sized swells when there is mainly one dominant direction. Say if the swell is northwest, the sand gathered around the pilings dampens wave activity and the other side of the pier (Southside) is a nearly duckdive-free conveyor belt out to the line-up, saving a lot of energy. Now, with that sand scoured away, waves generally crash right through the pier in any direction and the shorebreak entry can be on occasion a multiple duckdiving nuisance sprint, when it was so much more pleasant (and safe!) easing-on-in most days. All said, my wave is gone! Boo-hoo. And in combination with the decline of west direction swells, some of the good consistency with it; and every ounce of my surf instinct tells me it ain’t returning in my lifetime. The same for four-decades, drastically changed in one season and now for five years; so difficult to ignore the feeling that *things aren’t right*.

And since we’re in the OC area, another perennial favorite just a short stroll where I had my first graphic design studio on Newport Blvd. for ten years and enjoyed so many great days is Blackies and 28th Street in Newport which I haven’t been monitoring as closely; but I think I surfed the only overhead-cooking-day the ‘20-’21 winter and haven’t even seen a season opener (*overhead day, there’s still smaller good stuff on occasion and still a

great longboarding and beginner location) this ‘21-’22 winter on the cams or in person; the Jet Stream Shift-No West-Blues are singing a duet, and I’m cryin’ along with the chorus.

Meanwhile, the past few Hawaiian winter seasons look to have been pumping, so there is plenty of surf; just not at any favorable angle to strike normal Southern California spots consistently as before; which if you look on a map for reference, is lucky we had it so good for so long having the Channel Islands blockage and limited angle for entry. My apologies for the negative skewing assessments throughout, but it is—*what it is*; and what I might best be contemplating is how can I move to Oahu? At least for winter? (*Do I still Have It?*) And find one dakine wahine? Cowabunga!

So getting back to the Tamarindo stroll mentioned at the outset, when Big G asked my opinion about “Climate Change” it was the third-or-so time; I hadn’t the wherewithal to give my long-winded opinion that I’d been formulating for some time; and besides he might get a little mad at me, mistaking my viewpoint as political rather than personal. After-all, he and I were the two holdouts on getting any C-19 Vaccination entry mandate before going on the trip, which the planning for was extra consuming and of uncertain outcome for travel ease; taking a lot of the normal fun out of Surf Safari anticipation. But we’d booked the trip over a year in advance in an effort to just plain have some fun considering the current goings-on, and hard to believe it was

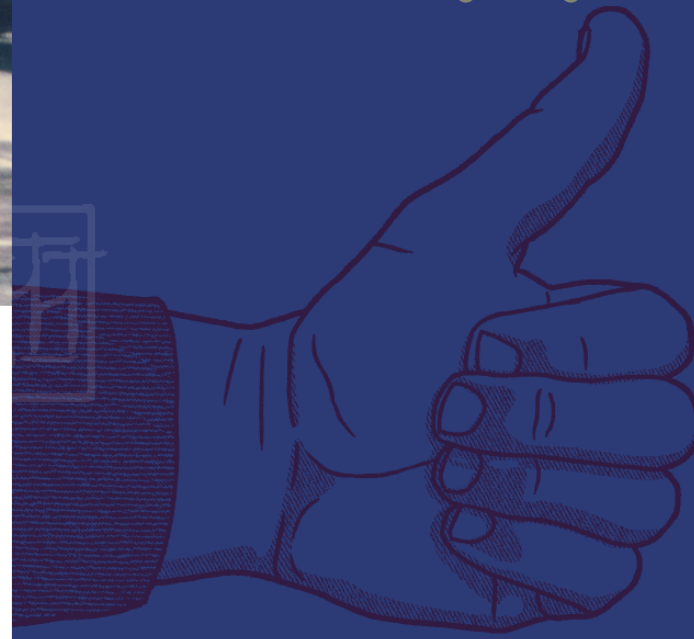
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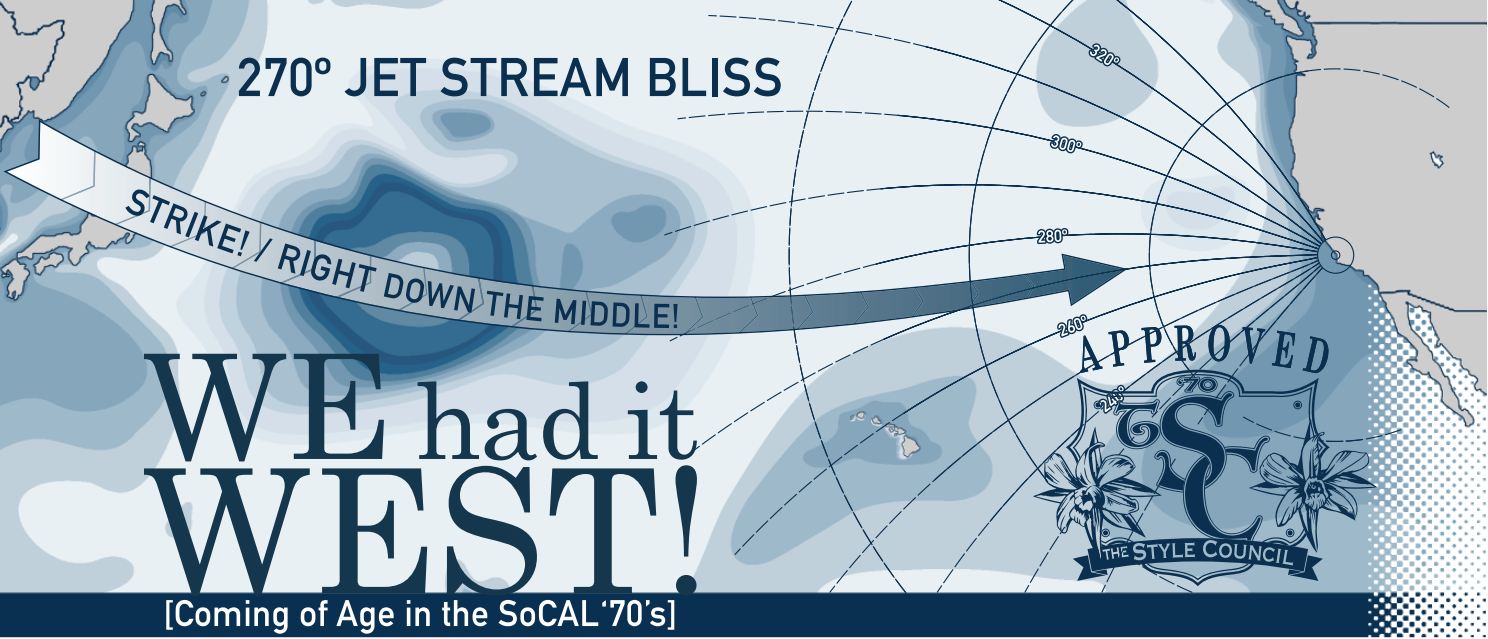


Thomas Bjelland stalls for a little shampoo/tube at Off The Wall lefts, a short stroll from the rental at Ke Iki Hale, on a 6'8" Lightning Bolt singlefin (what else?). Pretty sure it was shaped by Gerry Lopez, I had purchased it on consignment from an inland surf shop before the trip, it was signed not on the foam under the glass, but on the deck in ink, apparently some fellow had won it in a contest and didn't appreciate it's sublime curves. What a score! Didn't realize how good until I gave it a go in Hawaii and found it more than suitable for the task. One day after a session at smallish Pipe, I was sitting on the beach, and Señor Lopez walked down from the compound to check the beach, saw the board and gave me a subtle nod and grin, I just smiled back, to shy to inquire, but felt a little elevated. The very first session on the North Shore was up to that point the best I'd ever had—Exhilarating!

WE had it BEST!

[Coming of Age in the Southern California '70's]





West Swells. If I haven't already given enough gravitas on the subject to this point, I'll start off with this one as the number one reason my generation was so fortunate, that is to say, fellows who came of age; converting to surfers from roughly during the 70's decade give or take a few years either way. I say converting, because back then there was a certain type of fellow (few girls as there are today) who was a surfer. You knew when you became one (and if you ever gave it up willingly—physical restrictions aside—you maybe weren't really ever one?); you knew who others were by self-projection beyond the obvious tan face above the wetsuit neckline and sun-lightened locks.

Athletes who were more singular-pursuit-minded than team sports to some degree, and appreciated the nature aspect as well. Water polo and swimmers had an extra advantage, but generally an athletic profile is necessary. At once a demanding sport, but having the great advantage of being

so fun to do, you might not realize how good of shape you've been in until some break comes, and especially if getting on with age, painfully realize how much it hurts to try to maintain physicality competence levels once taken for granted. And mentally tough to deal with accepting that the aging body has new limitations and won't do what one wants it to do; and need extra recovery time for endeavor that used to be done twice-a-day, no-worries—narry a second thought. And while this brief summary touches more on the surfer as "animal," and mentions the '70's period as reference for starting point, the problem of the west swells and their desertion of a wide range of dependent winter breaks is something I'd guess today's coming-of-age groups are going to suffer from here on out; unlike all the generations since the modern age before them.

Take the winter of '21-'22 for example. The west swells generated by storms originally coming off Japan (a

very cold, stormy year for them) head straight west towards Hawaii, where they were graced with some of the best winter surf in maybe thirty years; big at Pipeline and breaks that favor that direction, and spaced out the entire back half of the season.

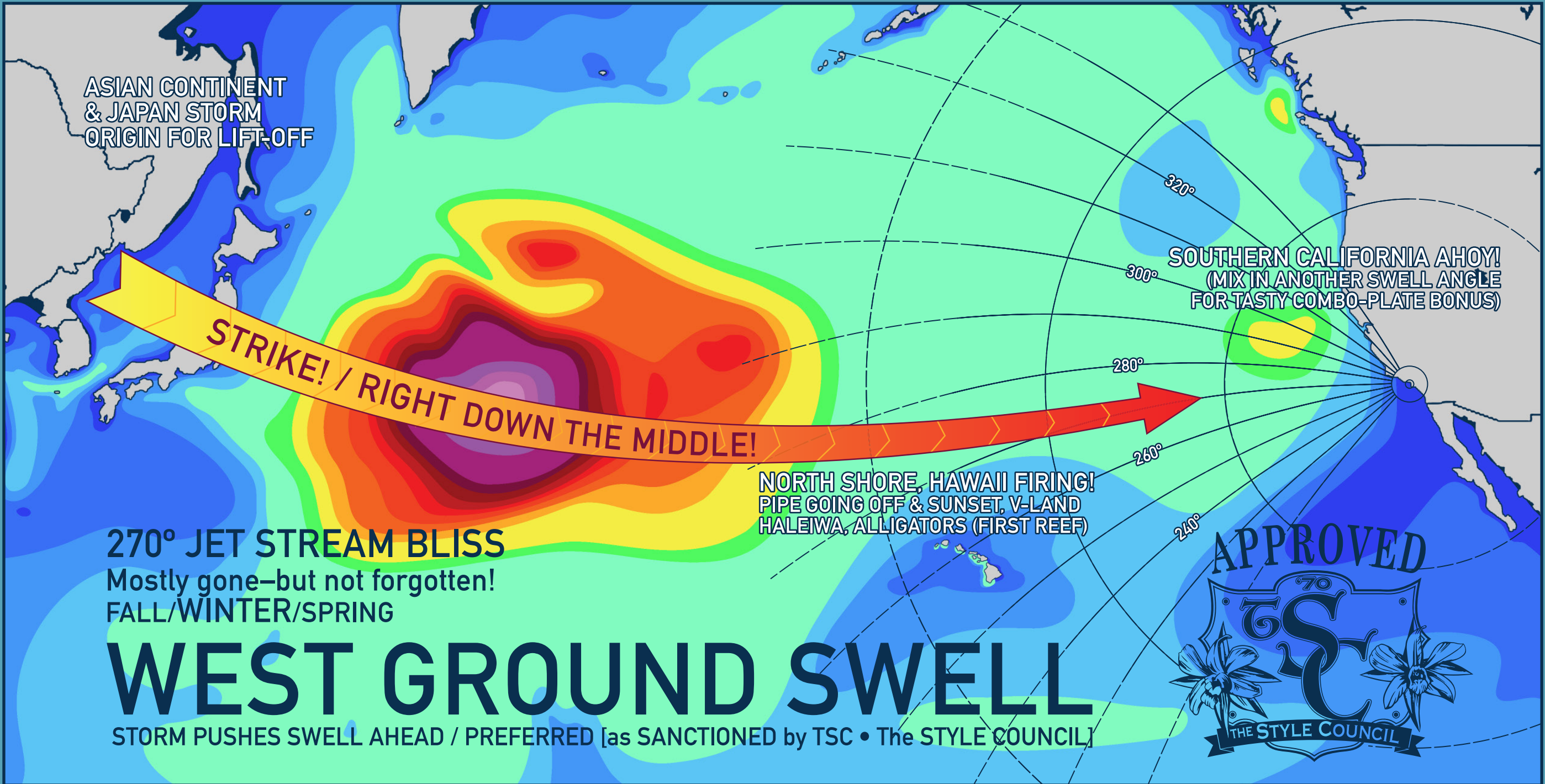
Meanwhile the Jet Stream, in a cruel about face since the last four-to-five decades (*minimum—author's exposure) gave them a left-hook, and instead of continuing in that smooth arc, in the good direction towards California; veer-off to the Aleutians or Gulf of Alaska changing the angle too-northerly, and with the storm-blocking high-pressure camped-out in the middle of the Pacific; there's been a lot of great weather, but meager surf.

Nearly flat for months at a time, and the point being; this is the season—inclusive of fall— that a lot of us used to and are still trying to live off in addition to summer's offerings that now also include pesky south winds also not previously of "the norm." Not sure how to deal with it really, and the confounding thing is that every instinct in my surf bones tells me this is the *new normal*, and *from here on out*. Sorry Young Surfistas, deal with it how you may? (Maybe you'll never even notice, ignorance being bliss and one's time is one's time.) The one silver lining to take from this intro, is that if dedicated—you *will* be in good shape most of your life as mentioned, but where to burn all the winter-time energy that beyond traveling needs to come from home breaks, I've got no answer. I'll end this optimistically challenged diatribe with

a line from the great Joni Mitchell (that I unfortunately know somewhat of in more ways than one!) "You don't know what you've got till it's gone."

SoCAL Boys. Another thing Big G and I agreed on in brief contemplation over the changes to Tamarindo and elsewhere, and with other friends like Sticks upon me proffering the overall topic; was just how lucky we were to grow-up when we did as surfers in Southern California. And this could be extended North with variations of the theme. But sticking to what I fondly recount regarding the culture, design innovation, and relatively less crowded and consistently available surf and weather on offer—we had it very good.

The pioneering forties, fifties and the psychedelic sixties all contributed to design progression regarding boards and materials. We were on singlefin shortboards to start, but there was no shortage of longboards still around (who knew they would fetch considerable auction fees decades-on for the special ones!), and my group of friends included *The Glide* in our formative years (Bolsa21 Gronkers!). And by the way, I'm *still* trying to surf like David Nuuhiwa, which gets further accolade in later chapter: *Best I Ever Saw*). The talented shapers, brands and labels were plentiful in the vicinity, and the latest designs would show-up in the board racks of local surf shops not long after appearing here or wherever else they might materialize. Specifically for my crew, there was the closest core shop Harbour in Seal Beach, but we



ASIAN CONTINENT
& JAPAN STORM
ORIGIN FOR LIFT-OFF

STRIKE! / RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE!

