Understanding the "Thirdspace" of Southern California's Surf Shops: How did a commercial market become a cultural anchor for Golden California's identity, during the years 1945-1972?

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This work is dedicated to surfers, past, present and future.

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I would first like to acknowledge all those that have played a part in pioneering the surf shop story, as this project would not have been possible without them. I was fortunate to meet and talk to some of these surfers during my 5-week research trip across Southern California in 2022. This trip was funded by the Bolt Scholarship, awarded to me by the University of Kent, which allowed me to travel across California to truly understand the community this project has been nurtured from.

One particular light-bulb moment for the project occurred on a warm day in October 2022, in San Clemente, Southern California. I walked into an unassuming industrial park called Calle de Los Molinos, armed with a single Post-it note containing a list of surf shops, which had been scribbled down for me by a surfer at the Surfing Heritage and Culture Center (SHACC). Amongst the alleys, there was little extravagance in architecture, with most buildings offering windowless facades, corrugated shutters, and a scent of fumes. The only sign of life was found in the eclectic mix of sounds from carpenters and mechanics – each adding their own melodies to the hum of activity.

Outside these buildings, several craftspeople were sat outside on white plastic chairs, enjoying a moment's rest from the laborious work. With dust on their clothes and a nonchalant demeanour, it would be easy to not recognize these characters as being some of the biggest names in the surfing industry. Local surfers call Calle de Los Molinos by a more fitting title, the "Surf Ghetto" – which has remained untouched by time. It was here, as I stepped from the outside world into their spaces, that I felt a nostalgia for a past I had never lived, as if entering a time capsule. There were family photos in old dusty frames on the wall, showing pioneering shapers smiling. There were surfboards shaped decades ago within arm's reach. The scent of resin filled the air, seeping out from workshops hidden behind glass. People lingered around the room, reading magazines or chatting to employees about recent surf adventures. These spaces were quiet, industrious, but most importantly, homely. This was particularly noted at "T.Patterson Surfboards," when the employee passed me several family photo albums, featuring the likes of Greg Noll and Dale Velzy. Not only did I connect to the project on a personal level, I connected to my own identity, as a surfer.

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Abstract

Surfing is a spatial act; it cannot exist without geography to synergize with the action. The sport requires spatial awareness at all times, whether to spot a curling wave building on the horizon, or to feel the tug of a rip current gaining strength nearby. The ocean is a sacred space to all wave-riders. The ocean, however, is not the only space of sacrality for surfers. This thesis argues that the ocean was not the primary space that nurtured, developed and exported California's surf culture. Instead, the surf shop, a brick-and-mortar space offering both function and familiarity, enabled a modern surf culture to be born from its humble foundations in 1950. Through a spatial lens, this thesis applies Edward Soja's "Thirdspace Theory" to the surf shop's story, concluding that a commercial space was the "cultural anchor" of modern surfing. As a result, surfboard shapers were not only pioneers of novel surfboard designs, they were the pioneers of a novel Californian way of life. This thesis will explore how Dale Velzy, Hobart "Hobie" Alter, Greg Noll, Jack O'Neill, and Nancy Katin, founded California's modern surf identity within their shops. Focusing on the "golden" years of California's revolutionary surf shops, between 1945 and 1972, this thesis will explain why the surf shop story encapsulates a wider history on California's coastal heritage.

Contents

List of Abbreviations p.7

Introduction: Why the Surf Shop? p.8
The Surf Shop's Place in Scholarship p.16
Methodology p.22

1. Constructing "Golden California:" A Place of Communalism and Segregation p.26
A Global Gold Rush p.27
Black Gold in South Bay p.32

2. Surfing the Frontline of War: The Rise and Fall of Surf Clubs, 1939-1945 p.42
The Golden Age of Surf Clubs p.45
Surfing San Onofre p.50
The War and Decline of Surf Clubs p.52

3. Welcome to Manhattan Beach: The Home of Veteran "Beach Bums" p.61
South Bay's Natural Disasters p.62
Who can be a Surfer? p.65
Suburban Dreamin' p.71
The Arrival of Countercultures p.75
Custom Culture p.81

4. "The Hawk" Soars into Business: The First Surf Shop, 1950 p.88
The Hawk's in Business p.90
Why Not Hawai'i? p.93
A Golden State of Leisure p.96
The All-American Surfboard p.105

5. Dale Velzy versus Hobie Alter: The Orange County Surf Shop p.112
Surfing Businessman, Hobart "Hobie" Alter p.115
Dana Point, Orange County p.120
The Future is Foam p.128

6. “The Surf Boom’s Last and Best Manifestation:” How Surf Films Nurtured, Destroyed and Rebuilt Surf Spaces p.134
Homemade Surf Documentaries p.135
Gidget (1959) p.145

7. Owning the “Bible of the Sport:” The Partnership of *SURFER* Magazine and Surf Shops
A Strange Little Creature in Surf Shops p.160
The Social Impact of Magazines p.163
SURFER Magazine’s Guide to a 1960’s Society p.170
The Vietnam War p.174
The Power of Advertisements p.181

8. Like Da Bull in a Surf Shop: A Hawaiian Design p.186
Greg Noll and His Hawaiian Dream p.190
Greg Noll Surfboards p.196
The King of Marketing p.200

9. You Won’t See Them Wearin’ Their Baggies: Surf Fashion of the 1970s p.206
Developing Wetsuits p.207
A Customized Pair of Trunks p.214
Surf Fashion for Non-Surfers p.220
The Aloha Shirts p.227

10. The Shortboard Revolution: The End of the Beginning p.230
The Surf Shop Story: A Rose-Tinted Nostalgia? p.236
A Recovering Economy: Reviving The Surf Shop in the 1980s p.240
Is the “Cultural Experience” the Future of the Surf Shop? p.243

Conclusion p.246
A History Formed by a Community p.250

Bibliography p.256

List of Abbreviations

B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
BA	Bare Ass
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting Service
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
LSD	Lysergic acid diethylamide
M.A.	Master of Arts
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric Company
PVSC	Palos Verdes Surfing Club
R&R	Rest and Recuperation
US	United States
USS	United States Ship
WPA	Work Progress Administration

Introduction: Why the Surf Shop?

'I used to think that if I died and went to heaven, it would look like a surf shop.'[1]

- Sam George, *Shop Talk* (1989)

The sanctity of a space is subjective to the mind of the beholder. From the arrangement of *feng shui,* to the grand architectural wonders found at Archbasilica of Saint John Lateran, selecting what constitute as sanctities cannot be constrained to one definition or philosophy. A holy space derives from the personal interrelationship between an individual and their connection to a specific environment – usually a space enabling an ethereal and divine experience in the search for life's purpose. In an essay on defining the sacrality of space, David Bell acknowledged that if a worshipper is in 'his own sacred space within a greater space,' the environment may well be 'decidedly secular.'[2] To constitute a hallowed space, a person must be serving a rite of passage in a communal environment of likeminded reflections, through an act of 'pursuing a sacred task in a sacred place.'[3] With this summary, sacrality may go beyond conventional boundaries of archaic religious spaces to reflect a bond with modern, urban geography.

The commonly acknowledged space of sacrality for surfers is the vast ocean. Surfing, itself, is a spatial act; it cannot exist without geography to synergize with the action. The fundamental nature of riding a wave, whether 1ft or 20ft, requires a skilled connection between the surfer and their knowledge of the waves they face. The smallest of shifts in geographical and oceanographic characteristics are regularly examined by surfers, from swell height, to rip tides, to reefs, to debris. This engagement with spatial awareness in the water is inbuilt into surfers. This awareness, in turn, enables a mosaic of sensory experiences. From jolts of energy as the surfboard engages with the swelling wave, to being inside a curling glistening wall of water, the relationship with this space produces a distinct ethereal feeling. The euphoria has its own word in surf lexis: "stoke." For many, this feeling of stoke is inherently part of one's spiritual journey. As *Los Angeles Times* publisher Otis Chandler reflected, 'I'm

[1] Sam George, 'Shop Talk,' *Surfing Magazine,* December 1989.
[2] David N. Bell, 'Spirituality and Scholarship: Sacred Acts and Sacred Spaces,' in *Loci Sacri: Understanding Sacred Places,* ed. by T. Coomans, H. De Dijn, De Maeyer, R. Heynickx & B. Verschaffel (Leuven University Press, 2012), pp.13-29 (p.16).
[3] Ibid.

not a church-goer' but 'sometimes when I'm surfing, particularly when I'm by myself […] I feel very close to God.'[4]