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AHOY!
(MIX IN ANOTHER SWELL ANGLE
FOR TASTY COMBO-PLATE BONUS)

NORTH SHORE, HAWAII FIRING!
PIPE GOING OFF & SUNSET, V-LAND
HALEIWA, ALLIGATORS (FIRST REEF)

270° JET STREAM BLISS
Mostly gone—but not forgotten!
FALL/WINTER/SPRING

WEST GROUND SWELL

STORM PUSHES SWELL AHEAD / PREFERRED [as SANCTIONED by TSC • The STYLE COUNCIL]



ADIEU, ADIEU, Parting in such sweet sorrow! West Swells we miss ye! Incredible to think that even with the tucked-in orientation that SoCal inhabits—shadowed below Point Conception jutting-out and with the offshore Channel and Catalina Islands as bumpers to get around—there were so many sweet West/or combo swells to even make it in to our shores for decades on end. Decades folks, there ain't much else to bank on with perhaps

a scant few days the entire season the past few years. And, SoCal being of such an awesome temperate climate and variety of options to recieve said swells makes it feel so wrong. Also, it costs so much to live here now (if no foot in the door pre-Investor-Driven-Grind—or slipped on a banana peel along the way—ouch!) it almost feels like the meterologists should always be telling us: 70° and sunny—we're paying that much!

generally preferred the sublime lines of Bruce Jones in Sunset Beach, where he had taken over the smaller but “cooler” original Ole shop that had been there.

Even though my first wetsuit was a beaver-tail jacket from Carl’s Bait & Tackle in Seal, it wasn’t long before wetsuits got good; an O’Neill Animal Skin was the winter ticket, a little bulky compared with today’s super-flex Techno-Buttah (that’s fun to say!) but you were warm and on-it. (Hello-O’Neill folks! I’ve just reiterated a lifelong loyalty, how about flowing a suit or two–L, back-ZenZip please–my way, for publicity and some artistic ambassador status? Thank you in advance!)

Besides the availability of the latest design and manufacture goods, of significant note would be about crowding and the then relative lack there-of. Not only in the surf, but just getting there. Once one had one’s driver’s license, freedom knocked, it’s a bit shocking today that some kids (maybe not as much surfers, as they are keen to score?) don’t even bother with getting the learner’s permit and license as soon as possible with the Internet connectivity and the folks-will-drive-me-anywhere notions. We couldn’t wait for the day! Fondly I recall the days of loading up the (‘68) VW Squareback in Long Beach, driving to San Diego to surf Blacks or up north to Rincon or so forth, and getting there and back with relatively traffic-less stress, back home in the arvo. There was one single office building (a glass sided and towered futuristic for the time affair) near Jamboree St., that you can just



Tom goes left at Sunset Beach, CA / circa '77 / Junior year of high school on a second-hand 6'4" singlefin that had an airbrushed "Yosemite Sam" on the bottom.



glimpse a corner of now) in the *entirety* of Irvine! No houses, schools, tennis courts, mini-malls, shopping centers or especially the relatively disheartening “dense-occupancy” designed-by-builder and architecturally deficient (hey-every forth “unit” has a different color accent-whoopee!) box-scrapers increasingly smothering the landscape.

And since we’re in Irvine, which by the way has the distinction of being: *The safest city in the USA*, there’s even a strange feeling I get when walking the family dog (Shiba-Inu named Genichi—who by the way also has his own forthcoming book: *Shibadude* by your’s truly!) near the Ex and my son’s apartment adjacent Rancho San Joaquin golf course. When next to the course and the vast expanse of landscaped green grass offers an open view of the vicinity, I’m struck by the amount of tall buildings bordering every direction not far off and feel some tension: why haven’t some builders already have gotten their hands on all this relatively free space? Just a bunch of manicured grass with holes, flags, sand-traps, what about market rate real estate? What’s the hold-up? Surely there are folks sequestered in offices who have already done the math (already have rough blueprints?) on just how many units they could possibly cram in every square foot; buying-off the course owners (or maybe they’re the ones who already have the plans and working through city red-tape?) could be negligible once factoring in the profit margins from the ever skyrocketing rent and mortgage prices in OC, for

what used to be bucolic orange (and strawberry) groves if not rough pasture, glimpsed passing-by on the 405. If one would want to try that drive mentioned for a surf-strike in either direction nowadays, you are not going to not be stuck in traffic either one way, or the other, or both; and possibly beat down to the point of considering if it’s even worth the hassle to endure all in one day. The one crazy exception is being able to set the cruise control on 65 mph in the SportWagen, and go straight through Irvine during rush hour mostly without braking with the C-19 school and work closures the past two years on the way to Trestles. *Never* happened the last few decades, so strange to encounter now. I admit to enjoying the relief, but if had my druthers, would suffer the inconvenience gladly; especially once you get to the beach and see the hordes of folks enjoying the action as anyone would. Hey-get back to school (and work) you lolly-gaggers!

What’s the point of wrangling your lifestyle to be able to be available to surf during the week—get it while the gettin’s good!—if it’s just as crowded (or worse!) everyday as it used to be mostly only on good weekends? Somethings gotta give! I’d wager there are a lot of high school and college kids, who having now had a taste of all-day, any-day relative free-time to surf; that might balk at the idea of ever going back to a “regular” school schedule at any point, “electives” being surf first—whatever else later.

Whether this all falls into “We had it best” discussion is debatable. Sure one can go now anytime, but now *everyone*

else can too, trading stifling crowds for available option. I’ll take our day when you: “Had to be serious” to make things work. At least your sacrifices to: “Get it” paid-off for you and mostly only those of similar ilk—and not friggin’ everyone!

But of course one can’t stop progress, and the drastic changes since those pleasant—yet slightly-melancholic suburban days—of us Charlie Brown, Dr. Seuss, Beach Boys, CSN&Y, Stevie Wonder, and wholly analog youths having had the good fortune to have grown up in California (although one might not realize how nice it was at the time; or later when things are too late to capitalize on; other than the fine holdings stored in the memory banks) in comparison since “back in the day” are a little hard to take. Goodness is still plentiful if you can get to it, but it sure seems harder.

Let’s face it, the Internet changed the economy into a world-wide force to be reckoned with, and the connectivity exposed the relatively once pastoral splendor of SoCAL beyond known cities such as LA or San Diego to everyone and anyone who has the wherewithal to move here. And one can hardly blame them (who wouldn’t come?), although apparently there is no shortage of folks whatsoever who can afford nearly anything; and might also be oblivious to living a mile inland from the ocean in a multi-storied box that while eliminating yard work, cuts out the ever-present summer afternoon breeze from the ocean; the natural air-conditioner (at least if you are on the ocean-side of the 405), that happens when the desert-like

inland heats-up mid-day and sucks air in off the cooler sea.

Economy Seat. Surfers on a whole are not a big-spending bunch. Certainly there are professionals inside and out of the industry that have managed the generation of income, have acquired or have available resources to afford luxury travel to prime destinations and so forth; including those smart or fortunate enough fellows you might recognize (and avoid making eye contact with) when passing through first class on the way to the economy section loathing the upcoming journey (although in fine anticipation of enjoying the destination once there) in cramped discomfort, possibly wondering what the heck they did so right to be relatively more comfortable on the plane and most likely everywhere else.

For the majority of enthusiasts however, the energy and time focused on being able to surf a lot can create gaps, or how shall we say: “attention blinders” that may preclude the investment of time, the honoring of talent, or application of intellect towards climbing the ladder to more fiscally successful heights. When pondering the trade-offs of having free time to be able to surf right now and working things towards that end, or the “loftier” goal of becoming independent enough to enjoy things better but later, most hardcores would be challenged not to select the former. And it’s even interesting to note that certain beach cultures, say that of some in Australia, consider that the spending of one’s



Burleigh Point morning, fresh, warm & inviting. I finally got to visit Australia a few years back, visiting a local screenprint/surfbrand line I freelance for R&D and fun. I stayed just inland of this view in walking distance and its quite pleasant for a latte and surf check most days. Enjoyed the different element of the morning session being back-lit rather than the arvo, as the sun rises opposite down under. Surfing Burleigh Point mostly, but being solo, took a while to figure (and sack-up!) just the best place for the rock jump-off the point and into the surf. Friend from back in the Quiksilver days (I had a ten-year run designing freelance for them, check my other coffee-table book: THE ART of TEE for a fun biography and work compilation from those good days) Steve Fontes guided me to a surf together at fun Duranbah one morning as he had moved there for work and family, having married a Sydney girl. One thing that was a bummer, also from being solo; was the difficulty of exploring easily as I wasn't comfortable driving the rental car with the steering wheel on the other side, and being on the other side of the street, deciphering where to go while not crashing. Missed even going down to Byron. Next time!

prime income generating years chasing and scoring as much surf as possible, with just enough work to manage in relative comfort, is actually a commendable, if not honorable lifestyle.

I sure enjoyed Burleigh Heads when I visited a screenprint/surfbrand company on the Gold Coast that I freelance art and design work with, the folks Down Under seemingly have their priorities a lot in order for perspective. Surfing and enjoying the incredible headland points and breaks ranks right up there on the noble pursuit issue, and folks are very connected to the coast and ocean sport, being that most of the population lives not far from the source.

And speaking of a lifestyle including surfing as a prime activity, it's alarming to think that the native Hawaiians had a lot of that figured out; surfing *was* noble and the appreciation of fun maybe on par with work and spirituality, until the missionaries came and informed them that they'd be better off in church than in the line-up. Quit having all that fun! Come to work with us on the straight and narrow, although we'll be the ones the highways and byways (excepting the few government buildings, etc.) are named after once the sugar cane and pineapple fields you've (and later the influx of world-wide immigrants that formed the great melting-pot that is Hawaii) built us cash out and most of y'all are already up there in heaven due to our European diseases that there's no immunity for here. Maybe the intentions were good, but the results horrendous. A fairly similar result was afflicted upon the Native Californians who vanished in





Tom takes the drop at Pipeline, North Shore, Oahu, Hawaii / circa '79. Fall semester off from Junior College!

after tens of thousands of years (six hundred generations in some cases) of what one would hope was as enjoyable as any place to inhabit; the temperate climate—the mountains meet the sea.

So perhaps the consideration of how to spend one's time while one's got it may very well crossover different economical classes, and it could even be said that the truest asset of wealth could be having the free time to do what one wants; and surfing being one of them, it's a somewhat fair assessment to say that either group might be as happy. And in surfing in particular, it's also a great equalizer in that it doesn't matter whatsoever what one does on land

occupationally, what class they might inhabit, how powerful or innocuous, waves are to be ridden by whomever has the best skill and experience; the ocean having complete disregard for social status. Also, on a physical note, one could take the strongest gym-rat bursting out of his muscle tee and drop him in some heavy water, and chances of survival are way less than one honed in the oceans rhythms; regardless of stature, it's never a successful fight with the ocean, one must flow with it, take what it will give—never against. Yes, those Hawaiians did (and still do to great extent) have the right idea!

And now to the argument of who had it best, it's not even close on the issue of *do-ability* when the economic angle is factored in. We enthusiasts of that age in comparison were incredibly lucky to be able to afford travel, accommodations and other expenses associated with enjoying the ride. Having taken a few Long Beach City College semesters off in my day for surfari, it's incredible to think back that Tosh and I were able to rent a beach-side apartment on the North Shore of Oahu for three months the fall/winter of 1980, for something around \$200 or 300 per(?), maybe likely what the Keiki Hale charges now *per night* in its current gated and secluded upscale version among all the other beach-front mini-mansions. It was one of the few long-term options available amongst smaller homes adjacent many an "under" developed lot (the Lopez house at Pipe was the single multi-story domicile), walking distance to prime spots, one could drive right into the driveway (had they that transportation option) and us fellas who had saved part-time income could afford it with ease. For three months! Could a student, basically on his own fiscally, but with the security of the always being able to be welcomed back home and to next semester, even attempt that now without couch surfing or ganging-up in numbers uncomfortably in attempt to split the costs? I'd guess not.

The "Country" was certainly just that back then, one could sway in a hammock between two coconut trees and maybe hear one car drive by on Kam Hwy every ten or fifteen minutes, in stark contrast

to the ever-traveled and oft congested corridor it has since become. So, beyond the relative afford-ability of staying right at ground zero, and we are talking what would be sagaciously dubbed: *The Seven Mile Miracle*, the surf itself was much less crowded (although local pecking order was already in effect; if you were polite and committed, you might just have a legend like Marvin Foster give you a friendly tip such as paddling a few strokes further down the face before popping-up to avoid being pitched-out with the lip at Pipeline!) Ouch.

Certainly, access to the North Shore by global enthusiasts may be easier today; there's always been the fellow or two (or more recently gal) from each surf community who move there to challenge themselves and find a place in the revered underground of local chargers, make a life, and one might still see them mastering a session today being of seasoned experience and still fit, but all-in-all—try it now and it's going to cost ya! Hawaii ain't cheap! California ain't cheap! The secret's out.

Undoubtedly there are still untapped destinations for the hardy adventurer seeking great line-ups sans crowds to experience, but they're far-off the beaten path; and that's going deep and committing beyond what can be slipped into and out of for the average devotee dealing with today's fiscal realities. Also, I've got to admit that having never taken a chartered boat trip, that that does look sweet and will have to give the nod to the present enthusiasts on that comfy slice of immersion, but all-in-all, dollars making sense—We had it Best!



Fun Factoid? Since we've just visited Hawaii, and I'm forever hoping to make an appearance there for Surfari in season, I've got a fun if not rhetorical question: Is there a single person having moved from Hawaii to California that doesn't have some type of sticker (Island chain, hibiscus, *honu* or catchy phrase) on the back of their car announcing that—Yes, while they are indeed (begrudgingly?) here in California now, make no mistake—they are originally from Da Islands! Don't forget it bruddah! And if it's a sportin' fella, most likely their ride is a black truck or SUV (with the requisite pronouncement on full display)? Just bustin' some balls, Island pride being *mana* to be taken earnestly, who can point fingers—except if it be a Shaka! Aloha.

[ALOHA]



SOUTH WINDS always DIE

Yeah-right!
A back-in-the-day oft-quoted maxim (of uncertain origin) turned sarcastic quip from a few-too-many contrary denials.

[Say Hello to Southern Eddie]



Tom B does R&D on a frothy Lowers left / circa 2012. This page and following spreads / photos: Richard Holcombe

Just when I think I've gotten a clear I.D. on the two major culprits responsible for the recent down-grades of today's SoCAL surf conditions in relation to the past four (or more) decades, (to reiterate: being the lack of west swells and disappearance of outside sand bottoms of many breaks) along comes Southern Eddie. And dang-it, or to be more concise: mother-f'n-goddammit! it appears that he's here to stay.

He's always been around, especially during spring—pardon the gross reference to this season being forever in my mind as Mother Ocean's menstrual phase due to the often incessant onshore winds and gray skies—and invariably first thing in the morning as an unwelcome greeting. Consistently the least favorable conditions of the year, Eddie blows in from the south; but is actually caused by strong winds from the north that blow across the ocean, then bend on the Baja Peninsula and flow back into shore, chopping-up conditions, and for my purposes, the worst affecting direction for surfing Trestles.

But Eddy, in seasons past, after wrecking-up the joint intermittently, packed-up and left us once summer's warmer water, glassy mornings with ruffled afternoon seas and a cooling breeze (as mentioned earlier due to the arid land heating-up mid-day and air rising, sucking in air from the colder ocean—Nature's natural A.C. for folks in SoCAL on the beach side of the 405), had ushered him on his way, only to be

an occasional guest, and not the home-wrecker who couldn't take a hint and beat-it.

The previous summer, 2021, was the first year that the eddy winds persisted from spring all the way until fall's arrival, chopping-up many a good swell, especially in North OC. And swell-wise, (in direct opposition of the worst winter to come in five decades) it was a good year; overhead days spaced out every couple of weeks, nearly for the whole summer; I was fortunate to be able to surf Cottons on most of them, and dang if at sixty, was feeling like I was getting into measurably good surf-shape and stoked for the long run.

Even during spring when the winds made it difficult, as there is also the high tide to generally work around at Cottons unless the swell is big, San Clemente was fairly manageable and consistent with the past five-or-so years of starting off the season with size-able offerings, a positive note in most of these otherwise unenthusiastic reckonings. And, I did notice that the start of the season for this recent period had some of the strongest swells, which one might assume would happen later on when everything is warmed-up temperature wise for storms and such; but just recently sorted (with a note from forecaster Intel), that since it is winter down in the Southern Hemisphere where the storms originate, the early season has less ice mass and more water for the storms to stir-up to make waves. Interesting bits of Intel always popping-up here and there once one goes deep.



And speaking of such tidbits, here's a bit of hard-earned "confidential" Intel that I can be fairly sure that *no one* will utilize *except me* anyways, Mr. Serious; is that if the Oceanside buoy (it is south of San Clemente, so in-line with the swells final arrival at Trestles) reads 3' or above of an individual groundswell (not the aggregate)—roughly 15 seconds minimum and above, there more than likely will be outside sets; what I favor to stay out of the main pack and be able to catch my share of waves, and also be able to make the call for the drive there more confidently beyond camera viewing, since it's 35 miles one-way from Costa Mesa. 3' being the magic number, 2.anything-under just doesn't do it (good waves—but not outside sets), and once anything ticks a couple notches above 3', we're talking mackers out-the-back. Like I said, three decades of observation, testing and ultimately scoring, and who are you calling serious? No charge for the tip though, maybe you purchased this book—so it's a part of the package—and thanks!

HANDJIVE Due to the whitewash froth on the wave face (leftover from the previous wave), the front arm extends and guides trajectory forward towards stability. However, the trailing hand seeks powersource connectivity, fingers tickling the surface.



the [NEW] normal

[Six years in—with no end in sight—read 'em and weep!]

- No/very few West groundswells for SoCAL (not talking windswell!)
- Sand depletion causing the disappearance of "outside" breaks (as well as dangerous conditions, such as no sand inside on the lefts at Cottons and home/property endangerment)
- Southern eddy blows all summer, hacking-up local conditions and incoming (south) swells

RAILJIVE Again the whitewash foam forming a slippery froth on the wave face inhibiting board purchase requires (operator/Tom B) to ease off the gas-rail engagement a precarious yet still fun-as-ever thrill (at age 52!).

Getting back to Señor Eduardo, that pesky F'er, he's actually of relationship with one other of my accuses, that being the Jet Stream veering. All those storms that now veer north towards the Aleutians and the Gulf of Alaska, park there for considerable enough time to send the north bending south winds, chopping us up; and for some reason unbeknown-st to this fellow, occurred *all summer long* the last two years. Some abatement here and there, but not mostly gone like the previous four decades of steady-as-she-goes.

And in addition to bumping-up local conditions, Eddie and his northern brethren also spread their wrath by blowing across incoming south swells day and night (on the back half of approach during their five-or-so travel days from the Southern Hemisphere here), so instead of arriving say at Trestles as smooth swell walls to be groomed by the triangulated cobblestone reef bottom into tapering, peeling gems; they are lumpy and sectiony, negating the entire effect from very good to rather wonky. Still better than many a break if put into overall perspective, but perhaps those that have enjoyed it so much better might have a contention point when adding up "near-misses."

Perhaps broken-record by now, and we'll see how next summer goes—but hinting at repeat is not something this fellow can ignore and please-oh-please, not another *new normal*? It's my unwilling prophecy and on a limb I do state: *Something ain't right!*



Labor Day BLUES

It's the day before Labor Day, mid-morning Summer '23, a two-thirds crushed beer can with the top and bottom edges still somewhat circular rattles away in the alley outside the upstairs window of the studio I'm currently renting in pleasant Costa Mesa, California, just two miles from the sand in Newport. The can clatters for ten seconds, clinkle-roll-over-klankle, stops. The wind gusts again, ten more seconds of rattle, stops. Back and forth with the alternating wind gusts careening off the two-story buildings abutting each side of the alley, it starts up once again as some kind of repetitive al-um-anomalous clattering chastisement directed towards me for assuming this season would again be the savior for yet another comparatively dismal year of surf in SoCal. For the past near-decade in OC, the winter surf conditions have consistently degraded further with each successive season due to a diminishing pattern of good west swells until reaching a fifty-two-year record of a mere single paddle-out in four long months for this fellow. Nice weather, no swell. Some swell, bad wind conditions; and with the exception of a stellar Thanksgiving week

south combo swell with classic fall conditions and a few days of "Atmospheric River" bombing crisp and inviting from the northwest in early January—it's been a bloody grovel-fest.

The one bright spot this past half-decade for quality surf has been that the summers still provided excitement and challenging surf for an admittedly "powder-snobbish" elder statesman to deal with. Seems I can't be bothered if the surf isn't at least head-high with nice conditions¹, or bigger to the point of being nervous of paddling-out to get truly motivated. And suffice to say that if it is any good on the cams or "Eyes-on"², all effort and a still burning desire deep within will have me frothing to engage; it's not laissez faire attitude in question. But the can outside the window being blasted to-and-fro by the out-of-season strong Southern Eddy wind is laughing at me; here I had still harbored the optimistic notion that the thirty-minute drive south to surf Trestles perhaps a couple times a week if lucky would sustain me stoke-wise and physically for yet another dedicated year of chasing the thrill and reaping



the reward, having been so fortunate to enjoy the here-to-fore consistently bountiful seasons in San Clemente for several decades³. I want to load-up the SportWagen and hit-it, but several attempts already this season have been marred by wind complications; I'd still paddle-out no matter what with my never-broken credo of: make the drive, paddle-out-it is world-class break and to be respected-but so tough to know in advance it *will be* sub-par and having to weigh the fun-to-effort ratio having previously had the luxury of not given much thought to the matter.

This summer/late spring, the early season larger ground swells originating from the Southern Hemisphere (Meteorology speaking: early winter there so less ice mass in Antarctica for stirring-up more ocean water during wind-driven storms to form swells) did not materialize in a consistent pattern as with the last few seasons, and those fewer days during the remaining season that had swell were greatly compromised by the north originating, banking off the Baja Peninsula and back to shore in unfavorable direction southern eddy winds. With this factor at play, it's likely either already choppy from wind in the morning, or if the seemingly rare-these-days glassy conditions prevail, the same north originating wind blowing hard all afternoon and overnight on the incoming swells on the last sojourn of their nearly five-day travel time here have broken-up the long smooth lines into shorter sections; negating the main reason for surfing at Trestles where the cobblestone reef formations groom

those swells into long, tapering, user-friendly walls.

Now that it's nigh on Labor Day, which is the unofficial public demarcation for summers-end (back to school and work for the masses!-but COVID shutdowns screwed that up as well crowd-wise in most all line-ups⁴), and although there is still early fall for more southern juice possible extraction, this third season in a row Southern Eddie has made his presence known; too-regularly crashing the party when he used to generally limit his unpleasant-but-tolerably-sporadic visits to springtime. The previously diurnal pattern for decades of summer days generally being glassy in the morning then becoming surface-ruffled once the land heats up in the afternoon and sucks in a west direction breeze off the cooler ocean⁵ are noticeably on the wane, the "Blackball Wind" if you will-never-mind-you got your session in early in North OC anyways; or if "wanting-it" like this fellow, hit it most south swells down to Trestles to enjoy the waves in a generally calmer sea surface overall, and nearly all day long⁶. Especially back a decade-or-so when SCE planted kelp just offshore in the vicinity to offset emission responsibility requirements in South OC, for several seasons while it lasted then it could be victory-at-sea around HB and Newport, but smooth as a baby's bottom at Trestles. Good stuff-how 'bout another planting fellas?

When adding in the now summer challenging conditions to the west swell depleted fall and winters of the past six years, the frustration level has reached

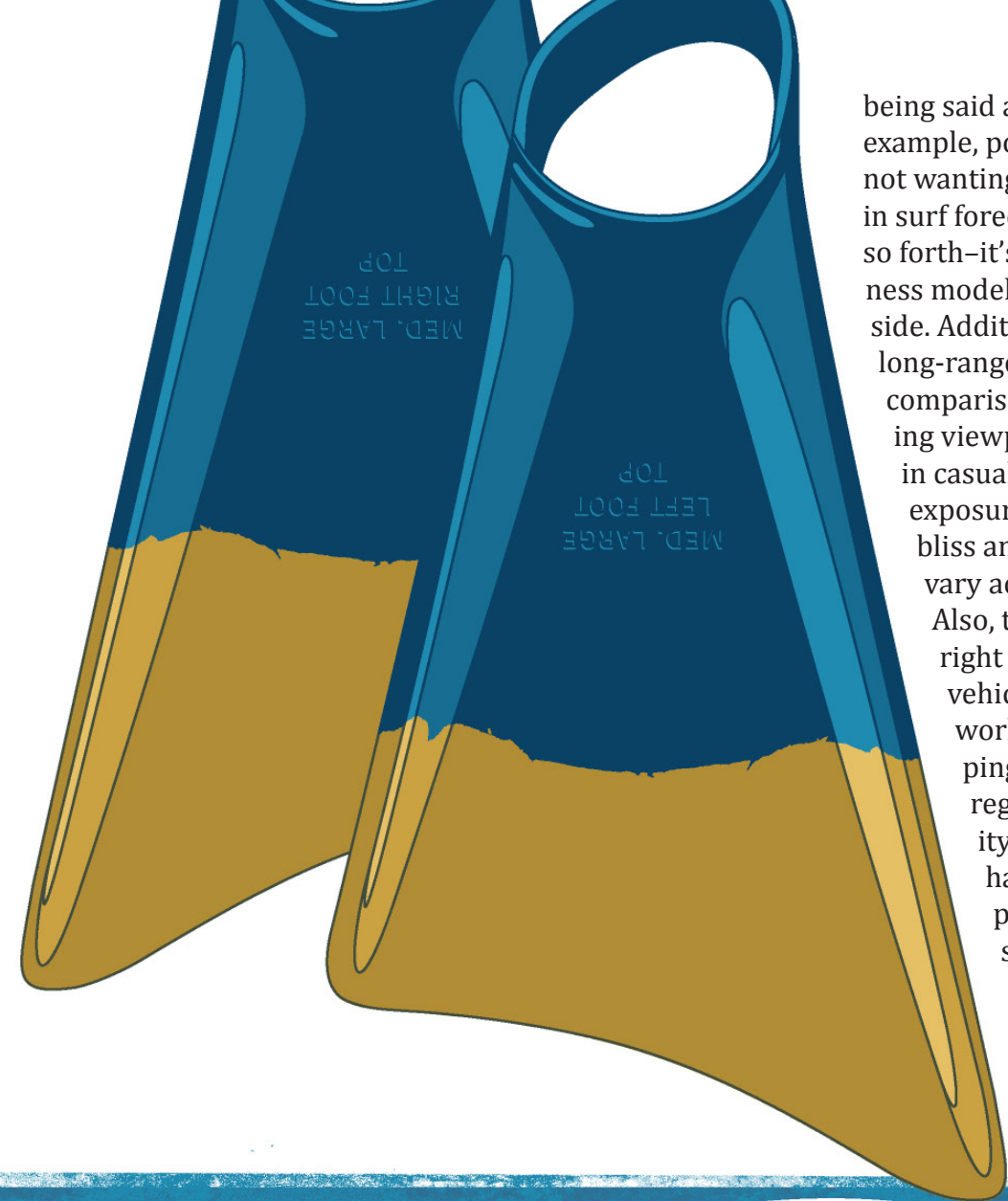
critical mass; five decades of immersion⁷ by this ocean-centric keen observer have been toppled upside down surf-wise, and regrettably every ounce of being to my marrow tells me it's the NEW NORMAL. Crikey. The worst year in fifty-two years-summer-no longer savior. And while there's optimism, pessimism, and some conjecture about the subject according to each individual's length and depth of exposure and the seemingly-yet-puzzling vastly varying limits of perception, there's also reality; and while I ain't always right, there's two things I ain't ever wrong about: Art and Surfing.

To say this fellow is in a funk would be an understatement. And after-all, like enough other blokes in different careers who to varying degrees of awareness or intent may look back and find having also prioritized lifestyle in such a matter as best flexible as possible in order to score, half the reason besides needing to address and express a creative drive deep within myself by becoming an independent freelance artist and designer able and willing/liking to work most every day is to score said surf most any day when it is good is possibly now out-the-window. A significant perk of the decisions made along the way regarding taking risk and enduring consequence or lesser fiscal engagements could sound a bit whiny to many folks, but I'll argue shallow pursuit it is not when finding the decent physical shape I've been able to maintain (not to mention ongoing mental wellness benefit-even if temporary-most always a great reprise from most any daily

grind following a good session) of being a lifelong surfer has blessed me with when comparing senior citizens of my age group⁸. "Hey, [so looks like you're] Still surfing?" a surprise greeting from a wahini not seen from fifty-to-sixty. Which is a not-insignificant part of the rant I'm extolling and trying to grapple with, the dedication and sacrifice to get to this point maintained itself apparently; without it where are we now? Heck, who knew something so fun was actually so healthy for the long run?

Makes a fellow wonder, is it over for good-at least for my lifetime? Signs point in an unfavorable direction, sorry to say. There's still the ongoing debates and Online fodder over El Niño or La Niña climatology affects and so on, but I'm saying there's too much other change overall affecting storm direction, swells and conditions. Say for example a wildly swinging Jet Stream or the non-replenishment of sands affecting outside breaks due to prolonged drought⁹; never in five decades has it been so poor quality in-and-out of any temporary phase, the past six seasons have dropped off the charts after being steady-as-she-goes for nearly half a century of daily surf conditions monitoring, reviewing and participation on my part. Look, I ain't got no charts, graphs, or timeline spreadsheets-I lived it!

In summation, the *single biggest issue in five decades* of otherwise enjoyable pursuit, and the perplexing needle being jabbed further in my hide is that besides the dejected banter of fellow still-enthusiastic old salts of my acquaintance in full agreement, so little is



being said about it in media. For example, possibly due to prefer not wanting unsavory content in surf forecasting venture and so forth—it's the opposite business model to dwell on downside. Additionally, without the long-range immersion for comparison and from reviewing viewpoint of individuals in casual or as yet prolonged exposure, ignorance seems bliss and perceptions can vary according to acumen. Also, the subject just isn't right to fit in certain vehicles with a whole world of surf content to ping-pong around this region-specific perplexity. And although SoCal has become a densely populated region for surf enthusiasts, (just try and not have your jaw drop upon seeing the crowd at Blackies—as men-

tioned, my part time stomping grounds along with 28th Street and HB Pier when I had a design studio on Newport Blvd. for nearly a decade—any weekday with any swell in season: Ouch!) it's likely still a fairly small number of individuals to even notice (or suffer!) these relatively adverse times. Also, if one doesn't live in the area—or not grown-up surfing in SoCal—why would they even care? Except that I'm pretty sure these changing conditions or variations there-of are happening in many other localities¹⁰ and looks as though I've tasked myself to at least ring a warning bell. What to do about the conundrum other than travel options I've not the answer. But when considering a sustainable commitment level, after all, it's local conditions that support a surfer's lifetime needs; and so incredibly lucky we had it so good for so long regarding consistent quality. Kenny says punt. Shoots.

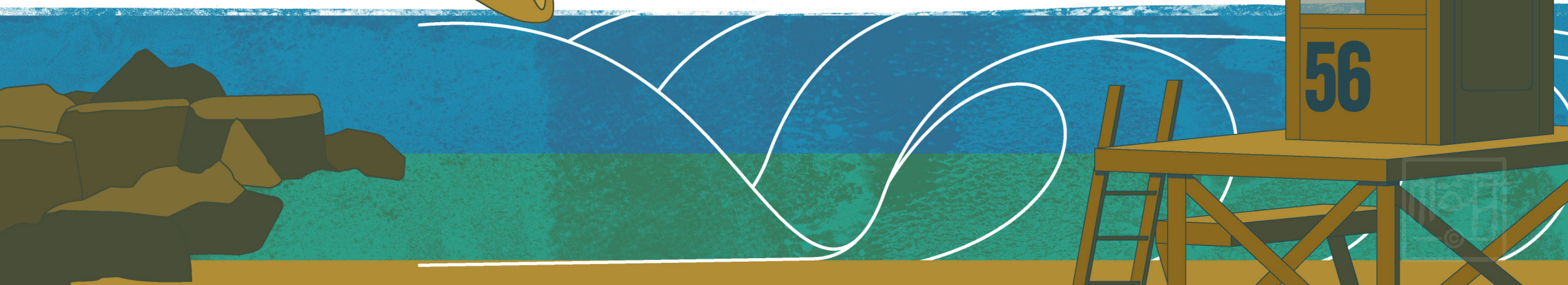
NOTES

1. At sixty-three, the quickness factor is noticeably a tad slower than youth, and the effort it takes to hop-up in small surf

if not longboarding yet is significantly more taxing than a head-high or above wave with more time to get to one's feet on the drop (providing one favors more juice), and that early a.m. arid winter air on a marginal-leaning-purely-maintenance day in SoCal is a bit chilly for a seasoned fellow!

2. "Eyes-on" coined by great friend and HB stalwart GBD for his requisite to what a reliable surf check could entail. *Never-mind* I've been a Surflife Premium Subscriber from day one (two decades?), having monitored conditions on camera nearly every day of that time

[continued in full book]



you
might be
“SERIOUS
About
SURFING”
if you:



The balcony views of Voorhees' Honu Pacific beach house. Right on the sand (but with a lava rock foundation-A Keeper!) Kaena point coffee morning, vino sunset view, with nothing between you and Japan but endless miles of sea. At right: "Leftovers" reels off (double-overhead-ish) in morning splendor.

Travel to the North Shore for a week of surfing in fall

(My favorite time to go—the winter season just getting revved) and score good surf; challenging enough in size, but we're not talking anything multi-black-diamond. Selectively ride some good waves (perhaps reconfirming some self-realization notion that you've: "Still got it!"), suffer no extra-gnarly wipeouts, make it back in to shore safely (oh the joy-release when one's foot sinks-in the coarse coral sand that makes up the beach, the other follows-safety!). You've even left an offering of blood, small as it was, from a scraped-up knee, on the inside reef at Laniakea in an offering to the Hawaiian Surf Gods for thanks of a fruitful and safe-enough trip and prayer for *mana* for next year's

return should things work out. Then, to top-it-all-off, enjoy a glass of red on the beach-house balcony (with the awesome view of Kaena Point-thanks Mike!) for the sunset hour.

Upon returning home from Hawaii, however, all you can think about is *the one that got away*. The one you paddled for, but pulled-back from at the last second before catching, erring on the side of caution; but then watched in agony from the back as it peels-off un-ridden in symmetrical line for great distance, a would-be gem for the would-be taker. Even though you were in the apex spot to catch the wave, luckily you didn't prevent another close-by surfer from catching it; but you stick out your chin with furrowed brow and feign indifference, as if it wasn't up-to-

par, just to be on the safe side in case someone was watching. Look, the wave was sizable; maybe at the beginning of the trip so confidence and wave judgment were still building, but dang, you coulda' had it! Funny all the other stuff comes in second, but you'll: "Get-um' next time," brah.

Or—

Still remember vividly the time your friend called you off of the bomb right that day on Southside. On that top-ten winter day (of a few decades for consideration!), pumping northwest groundswell, with a healthy mix of west windswell; "A lot of water moving around," as GBD muttered after trying to get me to pass on Huntington and check-out Crystal Cove, only to be a bit off on the call and miss this particular epic day of surf). No biggie was George calling me off of the wave, but the egregious sin was committed of him then not catching it himself. And similarly to the first example noted, a spectacular wave peeled-off un-ridden.

I myself had already caught the wave a few yards closer to the shoulder but still on the peak, my hands on the rail ready to push-up for the hop-up and drop, and my bro George, a bit too-deep and on his regular short board; called me *by name*—Got It Tom! But nooooo. He didn't have it. Frowned and turned his board around to paddle back out some, sit back and try for another. And although there were indeed good ones ridden by both of us before and after; that one set had the little extra umph to

make it notable and of consideration of being in the echelon status for the day, which was up-there regardless.

In crowded surf, the Drop-in: taking-off in front of and in a lesser position after someone in priority position has already caught and is surfing the wave is all-too-commonplace; sometimes by accident, sometimes on purpose. Difficult to always sort-out blame, through the differing perceived abilities and assumed pecking order of different surfers, each spot varying by degrees of tact-necessary engagement. It most often is considered a "burn" and is undesirable, especially to the one having edged in rightly for what looks a bit of fun; only to eat spray and hope the offender is competent enough to avoid causing collision or injury.

Another "fun" version of the "snake," includes taking-off behind a surfer already-up and riding and then assuming priority position for the usurper as having been "closer to the peak"—as established in more recent decades of competitive surf contests. Which is pretty lame in my book, due to the fact that when employed in non-competition free-surfs, contributes to unnecessary hassling for each and every wave. Due to older perceptions of surf etiquette that my generation rigorously came-up through—now severely on the wane with some but not all, faction of youth—if I'm lined-up perfectly to catch a wave out further (and by the way, I'm letting a lot of good mid-size waves go by!), and some punter employs that BS forcing me to alter my paddle defensively to keep "possession" or goes

ahead dropping-in *behind* me, I'm hard-pressed having it.

Which at Trestles for example, due to the oft-times slopey nature of some waves, happens more frequently. I've actually caught a wave, dropped down into bottom turn and back up for a bank or carve at the top, and coming down again for another bottom turn only to hear some fellow attempting a call-off having just caught the wave "deeper." He's not even at the bottom of his drop. Dude, that's nineties contest chicanery, we don't have singlets on in the everyday line-up, there's no time clock ticking requiring scores be tallied by *whatever* means necessary (perhaps his filmer on shore needs fresh clips for the gram—or at least he can throw some buckets recognizable on camera rewind since the day is all about him!), and try and raise your awareness to some semblance of gentlemanly sport—dork!

A slight variation in the vein of this tactical groveling is back-paddling: upon seeing an incoming wave, a surfer a-ways-off but in contention proximity, ignoring and sprinting "behind" someone already waiting in good position, then if aggressive enough snags it from behind the person and presumes possession for themselves, this variation fairly prevalent at HB—sad to say. Here's one "fun" example of this annoying behavior even going back near two decades on Southside. Incredibly, I was the only guy out even near the pier on a so-so day and here comes a decent for the session left. My new buddy, who was just paddling out near the pilings, bee-lined it out twenty yards

and actually challenged me for it—the only two guys in the line-up. What? Are you kidding fellow—I'm going anyways, dufus! But these unpleasantnesses are only to inform the non-initiated that nearly every surf is a competition, and overt tactics oft come in to play—the hustle. You'd like to tell the fellow to try that behavior in Hawaii on a local some time and see how that goes; but he's in his element and likely with his bros nearby for support, braggadocio is in full swing, home-turf projection—locals first. Alas, we all choose our spots and stake our claims, hopefully enough small victories will add-up to override the unavoidable pains and infractions suffered, and that pursuit of fun being somewhere in the mix sometimes gets a little skewed.

Fast forward twenty years, and we two bump into each other at the Pier on a good day, as we have done nearly every winter and catch-up on surf travels (George stays in shape and surfs good, keen to experience Surfari adventure like me) and family stuff (he also has a foreign-born wife and child, and they gang-up on him and speak in German sometimes like my Ex and son used to do to me in Japanese—fun times!) that has transpired since last year and catch a few waves. This day when I first saw him, I noticed a certain focused squint in the eye and engaged countenance; he's dialed-in and has his "Huntington" game on. On it, and sure enough catches a really nice Southside right barrel—a nugget.

A little time transpires, and when G proceeds back to the line-up, dang
[continued in full book]



[in-between]
the **GETTIN'S**
good!

Some of the fondest memories in surfing are the moments that surround the actual wave riding. Those carefree days of youth when our folks simply dropped us off at the beach in the morning and picked us up later that arvo. Maybe we had some (fried tortilla) strips from the snack shack with our allowance change after bellyboarding for the day; freedoms enjoyed generally unsupervised—there might be other folks or lifeguards about depending on location, but with a non-threatening overall vibe in the air: the antithesis of some of the helicopter parenting exhibited today, and kind of hard to fathom such overall perceived innocence then from this vantage point.

One time decades on after parking in the lot in HB, I was walking along the shore towards the pier on Southside for the paddle-out next to the pilings on a steely-grey dark winter morning. Up close the surf was challenging looking enough and just then from some contest scaffolding being set-up a song from King Crimson's then newly released THRAK CD blasted from the speakers: thumping rhythm and grind to compliment the what could be considered foreboding from certain viewpoint conditions; apparently some tuned-in Dad had just the right ear for the ambiance to be complete—Zeitgeist indeed.

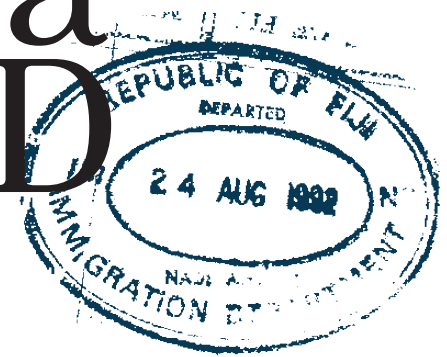
Then one fun time, and in direct contrast with today's home-school grommets making the scene seven-days-a-week; was out on Southside on a nice fall day. Decent surf and the pier bowl working as it did then. As alluded to and is of keen debate as to which is "better," until old enough to drive and ditch on occasion, we went to school during the week and surfed before, after, or on weekends

[continued in full book]



I painted this 24" x 36" Acrylic on Canvas: "Tavi Peeler" at the studio on Newport Blvd. shortly after returning from a two-week Surfari on Tavarua. One of the few pieces that in large part-painted itself-I just mixed the colors and laid down the strokes fueled on the focused exhilaration still buzzing from the experience. F-U-N! Doesn't feel worked on, as much as laid down freely. Hope it captures some essence of "Restaurants," surfing on another level. About a couple months upon returning from the trip, I was kneeling over rummaging through the bedroom closet for something I can't recall just now, when I happened to come across the reef booties I had worn on the excursion; and grasping them a full jolt of energy shot through my spine and I broke out with da-kine chicken-skin all-over, brah. Positive vibes stored for a little while inanimate, forever in the sensory/memory banks!

Tavarua ISLAND Fiji



I admit I've got a bit of a predisposition for being especially irked by the Call-Off-No-Catch-solecism, due to the fact I've unfortunately experienced it on the highest level. It's a pumping day out at Cloudbreak, the fabled offshore reef off the Island of Tavarua in Fiji. It's during the second week of my two-week stay there with my burie-buddy and oldest friend from the hood-Tosh in '92. I'm feeling pretty confident as the waves have lived-up to every bit of the fine reputation the place has, have gotten some good waves there and at the other nice break Restaurants, both lefts. I'm in good shape and if I could travel here more often at this level of athleticism and stoke; would be my favorite destination of all time for challenge and adventure, since I'm goofyfoot and can face the waves where tubes are commonplace. As mentioned, I'm feeling confident, in part due to then owner Dave Clark having called me into an

absolute macker out at Cloudbreak near the end of the first week. Was sitting a bit over, near the crack in the reef I had been using as a line-up marker, specifically to get onto (or around!) the occasional swing-wide sets that break nearer the channel than over the deepest "normal" take-off zone. So here comes a bomb. It happens I'm the only one even near it and it's coming straight at me. I want it-and I *don't* want it! Dave was paddling back out from his last ride (and by the way, to watch him surf Restaurants-the spot being named that, as it is just out front and close to the tiny island's casual, open-faced to the ocean eatery-was a dialed-in performance honed from numerous repetition; a level of surf involvement hard to ever achieve on a world-class wave-bloody awesome!), sees the wave and then me, and he's yelling: GO! Farkin'-A, if Dave's yelling, it's a good one. I glint the briefest view from the corner of my eye just to be sure it's me he's yelling at. It is. Swing around, chin down, and paddle



The view from "Restaurants" circa '92. At left: on the beach out front. At right: inside looking out at the racing walls, lefts for days! Plantation Island in the background, Namotu to the left out of view.

my 7'6" Channel Islands gun like hell and onto what sweet dreams are made of. Made of speed, power and beauty, even comparing some waves in Hawaii, this is a different kind of good; it's up there in the all-time stratosphere for my humble wave slidings—thanks Dave! So the second week, most of the crew changes and we're out at Cloudbreak, which requires a fairly short boat trip to reach (with the possible catch of a nice fish from the boatmen's trailing line on occasion) as it is a submerged reef

sticking up in otherwise deep ocean, on another A+ day. I'm being selective but steady, a similar situation occurs; here comes another macker in "my" window lined-up off the reef crack.

This time however, there's a fellow on my inside and a bit further out, and he's paddling too. A skilled surfer (from the 'Bu!), who in the day inhabits the moniker "Wave Killer," and indeed has a deserved profile; but now I guess he deserves this incoming wave cause he's yelling me and anyone nearby off *his*

[continued in full book]

you
might be
“SERIOUS
About
SURFING”
if you:

[After the previous but perhaps not-brief-enough examination of some minor discord and strife experienced in the sometimes selfish pursuit of catching waves and “Sitting On Top of the World” (as the Beach Boys sagaciously intoned) being “Serious” has its lighter moments as well.]

Leave your infant strapped in the baby seat

of the FourRunner in the Trestles parking lot for a dawn-patrol go-out. Doors locked, tinted windows ever-so-slightly cracked, fingers crossed the little bugger will be OK on his own (asleep?) for a couple hours—won’t choke or worse—or someone spy it in the back seat and call the cops. (I did, and didn’t call.)

Or—

Drive right past your friend Atsushi who is pulled-over on the side

of the 405 Fwy, not far from home, outside his hard-to-miss red 80’s Vanagon on your way to Trestles. He probably was on his way too, but heck (to a lesser degree than the fellow just mentioned regarding getting in the water at all costs), I’ve got a short window before my turn in watching the grom today; and if I stop, will jeopardize my chance at a session. And besides, he’s got his cell phone out—help is on its way—he’d do the same for me! Also, it’s not the first

“You’ve Got to WANT-It!”
(If One Need Ask—the Answer is NO.)

time a VW Kombi driver will be aborting a mission with the diverse engine/mechanical gremlins constantly at play. Sorry Atchan!

And speaking of Atsushi, he had an earnest run at being serious and was a competent surfer; maybe still—on in age, but with back challenges from his gardening gig. Even moving to the OC

from Japan partly to partake in our generous booty surf-wise usually on offer; after I had met him in Nagoya, back in my college/girl-chasing halfway-around-the-world-to-Tokyo days, and he had visited here and seen the potential.

Japanese surfers once bitten can be as hardcore as anyone. I was thrown-off a bit to see an entire line-up of folks sitting on their boards on a weekend morning; bobbing around and conversing, despite the ocean being flat as a lake. They had made the long drive to Chiba (short as the crow flies, but ever-so-slow on the narrow, cramped highway) from wherever; the paddling out will commence regardless of conditions—Banzai! Those wacky Zipperheads! (hey, don’t get all PC on me—I get to say it, being of kin and friends and all).

So Atsushi had a thing for Trestles too. One day he was riding down the asphalt trail on his skateboard, board tucked under arm, and hit some loose pebbles.

Went ass-over-teakettle and landed with his shortboard below him, cushioning the fall, but breaking-off all three fins. He really wanted to surf that day, so drove all the way back to Costa Mesa, loaded up his longboard, and drove back to Uppers for the much later than planned go-out. Get it while the gettin’s (still) good! You’ve got to: “WANT-It.”

Or—

Stay up all night long, tossing and turning about the speech you are going to give to the rival High School surf coach for switching beaches and invading the break you've been lately enjoying. She *has* her “designated” beach, and just because the waves have been more scarce there than here during this swell direction, gives her *no right* to the option of spoiling two breaks *whenever she pleases* with the: “paddle-out-en-mass-etiquette-no-mas” flagrant foul—complete disregard for those regulars enjoying some semblance of an unmolested morning session. “Enough is Enough already!”

Wifey (the better half!) wants to know what all the squirming is about, and get back to sleep. Upon hearing the details of the dilemma, offers up a simple: “You don't own the ocean!” (Get over it!) So, the next morning finally arrives. You're feeling extra crabby. Make the java and drop the morning deuce. Load-up the truck with board and not-quite-dry fullsuit by rote, swimming in a somnolent fog due to the

“You don't Own the Ocean!”

restless night's bout; but determined to tick the hi-light boxes of the prepared speech you've been incessantly mulling over, say what needs to be said, and let the cards fall where they may.

Park the truck in the lot, trudge across the sand with a head-full-of-steam and ready for confrontation; and reaching the point where you can take

in the line-up (expecting to see a free-for-all cluster-F), there's no-one about, just a few dawn-patrol takers. The class is back where they are “supposed” to be—it's all-for-naught. And now guess who's the fool? But you *were* ready, despite losing a good night's sleep and having a less-energized day ahead of you. Good thing you are so serious!

Or—

You've got a built-in “Froth” mechanism that somehow activates itself whenever a good swell is within reach. Honestly, It could be the one secret weapon, X-factor if you will, that upon reflection might just be responsible for having kept one in such good shape even into the later chapters; and a great last component for optimism that however bad these winters continue to get in SoCAL (and they will—**trust me bro!*) and the physical up-keep is neglected by uncontrollable circumstance (one can't really keep in surf shape without doing it; other maintenance activities are helpful—but if you can just surf enough—not needed at a level for having fun) one still has hope. It practically is essential for the long run, and needs activation more and more the longer one keeps interest at a high level.

The activation occurs whether through the excitement factor—I need to feel apprehensive or bursting at the seams in anticipation of fun to get motivated—not surfing in questionable conditions is the go-to choice for the individual with high-standards. To surf,

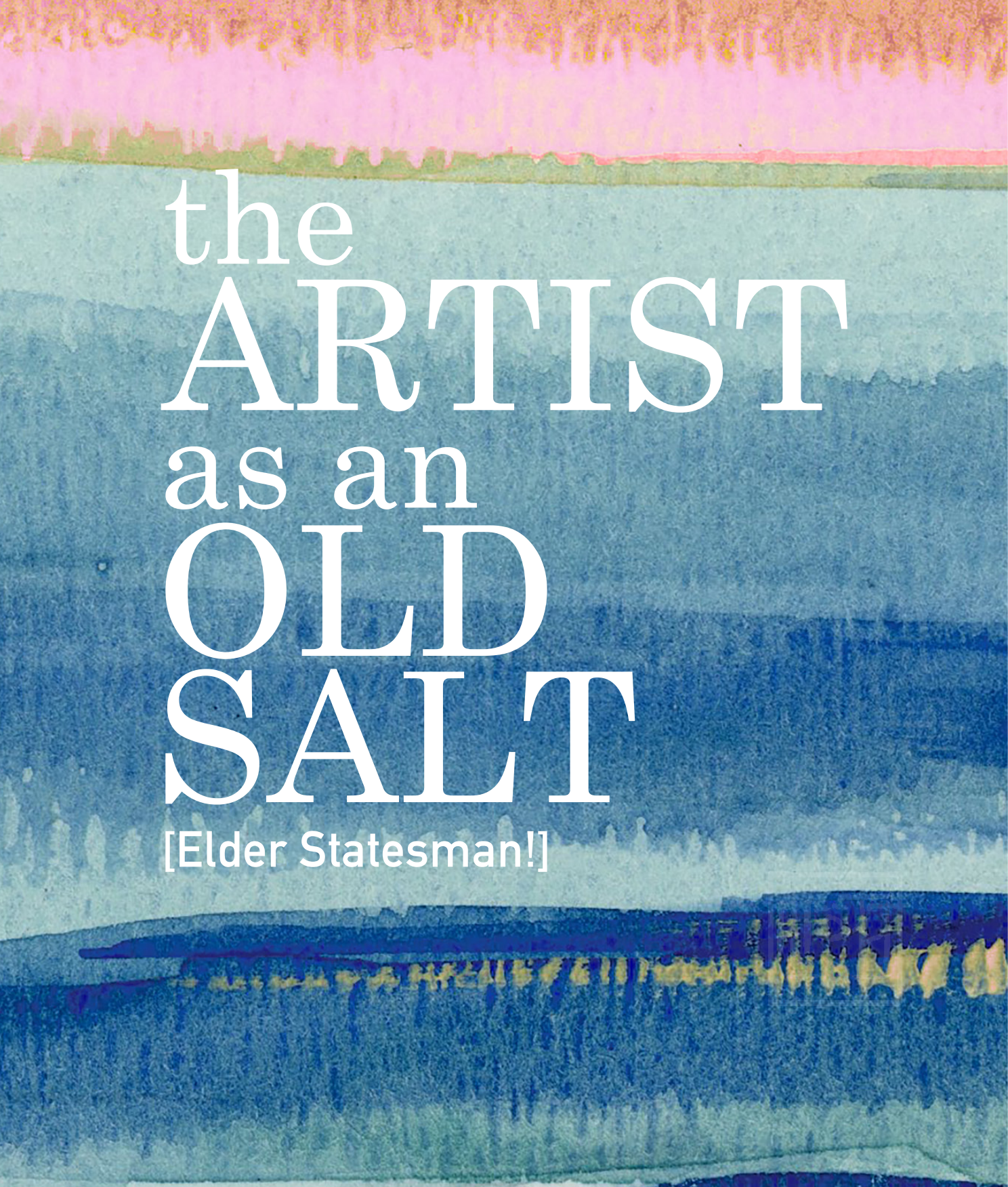
even if just out for a “maintenance” paddle with low expectations, and not having enough requisite fun seems to defeat the entire purpose—and what's the point? Here or there tolerable; an entire winter of long intervals between paddle-outs in HB with less than a handful of memorable rides just doesn't cut-it. We want good waves, had them for so very long—how to handle going forward with such dire long-term forecast (sorry folks!) I've yet to sort out.

In the mean time, here's hoping that the hidden “FROTH-Factor” still kicks-in as it reliably has for the last five decades. And to be more succinct of its symptom: When in knowledge of the opportunity at hand for the scoring of good waves, one's every thought for successful completion of said task becomes nearly overwhelming; and avoidance of missing said opportunity is relegated front burner. Everything else becomes a check-list of secondary considerations; what can and can't be ignored for the time being. Job(s) in the balance: get up early, knock 'em out before or after with increased concentration (we've already determined that gigs that hamper accessibility may already be suspect!:) Social events: unless serious relationship harming (tough call!) miss-able surely? Appointments with anyone but the doctor for serious issue: reschedule if possible. One possibly has already considered the long range forecast before making said engagements in the first place, especially now that such fewer prospects for scoring are becoming

evident. On-and-on down the list, one might come to find that lifestyle has been dictated to some degree by this force of nature. Even seeping into dream state, such as the variations on the theme that this fellow conjures occasionally: I can see good waves but through some differing but always perplexing circumstance, can't get to them! These have gotten way fewer over time, but I can still recall after some early-days surf trips, having fantastical scenarios play out in dreamland; line-ups so as to be another level of existence, and possibly waking up before actually sampling the nectar. (Look, I don't only dream of surfing. If one were looking to engage in a bit of *freudenshaden* for a laugh or commiseration—I've got a whole 'nother fun book to explore on another subject, that's title may say a lot towards hinting at similarity: *The Celibate Man*. Coming (or not!) to a Barnes & Noble near you (if there are any left by the time publishing favors me?)

So, of course situations arise that can't be helped when in froth state; but always with mitigating consideration before all hope is lost. And when I mentioned previously of having been “accused” of “being serious,” it has been due to my countenance just during this concentrated condition that the observation by others was made and pointed out on more than one occasion, “The Game Face is On,” Lil' Tommy is Serious! Suiting-up in the parking lot—stilted conversation. Assembling the gear into the car and beyond—not forgetting *any* detail large or small. Etc., etc. Get it While the Gettin's Good!

**trust me bro!* Normally, when one hears this, one could be about to be screwed royally from a fun but unfortunate experience upon hearing the quip. But really—you *can* trust me, seriously—just this *one* time?



the
ARTIST
as an
OLD
SALT
[Elder Statesman!]

While we all know that there are things about us that others close to us can see, that we can't see ourselves (at least *some* of us can acknowledge imperfection—that is!), in an attempt at clarification of my possible motivations and/or afflictions; it could be interesting to break oneself down for hopeful insight, or if nothing else, a little fun or discovery. Collected here is a list, 1 through 7, but in varying amounts to a tally of 10 for rounding out, and in no particular order, that might very well give clues as to what a: "Serious About Surfing" "Seasoned" Fellow might be composed of:

1. [3] Parts Spicolli

Jeff Spicolli to be specific, played by Sean Penn in the seminal classic (If anyone hasn't seen it? and if you haven't—please do!) 80's Movie: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. A somewhat codified surf/stoner character with a decent set of lifestyle priorities: Waves, Women & Weed! ("All I need is some...") The fun part is there is some underlying truth to the possibly exaggerated portrayal, this dude was *the dude* before the dude (Jeff Bridges) was The Dude in *The Big Lebowski* (both fun!) and pretty much nailed the youthful stoke of a dedicated SoCal enthusiast; who wore his south-of-the-border pullover hoodie and checker-pattern Vans slip-ons with unmitigated pride, and issued forth his thoughts and actions in an unfettered expulsion of bro-ness and general bitchen-ness.

It would be tough for me to flat-out deny having some underlying

similarities, and there is some further insight in the "Froth Mechanism" segment just laid out, the main difference between me and Spicolli being; I, for the most part, keep it under wraps, and feign a more composed exterior in the presence of others.

After all, I am a middle child, artistic by nature; and with a certain stoic Scandinavian, part German heritage attendant understated manner and of a reticent personality in general.

The other characters in *Fast Times* all fit in to the high-school social scene appropriately—if not awkwardly in many cases—for those coming-of-age days, but Spicolli operates in his own salt-drenched euphoric vortex, the others revolving around him; including in dreamtime as to his assessment of his surf championship opponents: "All those other guys are fags!" (Pardon the non-PC F-word reference now-a-days, it doesn't mean gay so much as: "pussies,"—if that's any better?) It could very well be that I, indeed resemble the Dude under all other pretexts of outward appearance, and woe-be-to-me should the day come I ever let it go, or *worse*, it leaves me.

2. [2] Parts Severson

John Severson (RIP Legend) to be specific, best known as the founder of Surfer magazine, and a trail-blazing surf film pioneer and photographer, and perhaps also lesser known for his lengthy fine artist output. It was his latest stage as Aloha Shirt designer collaborating with Kahala, that I particularly appreciated; due to the simple fact of creative output to

the very end, executing hand-drawn original pieces well into his senior years when many folks might otherwise be comfortably settling into a relaxed (hopefully!) retirement. A fine example of the power of creativity never ceasing, and the willingness and learned discipline to wrangle that energy into producing work that folks can enjoy beyond just the enjoyment of self in the process; which is an aspirational goal for any true creative. And, his stuff was great! There is beyond the artist side of creating engaging textile images, the designer element of laying out desirable repeat patterns for the shirt manufacture, so an additional reward if one could do both.

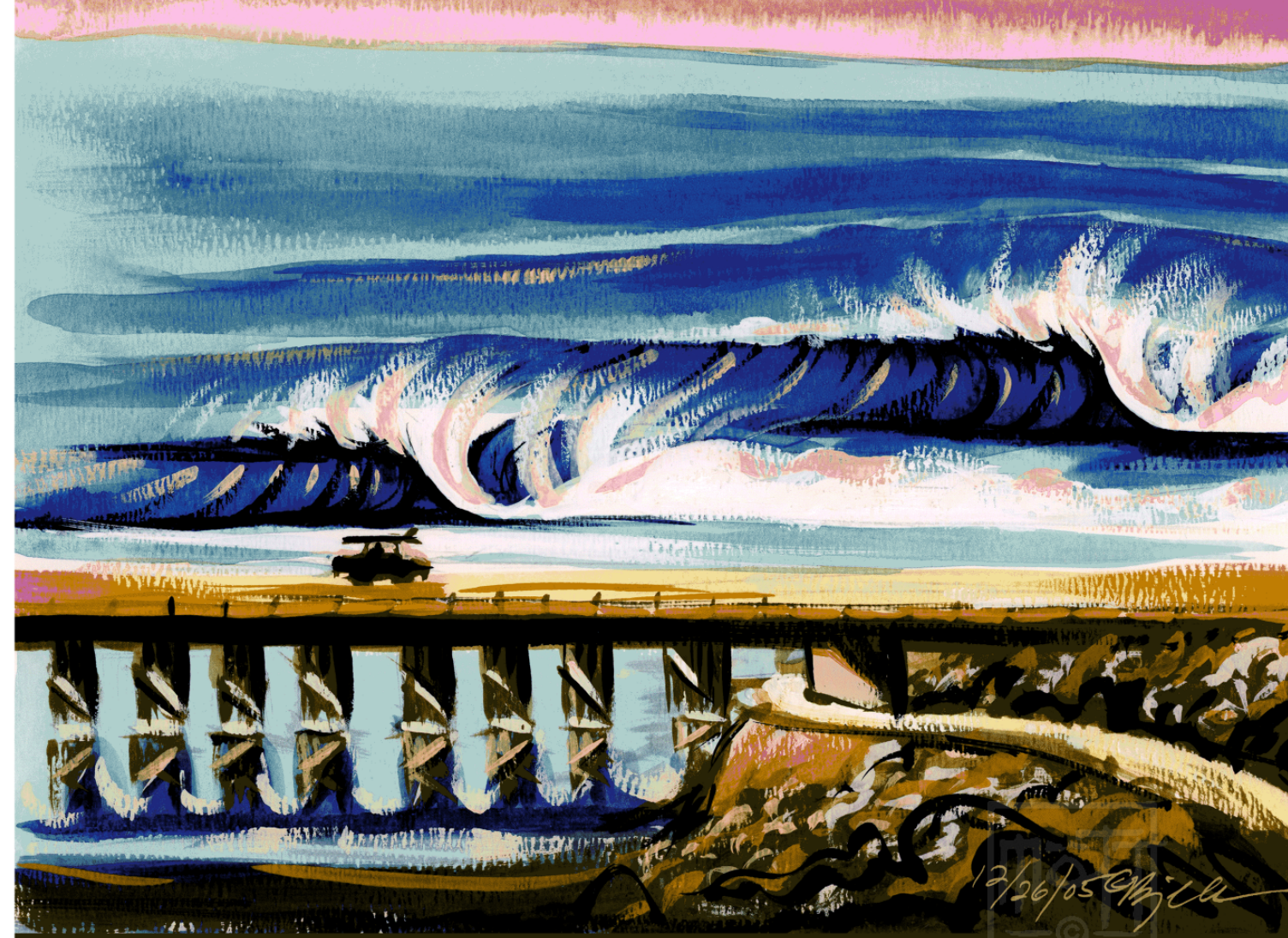
As far as any similarities I've got are the heritage mentioned earlier: Norwegian/German and having the SoCal upbringing, and also being a creative interested in multiple platforms. I only did one semester at Long Beach State where I grew up and he degreed in Fine Art, but the OC environs of his earlier and my later—but still great times—could possibly be felt in the output of both respectively. I'd mentioned my decade and a half-plus screenprint designer experience for major surf brands as a "pro," but starting out at age nine—a year *before* my first actual stand-up surf immersion—copying surf photos (and later logos) from Surfer magazine—so there's that. Also, from photos he was a competent ("Serious?") surfer, lived for a time overlooking Cottons (legendary!) and had his own little Shangri-la on Maui later on. I did have a home in Costa Mesa

for a couple decades of family life, but the Hawaii thing or end-game strategy has yet to play out, we'll see how that may unfurl—fingers crossed.

I met John once at a Kahala/department store promo signing, and he was cordial. I'd arrived a little late and whatever crowd was there had dispersed, there was a table with signed posters and whatnot, no one around. Then he'd returned and noticed someone had left a bookmarked periodical that apparently had a story about "back in the day." As he picked it up, he remarked to me offhand: "Let's see if I agree with them." Lived it! It could be fun to apply that to some argument I might be proposing in other chapter, but it's so difficult to fathom splitting ranks with long ties over miscommunication, that possibly wouldn't matter in any case or circumstance—speculation of viewpoint—no matter who wins the deliberation, both people lose.

So, in brighter news as to positive energy, and in regards to content and intent, if there is one thing that I won't argue; as far as growing up in SoCAL in contemplating creative influence, we *all* had that best.

When he passed, there was some nice memorial notation, but having personally ranked him only second on my totem pole as surf artist greats below Rick Griffin—RIP (and by the way, it's not even close to be fair—for all of us; most everyone knows his "cartoon" and unreal lettering work—and its influence does show in some fellows' output—but combined with his painted



CHURCH(es) San Clemente, CA / "Get Into the Church on Time" / Watercolor, Gouache on Paper, Mac Digital '05. Some influence from Sevo's style in this little study: hand-painted surf scene with pumping/exaggerated waves, the vintage surfmobile racked and rollin'—the theme veering towards stoke as primary objective.

Some folks might consider The Church of the Open Sky as devout as any stained-glass or pewed house of worship; as good a place as any to spend Sunday Morning (or any other day!) in communion with the Almighty—call it God, Mother Nature, Goodness (although sometimes too much convergion can wrangle the congregation). And despite being a confirmed—but physically oft-absentee Lutheran—I concur on the immersion with nature as an excellent conduit for nourishing the soul, the positive energy usually comes back out two-fold. "Amen."

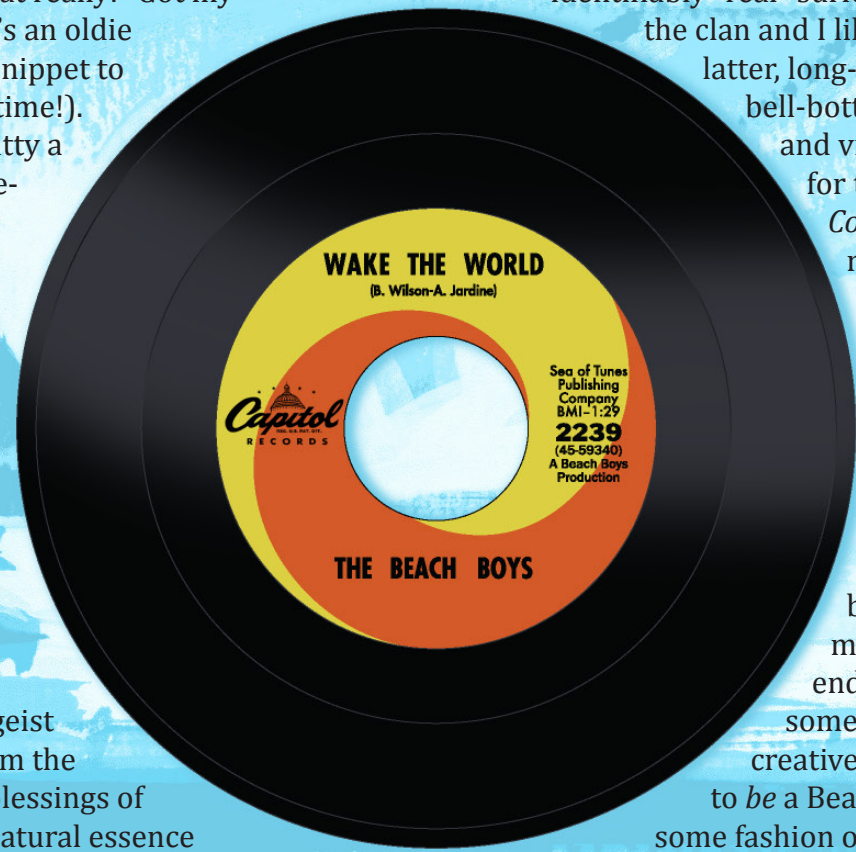
canvas works—*no one* is at that level of originality and expression; it would be as if one were a guitarist/songwriter and had ambitions of comparing oneself to Jimi Hendrix), the world didn't slow

down as one would hope for such accolade, and reflection of the self-fulfillment aspect of doing creative work becomes all the more apparent. Work hard, surf hard, enjoy!

3. [1] Part Brian (and Dennis) Wilson

The first record I ever bought around ten years-old or so with my own allowance, was a 45rpm of the Beach Boy's *Do It Again*. And while the song captured the edging-towards-groovy Southern California surf-stomp beach vibe of the day, it was the B-side: *Wake the World* that really: "Got my goat" (there's an oldie vernacular snippet to go with the time!). A sublime ditty a mere minute-twenty-nine seconds long that touched on a whole 'nother aspect of how "California-ism" felt; capturing nicely the below-the-surface zeitgeist awarded from the immersive blessings of the serene natural essence of the landscape; rounding out the doo-wah-bop of sun, surf, cars and beach babes that the group was otherwise famous for to great effect.

I didn't know until much later about the genius of Brian Wilson's creative output, and there are other great tunes written by other members of the group such as Al Jardine's *California Saga/California* (which if when heard—doesn't



make one want to surf—is impossible for this fellow to fathom) and of course the acclaimed *Pet Sounds* offerings, and it was fun to hear Brian interviewed on radio and mentioning *Wake the World* as one of his personal favorites.

I added brother Dennis onto the list simply because he was the most identifiably "real" surfer amongst the clan and I liked their latter, long-haired and bell-bottomed look and vibe such as for the '73 *In Concert* tour recording, and as a youth I wanted to connect to the positive vibe of the music and band. If not musically endowed, somehow creatively, I wanted to *be* a Beach Boy in some fashion or other.

While I might put Honk's *Five Summer Stories* soundtrack (also of course California based creativity at work!) at the top of my list for surf tunes getting the most spins of my vinyl collection over the years, *Do It Again/Wake the World* was my first, and still a treasured milestone of "who" I wanted to be.

4. [1] Part David Nuuhiwa

As far as approach to surfing by example, as a budding 12-or-13-year-old surf neophyte with a couple of years in the water, the day I saw Nuuhiwa logging from above on the Southside of Huntington Beach Pier was the time the light-bulb flashed-on for good: "So that's how it's done!" I'm still trying to surf like the fellow, and there is upcoming expulsion on the subject in: *Best I Ever Saw*. The only thing I'll mention ahead of time, is that beyond the deserved recent accolades such as the great piece in TSJ as regards to stylish repertoire in more of the golden-age, I personally got to see him surf at later stages than that longboard era most publicized, the fellow was radically aggressive under all that flow and charged—*all* bases covered.

5. [1] Part William Finnegan

I'm not about to compare myself in the writing category with the author of perhaps the greatest surf book ever written: *Barbarian Days A Surfing Life*. After all, I am a visual artist first, and the words that I've written are from experiences I've felt a strong compulsion to share for commiseration, empathy or fun, I've not the skills to write about anything else other than personal experience. But I've been an avid Fiction/Literature reader my entire adult life, have the entire collection as an original subscriber to *The Surfer's Journal* (among my 400-or-so personal book library), and was even a book dude as a little fellow; I still have my original copies of *Winnie the Pooh*, *It's the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown*, and *How the*

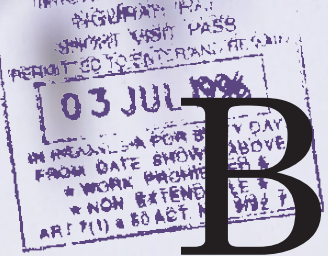
Grinch Stole Christmas that Mum gave me, already showing an interest in art/illustration from a wee age.

Pretty much this entire compilation of photos, art, and ideas was wrought from the fun of putting it all together, especially since there was no pre-determined goal of publication; I just documented and created work that moved me over the years, was methodical in nature (neat freak!) to keep organized archives (I have nearly every Mac digital file I've ever created recorded by date and stored on CD, DVD and back-up drives for twenty-five plus years of sole-proprietorship graphic design; despite divorcing and several down-sizing moves [some fun stuff on that experience in another book project I knocked-out during the C19 lockdown: *Dementia Mom*,] shedding a lot of "stuff," but keeping the goods.)

So, as to my listing of W. Finnegan, it's more the: "Getting it out there" at a level of professionalism and sophistication that surfing deserves, and not the word part (thank goodness for spellcheck, etc., and by the way, the yin to the Spicolli yang as far as representation) so much; but with apologies to any "serious" English Majors regarding technicalities, as mentioned being an overwhelmingly visual creative—my syntax is actually based more visual and "sounds-like" arrangement; it's the content needing/wanting to get out that fuels the expulsion—the hope being that the message gets through.

And, I can add a fun bit that one would hope Mr. Finnegan would enjoy

[continued in full book]



Bali INDO- NESIA





"Bingins" shot from the side-view from an empty "Dreamland" clifftop. Circa '96. The cliffs look fairly undeveloped, although having only seen other photos and not visited since, can only guess the at the current state of "development." At right, top: Thomas B. enjoys a brewski—shootin' a selfie—before it actually was called such a thing. Canon AE1 with Velvia slide film—Auto Focus! I've got a good eye for image framing, but not that great with aperture and speed settings—hence the overexposure. But overall they've got an old-skool film feel which I miss some with areas of digital photography today. Middle: Bingins from shore. Bottom: Relaxing in the warm dense air, on the balcony of a Kuta hotel. Walking distance to the reefs and a delicious plate of Nasi Goreng (the Indonesian soul food: fried noodles & veggies—don't forget the sunnyside-up egg on top!).

Maybe you know my friend, his name his Ketut. Which being only one of three choices for first names given to Balinese males, is a pun; maybe funnier to say in person though. There's probably a lot of folks who know Ketut by his nickname Kong, as in King Kong, which I gather he acquired for his statuesque physique and surfing prowess back in the day before suffering a back injury as a result of a hang-gliding accident; and turning his focus to the burgeoning surf industry, becoming a leader with both Quiksilver and Volcom licenses for Indo. I met Ketut (and Aussie partner Stephen Palmer) when I had the studio in Newport (for about a decade) through my friend Mino, who knew each other from the influx of Japanese tourists and surf adventurers to Bali in the early days. We became friends and I did some illustration and design work for their shops there (Dreamland Logo, among others) before visiting on a solo R&D and surf trip there in '96. Somehow Bali seemed more "Asian" to me than Japan did on the half-dozen or so trips I visited Tokyo for romance and then family. The smells, customs, architecture and scenery, even something in the air, felt so "Eastern" with a good sprinkling of mysticism throughout. The Balinese were very friendly, at the time there was only the temple (& monkeys!) at Uluwatu; and much of the Bukit Peninsula was still natural topography and jungle, a very cool vibe overall.

One interesting thing happened to me at Bingins after surfing and relaxing—even had a massage, although I couldn't
[continued in full book]





Kenny Kolanoski sliding right at Playa El Mojon, Huatulco, Mexico / Photo shot from the Cinco Amigos Palapa.

WHY CAN'T We be [photography by: michael voorhees] Friends?

We are friends! We've been on Surfari to Huatulco together, stayed at the beachfront house on the North Shore on several occasions, gotten to catch-up with goings-on back in OC often enough (the good fellow kindly shares his Mesa Verde homegrown with me—plant that bell and let it ring! the happy farmer—and thanks!) and so forth. The dude charges solid *Alligators* (surf spot-not the reptile), and is a dedicated now longboard rider—although not of the nose-pose, the charging breed but with a stylish cutback and switchfoot capability, and he's a funny dude. Always at the ready with a politically incorrect or bawdy joke, has a wickedly funny voice impersonation of a (South Asian) masseuse that he teases me with since I like the Asian persuasion: "hey mistah Tom, you likea me makea you feel sooo good?" (it's good enough that maybe he heard it first hand-ha!) and generally how shall we say: "Cut from a different cloth." Which is a big element of what I like about the fellow.

I recall the first time I saw him, in line with friends in front of me and Atsushi at a Thomas Campbell film at the Lido Theatre in Newport: there's an (interesting) fellow, not of the typical surf stature, compact (he's small in size—but big in flavor!) and sort of has a look that he could be a model for a Rick Griffin surf cartoon side-kick character. I don't know him, but he's wearing a screenprint shirt I designed for my longtime photographer colleague who is the friend we have in common and then went on to spend a lot of fun time with

together on said surf-excursions.

CBK, (Crow-Bar-Kenny) to give you a hint at fun character, has an entertaining backlog of stories that include minor brushes with "the authorities." Such as an innocent taser gun expulsion in the presence of an officer, and there is rumor that he might have chased a long-standing respected shaper with a crowbar in the parking lot after the bloke had accused him of hogging too many waves out at River Jetties. I'll not comment on the accusation of the monopolizing waves issue, although hey—if you are out at grinding, pumping El Mojon while having to constantly paddle against the current pushing you out of the take-off zone, and are hesitant to push over the ledge and he's close by on the big board, he's going and you ain't, so buck-up! He did finally break the 10' long, 4" thick stick while charging his umpteenth barrel in shallow water, and it was a day after I had predicted it would happen; but being friends and all, feigned a sympathetic frown when he walked in to Mike's Palapa with the two pieces under arm. Finally! Ha-ha. But glad it was the board snapped and not my bro.

One thing that is fun to note about life in general amongst friends who share interests—or more rightly addictions since we are on the general subject of surfers—is how "God" or Nature provides some know-how in doing things so differently in individuals, yet distinct enough to provide employment or wherewithal for "getting by," or even in Mike's case, very

successfully. A talented photographer with a good eye, but with a built-in hustle that being an extrovert is a great aid business wise to his long career. I never knew he had a bit of ADD as a child when we became friends sharing a studio for around a decade when we were both starting out, but it could be an underlying element as to why his hustle (assisted by wife KV along the way) coupled with the talent was such a benefit in those early-days pre-digital. You had to keep moving. Plan an entire shoot for a client, engaging with a lot of different folks besides models, and shoot on film; possibly have the lab develop a few pushes back or forth from hard-earned experience, and there was always the possibility of something not going as planned, which with digital now you can see as

you go—so much more risk involved. Not as much competition back then due to accessibility being far less pre-digital, but “The KID,” as we still refer to his nickname having rambled up to Irvine in his VW Kombi with the *Girls of San Diego State* Calendar in tow upon graduation and a positive energy, had a great run of things, and I enjoyed learning a lot about photography beyond having fun from the relationship.

Kenneth, on the other hand, or shall we say, side—of the brain (right), has an inert talent for deciphering how mechanical things operate; and can tell you the type, pros and cons of the industrial air-conditioning system at the Mexico City airport during transit from his long-standing self-employed technician and repair service. And,


similarly as to part of my motivation of operandi, does his own thing to be able to fit in the surf sessions, thank you very much. I’ve not the latitude to decipher mechanical operations, can do basic home repair tasks, but usually need at least two trips to Home Depot before getting it right, being of the “left” brain and creative first in capability. However, having by necessity learned and then embraced the Mac from being a career graphic designer, can pick-up most software programs handily, although couldn’t write code if my life depended on it. KK, on the other hand from brief observation, if put in front of the computer screen; there is a shut-down, and not on the electronics end.

We’re in the check-in lines at HNL for the return flight, I’ve got a peaking buzz from the “J” Lindsey shared with

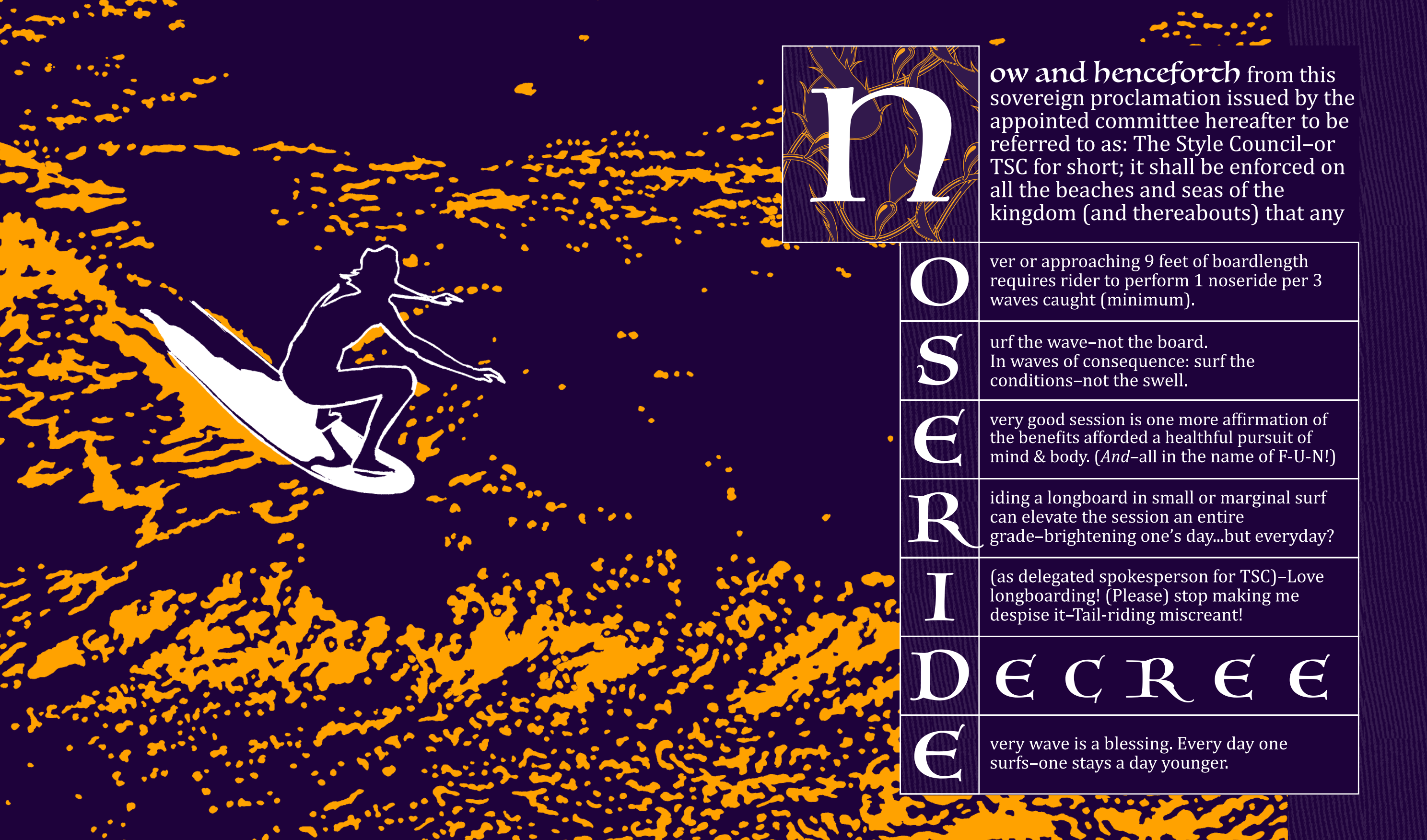
us on his short shuttle/send-off to the terminal—thanks! But I can still work my way through the passenger confirmation screen and over to help sir Kenneth who’s standing there with a somewhat bewildered look in front of the kiosk. Just enter name, push accept, scroll-through, accept, etc. and out comes the boarding pass. Pretty interesting how we each have our limitations, but together get things done.

Which brings me to the gist of this ramble besides introducing some fellows I like, and like to be around. All along our way, once every so often Kenny might throw out a political statement of opinion that adheres in confluence with the Republican party directive. Besides being more of a declaration than a conversation topic, and as has been mentioned previously

[continued in full book]



Tom on a rare shoulder backside at El Mojon. The waves were pumping in Huatulco! While this one is slopey, if you’ll notice that swell outside gathering itself, it’s going to ledge and start barreling behind the rocks there. Being in the right take-off spot with the strong current proved tricky. I could’ve used another foot of board for the paddle.



N

ow and henceforth from this sovereign proclamation issued by the appointed committee hereafter to be referred to as: The Style Council—or TSC for short; it shall be enforced on all the beaches and seas of the kingdom (and thereabouts) that any

O	ver or approaching 9 feet of boardlength requires rider to perform 1 noseride per 3 waves caught (minimum).
S	urf the wave—not the board. In waves of consequence: surf the conditions—not the swell.
E	very good session is one more affirmation of the benefits afforded a healthful pursuit of mind & body. (<i>And</i> —all in the name of F-U-N!)
R	iding a longboard in small or marginal surf can elevate the session an entire grade—brightening one’s day...but everyday?
I	(as delegated spokesperson for TSC)—Love longboarding! (Please) stop making me despise it—Tail-riding miscreant!
D	E C R E E
E	very wave is a blessing. Every day one surfs—one stays a day younger.

rider of approaching nine feet of board-length in the general shape other than gun; and should there be any other surfer(s) present in the vicinity “sharing” the waves, shall be required to exhibit at least one Noseride within a span of every three waves (minimum) as a gesture of goodwill and confirmation that: YES! I am riding a WAVEHOGGING BOARD in crowded conditions, I am a career wave-hogger—you’ve seen me at your break the last couple decades and *never* off the longboard* in any and all conditions; and since we are mostly all friendly acquaintances it hasn’t been pointed out in sincere discourse that taking a wave of every set (and sprinting back out to the line-up, sometimes diagonally and seemingly oblivious through a next-in line-waiting group of hopefuls—as if a cluster of priority buoys—towards an incoming swell—and thine’s next *rightful* wave) more than a little annoying, but hey—a good bloke ye be otherwise—be it no one can deny; other than thou’s here-stated charge of gluttony. That it’s generally “accepted” or more likely overtime “forgotten” that there is such a paddling advantage and the practice of ignoring the first half of the board other than to get on the wave and only ever riding the big board off the tail as if in complete ignorance or denial of *Form Follows Function* for employing said craft and could even be considered an egregious sin of nature, perceived to be counter of any soulful intent and therefore generally pronounced to be of scorn to TSC. That accrual and acquisition trumps ever doing a tight

turn or ever getting tired of just all that board out in front while on the wave over and over again (boring!—no really).

Shall said rider be observed to be in contempt, violation, flagrant disregard, blatant disdain, infraction prone or generally “flatulent” in respect to edict and caught in *flagrante delicto*—that is to say, caught while the crime is blazing (and hopefully not while in front of and spraying a fellow rider for further penalty to be administered upon later review) the immediate actions shall be administered. The rider’s board shall be confiscated and one-third (or thereabouts) of plane-ing area be ceremoniously removed from the nose and then reshaped into a point along with whatever further rail/deck area be required to achieve such design; glassed and returned to and thus relieving the rider of possible further violations now that the craft is devoid of real estate originally (and still utilized with fervor from other contingent of wave stylists as recognized and sanctioned by TSC) implemented for the act of artful Noseriding. The “revamped” board shall still have sufficient volume for surf accessibility but on a more “equitable” level, and could now be conceived of having the characteristic inherent to the “Fun” Board classification, (which could be perceived a misnomer for everyone other than the rider; as there is still distinct paddling advantage and it has been observed that the shape quite often enough is piloted by an enthusiast who is just good enough to ride the vessel—but not proficient to the skill level required of a shortboard [yet?] and

often enough can be observed “getting in the way” of the general public in wave sliding consortium). Be it stated with this intent that TSC is not empowered or of solemn oath and proscribed action that fun of any type in the line-up is to be discouraged; we’re just saying: You might be having a bit too much at our expense—*thank you very little*.

Considerations will be heard for determination if accused subjects have displayed character or actions counter to those stated in the preceding bylaws to be excused and/or if of age or physical restraints to be still actively engaged in the enjoyment pursuit regardless the craft—including longboard—but of amenable temperament and considerate to other participants while engaged will be taken into account.

Addendum proscribed to SUP enthusiasts shall unfortunately prohibit the use in ***any* crowded line-up as it has been observed on occasion to be: 1. Dangerous to others 2. Counter to the spirit of the craft—the whole underlying reason for the set-up is to access difficult, un-surfed waves no one can get to easily and have it to yourself 3. Thirdly: part of the overall enjoyment of surfing comes with the sitting back out after riding a wave and paddling back out. Resting, taking in the surroundings with all senses in alert-but-calmed repose, possibly chatting with acquaintance, meditations that can’t be accessed while on terra firma that can surface while in the ocean, simply enjoying the peaceful moments between fun or thrill. A whole line-up in many

instances, floating like a consortium of content seals (when viewed in the fullsuit/cool water environs). Meanwhile, *the entire time* our SUP brother is back-and-forth, back-and-forth—keeping the tension in the air, churning butter just in front of us outside break enthusiasts, eyes peeled for that next swell to burn out to and ride past, one good wave *in advance* of any incoming set not to be considered eligible for the taking by anyone else. TSC certainly does not state that SUP brother is in anyway not adept, skillful or (personally) good intentioned, but the doctrines put forth do include consideration of all aspects of the surf enjoyment experience (for all) not to be interfered upon, indifference not be encouraged, and are hereby motivated to inform and exhort paddle-bro (that while we like you otherwise): Beat It! Dude. ***Hawaii excluded?-don't kill me!*

*One fellow as prime example of this hereby sanctioned offender status by TSC (the identification of whom will not be revealed at this point except to hint at the location is HB Pier [go figure], who by the way, was/is in perfectly operable physical condition, as are most of our subjects poked at in facetious essay—decent surfers who otherwise don’t “shine”—due to anyways being Fool’s Errand for hoping such expulsion would alter any behavior or have any other affect other than for entertainment or commiseration purposes) was observed to paddle out a shortboard for a couple of months one season after an extended logging campaign, thereby affecting a significantly reduced amount of waves per session and merely blending into the crowd. Apparently couldn’t stand it, switched back to logging-and-hogging—the good fellow just needs that set wave. Every Set. At least one. (Don’t We All?) He deserves it after all—he’s a *nice* guy! Or, unless he can windmill back out and get two! Allegedly. Whoopee!
Mr. WaveHog-LogDog—see you in the line-up (too!) soon!



[FELLOW CRETANS!]

It has come to our attention regarding documentation and extolling of surf adventure that specific jargon may be in excess and/or deficiency of sophisticated taste boundary. Thereby specific recommendations shall henceforth be

3/24/24

decreed guidelines and be thoroughly enforced on all the beaches, shores and thereabouts, with consequence of deeming non-abiders as denizens and/or (non-cave) dwellers in the general realm of kook-dom. (Or just slightly annoying).

1. **The photo caption:** “Not a Drop of Water Out of Place” shall be permanently retired. The over-usage of said quote vastly diluting the original grandeur used to extol wave/surf conditions in the ethereal realm—now hackneyed: watered-down and weather-beaten. Furthermore, conflict arises when considering a prescribed lack of originality by the user, the usurper may be deemed indolent—verging on slothful—and generally unimaginative in character, wit, and/or misappropriate in brevity.

2. **Photo captions** comparing wave images to other more famous breaks shall be deemed uncouth and verging on blasphemous; such as: “Pipeline comes to *(insert your local break here)*.” While the Council acknowledges the intent of said transgression as merely being descriptive in a positive sense, denigration occurs for both breaks referred to as Pipeline is brought down a notch from its throne as World’s Heaviest (at least most renowned heavy—with its fair share of fatalities mixed-in with the thrill) and possibly Most Beautiful to top-it-off; while *(your local break)* is short-changed of its aspirations at greatness. If it’s that good—even if a once-in-a-lifetime offering—it’s just plain GOOD. No need for extraneous hyperbole other than if extolled for its own merits. Furthermore, if wave comparison is foremost in captioning, is ignorance of the entire experience that affects all the senses surrounding the actual riding (or mind-surfing) unintentionally revealed?

What one does or enjoys about any locale with surfable waves—in and out of the water is reflective of the entire immersion during and in the memory banks, separating the experience from the image is suspect to digital image oversaturation requiring too-much commentation be applied so liberally. TSC *recommends:* put the phone down, book a plane ticket. Additionally, latitude shall be granted for the naming of spots, i.e.: The Mexican Pipeline (Puerto Escondido), and if already established are in continuum permitted for recreational purposes. Similarly, descriptive narrative of similarity between two breaks for purposes of communicating characteristic traits only is not discouraged at this review.

3. **Sandbar:** “*Stranded on a Sand-Bar (stuck in my tracks like a streetcar)*”, might be one of the lyrics a lot of folks are singing-along with up in heaven with the late, great troubadour Jimmy Buffet RIP in their midst this year. It’s the figurative definition of the detrimental aspect of Sand-Bar, the one *Son-of-a-son, son-of-a-son of a sailor* is loath to encounter, dry-docked on the voyage in-or-out in shallow depth and of uncertain outcome; of course the song metaphorically speaking: dry-docked on the voyage of life—for the moment?

For surfers the word Sand-Bar conjures the opposite, an occasional building-up of sand at a spot that creates a shallower area for the incoming swells to build-up and pitch forward into a more hollow-barreling iteration than usual, as well as to a

[continued in full book]

Aloha Gerry [in memorial: Gerry Smith]



photo: Bret's Friend (Get Name)

The fully-realized Poi Dog throws us a shaka, surrounded by his surfcraft/fun-time progeny. His genuine smile belies the fact that this photo was taken in the throws of painful treatment. The docs gave him 3 months, he gave us nearly 3 years.

Born in Chicago, having grown-up in Long Beach, California, Gerard Smith passed away December 21, 2019 at age sixty near his most current home in Huntington Beach; due to advanced complications of Melanoma Cancer. Father, husband, surfer, shaper, semi-pro shredder in his day, glasser and trailblazer; spiritual minister, some might know him as the Poi Dog, and if you ever met him, you never forgot him.

I knew Gerry through my good friend Bret Boyd whom grew up across the street from each other in our pleasant, if not slightly melancholic suburban neighborhood. They were life-long friends and it was always a burst of inspiration seeing him sporadically over the years, as he had left for Hawaii with a hundred bucks and a ten-speed after graduating from Millikan High School on a surf-fueled expedition of life and

never looked back. Gerry had a unique and infectious energy that I loved, he was the closest thing to a cartoon character you could ever meet when he was rolling, he might greet you with a *"flurry of jabs to the mid-section"* and he was a funny dude.

If not book smart, Gerry had street smarts in spades, a talent for picking up languages easily and a congeniality and acceptance of others that enabled him to travel extensively, having friends in California, Hawaii, Japan, Peru, and Tahiti where he had lived the last couple decades near Teahupo'o. Starting a family, ministering, and shaping boards under his POI Tahiti label. He had moved the family back home to California with his wife Lita for their kids' education, and was sadly diagnosed not too long after.

While there might be a fellow in each surf community (now there might be gals, but there sure weren't back then) who packed-up and left for Hawaii to surf big waves and settle in amongst the North Shore underground,

Gerry centered on the South Shore which made him a little different, socially adventurous in his own way. One of my fondest memories of seeing him was on my semester-off from City college first trip there with our friend Scott McIntosh, just a year or so after he had moved, we ran in to him in Waikiki. Sitting atop the backrest of the Da Bus stop bench; shirtless, tan, pre-pterygium eyes

flashing, wild-blond-mane bobbing up and down, animated gestures and barely decipherable pidgin, he had melded right into the Hawaiian Kama'iana Surf-dog. Pretty inspirational that he made it happen! However he did it. Looking back—a subtle nudge for me to follow my own path in certain directions.

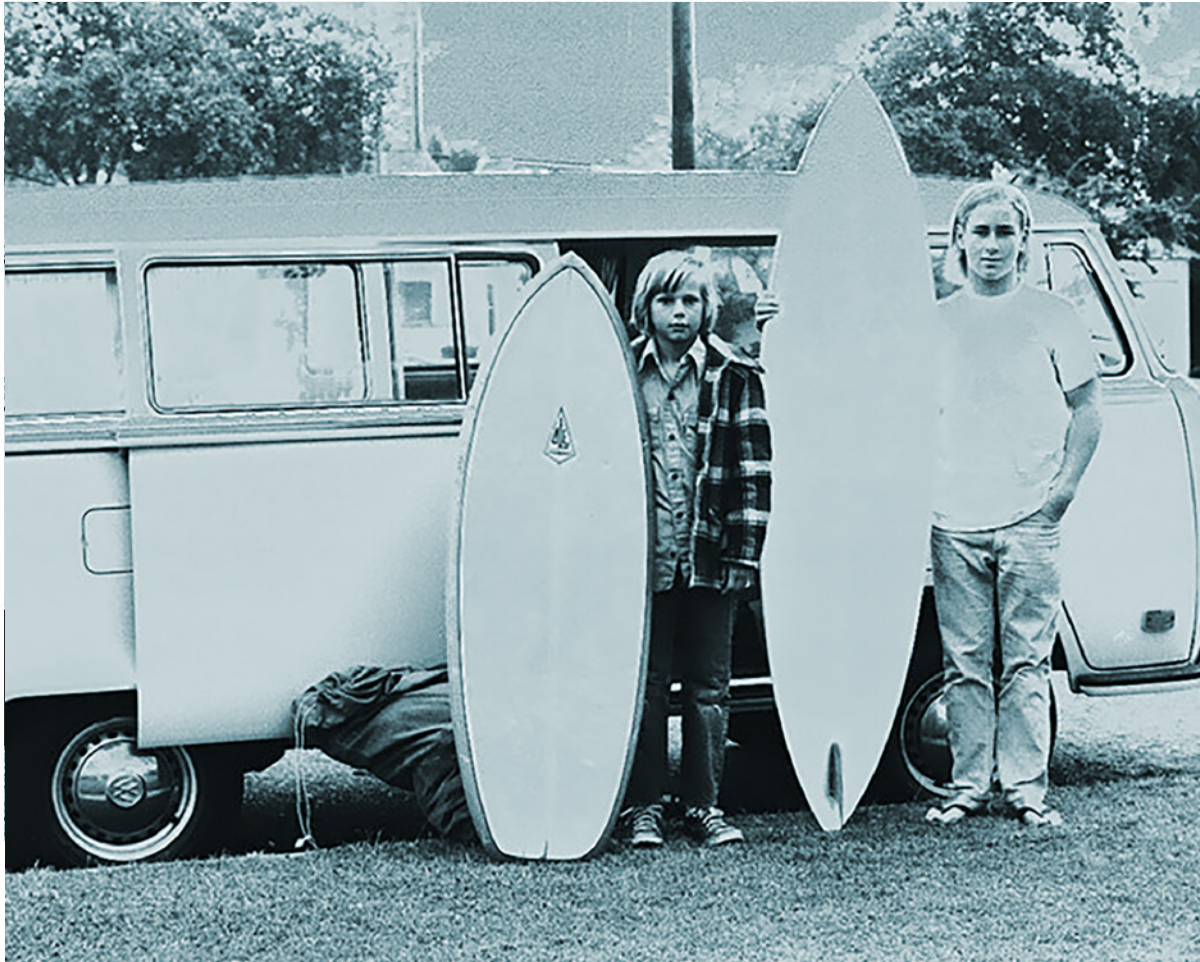
Gerry was a good surfer. He was a semi-pro during his long tenure in Hawaii (Japanese sponsors, wetsuits, clothing, etc., but not paying the rent—everyone was involved in the surf industry or otherwise to make things work) in the power school as a young man and while not the largest in stature, cracked-the-lip with authority. Besides the good many adventures that his journey led him to as a young man, a wrong turn in Peru led him to contracting hepatitis

that nearly killed him, and was a turning point. Fortunately, he found solace in scripture and brotherhood, became a devout Christian, turning his direction all the way positive and *spread the gospel of Aloha* as a driving

force from then until now.

Gerry is survived by his wife Lita, sons ----- and daughters; *Aloha-----, (sister?)* and if there is one thing that brings comfort in this sad situation that life can beget, is that he was surrounded by a loving family and left us with a positive energy up until the very end. A warrior, he sparred with his diagnosis, he had that inspirational take on life that had

“Father, husband, surfer, shaper, semi-pro shredder in his day, glasser and trailblazer, spiritual minister; some might know him as the Poi Dog, and if you ever met him, you never forgot him.”



The future artist to become known in certain circles as “stickman,” Bret Edington Boyd stands the same height as his classic OLE paipo/kneeboard. Meanwhile the hero of our short tale, the future Poi Dog, Gerry Smith; nonchalantly, hand-in-pocket and on-rail, confidently claims California Surf Dog replete with pintail singlefin. And don't forget the classic Vdub Kombi—thank you very much! Photo courtesy of the William Boyd Archives.

you know him in those semi-wild early days, might not have guessed he would be able to wrangle his path into enjoying such a fantastic domestic blessedness, perhaps his greatest accomplishment on this earth. Family and friends, Gerry you are ours. It's not goodbye—it's see you

later in heaven brother.
Tom Bjelland, Costa Mesa, CA 12/23/19



photo: Tim Hallinan

aloha brother poi

["No Fricken'
WAY
Jose"]
(West Coast
to enjoy West
Ground Swells
as before or
ever again!
in our surf/
lifetimes?)

You might be serious if you: Still hold out hope that after writing an entire book about being "Serious" in the effort to open a crack in the door towards open-mindedness or acceptance, have some evidence on progress attempted that it may very well be Fool's Errand—but keep on going.



We've had a pretty fun time in the Casa Colonial, despite getting comparatively skunked for surf and the background dejection that Tamarindo is now a euro-tourista-electronica-beat scene instead of the tranquil semi-paradise we first were so lucky to experience. Big G made the one Tica girl who I'd fancy getting to know laugh outside the small market, but the mustard came off the hot-dog when he struck-out with ex-pat Linda at the SurfClub restaurant and bar; but hey—we all get a little more challenged getting older, and he still gave it a shot—that's what counts (and we're still dudes with the attendant—how shall we say: "drives.") Puna Buttah provided some entertainment when fording the Langosta river-mouth at high-tide and getting swept with his Stewart *Science* Thunder F1 bodyboard/backpack a little way in towards the possibly crocodile inhabited waters (*Crocodile Rock*-na, na, na-na, na) and then making a clean dive through the donut-shaped rubber pool toy in the relatively shallow courtyard pool—still got skills. Papi—the eldest statesman of our small cadre of old friends, consistently nodded-off at intervals during the day, all the while sitting upright and holding a beer without spilling, and despite nursing a hernia that would wait for the trip's conclusion for treatment, made a nice effort in the relatively weak surf that we did get; taking off a little too close to the inside rocks in the attempt for a showy last-ride-in the first session, but a slight miscalculation had him getting a scraped-up lower back, but hey, kudos

Las Gaviotas Ensenada, Mexico



Greg Thomson enjoying the glass! West swell, circa '03. Many thanks to "cousin" Dave for the accommodations!

for the effort, and: "You can't get *that* at the gift shop!" Estubius Maximus, (Papi's son and Big G's nephew) provided some much needed levity for us otherwise elder farts with some positive energy that included: "practicing his Spanish;" staying out late nights and cavorting with locals and fellow traveling night-owls, it was a fun dynamic to observe Papi at 68 still worrying about his 33 year-old son in such circumstance (the parent/"child" connections everlasting!), but being not of direct kin and having distance, I secretly agreed with his defense that: "He ain't no small dude and can take care of himself," 6'+plus athletic soccer stud and all—and besides, he ain't no amateur(!)—he took the late night fun all the way to coming back in an hour before our 7:00 a.m. shuttle to the Liberia airport for the return flight.

"Small-Box!" Good to meet you Stu! But of all the moments I recall best about the fun of friendship and family, after I had been stung by the scorpion that had been nestling in my board sock when getting ready to pack for the next day's return flight and began contemplating whether I would be having significant side-effects like the first time, and possibly hampering traveling; I looked around at the fellows and realized, every one of these dudes *has my back*, a nice feeling amidst the uncertainty—no brethren left behind.

So, my seriousness about surfing has my necessary standards for enjoying a bit more quality waves, which a few months out before the trip had me nay-saying the scoring of them since besides witnessing the severe decline of west swells during the past five years in continental America—the swell direction





Photos are not from Costa Rica, but at Las Gaviotas, Mexico on a similarly-crewed sojourn, "Birthday Surf" bros!

we scored previously on the winter trips to Costa Rica—and consulting the forecast and examined the current/ongoing conditions, it turns out that I was spot-on; even one of the many(?) proprietors of the SurfClub confirmed (they've got great eggs benny, but a bit too much 'tude: "If you don't like the food *here*—go home!" Say What? Classic!), not good in Guanacaste the last five years unless it's stronger southwest swells, which the season for getting those is opposite of where we are, and it ain't happening like it used too. So, when after returning, got a group text from Big G, Nico (Nica—as in Nicaragua) next year! (So as to get closer to the source of the undeveloped landscape of similar environment without the Tamarido

hustle) what can I say? I've been saying it's not been good—the virtual lack of west swells the past five years—we went and *proved* the theory—it hasn't broken well at other similarly angled and reef break types such as Las Gaviotas, but if we try again next year it might happen? No fricken' way Jose! Sure, it would be a fun trip and all, but not a surf trip at foremost, and once again, Nica is also of the same characteristics that work for optimum surfing in Costa Rica, 'tis going to suck surf-wise unless we'd want to switch the trip to summer, but hey, *I'm the one* who is too serious; and all-in-all, the still "wanting it" and stoke are still there—the best thing of all. I'm In!—(or Out!) I'm not about to say Climate Change...let's go with: Cowabunga!

Postscript and sign-off:

While I hope for *everyone's* sake, that I'm wrong with my hunch that the twin "evils" facing SoCAL and beyond: Lack of west ground swells (and I'm not talking wind swells developed from storms close to Alaska, which by the way, this past summer was the first year *ever* in my recollections that the pesky north winds/turning into south eddies *never went away* the entire season like all previous decades; the flow was off and on, but never fully abated, chopping-up many a good swell and rendering them wonky, especially in North O.C.—hang on to your hats and check back in five years to see if that isn't the *new normal!* Yikes!) due to the recent Jet Stream veering and the diminished existence of "outside" non-lurching breaks due to the scattering of sandy bottoms, I can't shake the feeling that:

Things ain't right! And will end

with the George/Brisick quote from TSJ: (as to surfing) "I ain't always right—but I ain't ever wrong"...and from this fellow: *Please!* don't shoot the messenger. Aloha. TB

[PEACE-OUT]