There is a limit to this spatial relationship, which is less frequently acknowledged. Surf historian Roger Mansfield contends that surfing in the ocean 'was the magic glue that bound us all together as if a tribe. It was exhilarating, intoxicating, and quite addictive.'[5] The act itself, however, is fleeting and self-fulfilling; it does not require additional persons. Although surfing is a magic glue that can join surfers together in likeness, the space of which it belongs prohibits the production of a "tribe." With this revision, the communal anchor of surfers may not be linked to a temperamental littoral or oceanic space. Instead, to build a tribal nature requires a smaller community space, to nurture shared behaviours and export cultural memberships. Surf geographer Jon Anderson argues that there are more significant 'co-constitutive cultural geographies' than the ocean, that produce more significant 'relational sensibilities' for surfers.[6] With a focus on spatial geography and the human relationships formed within these spaces, this work shows that the surf shop, a humanmade commercial space, provided the founding cultural anchor that nurtured the modern surfer identity.

The surf shop has long been proclaimed by surfers as the sacred space for both function and familiarity since its humble and organic foundations in 1950, in Southern California. The surf shop follows the spatial rules of a hallowed space, offering a 'pilgrimage, the impact of landscape, [and] dedication rituals.'[7] With this archaic definition, these commercial spaces were "Houses of Holy," a term coined by *SURFER* magazine, where surfers have flocked for over 70 years.[8] These spaces observe the ritualistic manufacturing processes of every surfer's "Holy Objects," including the beloved surfboards and wetsuits.[9] Investing in these items then allows an individual to complete their rite of passage in the water. Surf writer Sam George rhapsodized the commercial outlet, labelling it his 'hallowed ground,' as it was a formal 'place to

[4] Leonard Lueras, *Surfing the Ultimate Pleasure* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1984), p.10.
[5] Roger Mansfield, *The Surfing Tribe* (Newquay: Orca Publishing, 2009), p.10.
[6] Jon Anderson, *Surfing Spaces* [e-book] (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2022).
[7] David N. Bell, 'Spirituality and Scholarship: Sacred Acts and Sacred Spaces,' p.26.
[8] Davis Jones, 'History of Surfing: Houses of the Holy,' *SURFER* [online], 19 October 2017 <https://www.surfer.com/features/history-of-surfing-surf-shops-are-the-houses-of-the-holy> [accessed May 2024].
[9] Nick Carroll, 'Drop till you Shop: Why the Surf Shop is Sacred Ground,' *Australia's Surfing Life Magazine,* January 2000.

worship' the culture of wave-riding that he, and so many others, found solace in.[10] Thus, sacred spaces are therefore not static entities constrained to an archaic religion. Sacredness develops when an environment observes a relationship between an individual, and their philosophy, with the artefacts of a space, to create a feeling of belonging. As a result, a hotspot of shared cultural belonging is formed, distinct and worthy of historic differentiation.

George published his ode to the surf shop in an issue of *Surfing* magazine in 1989, a piece that provided formal recognition of the space being more than just a commercial outlet. His adoration for the space can be viewed to such an extent that the surfer imagined that when he arrived through the pearly gates of heaven, he would be gifted with a surf shop. Upon reuniting with this heavenly shop, 'suddenly the memory returns,' as he is filled with fond nostalgia for his youth.[11] Inside his imagined space, shiny surfboards will stand in formation around him, 'tall, righteous apostles wrapped in sweet-smelling coats of fiberglass mail.'[12] There would be the recognizable thick scent of paraffin surf wax in the air, and a fine layer of sand on the laminated or cheaply carpeted floor, brought in from a former flow of travellers' bare feet. On the counter would be a couple of surf magazines, with "Shop's Copy" scrawled in Sharpie on the corner of the cover; and an old surfing contest poster stuck to the window, slightly ripped. Amongst its minimalistic design and rough edges, this was George's most holy space. These little recognizable stamps were 'the heart and soul of a real surf shop,' and by being wrapped amongst this familiarity, 'surfers will always find a home.'[13] For him, the surf shop provided a spiritual base for surfers; a place that began their humble origins. Through this description, the surf shop stood as the crucial origin point that enabled the development of California's surfer identity across the 20th century.

The relationship between surfers and the surf shop has continued to be respected and recognized in surf journalism into the 21st century, albeit shifting away from previous theological focuses. The surf shop has repeatedly been recognized as a space that disregards the boundaries of formal architectural designs, harbouring a multitude of identities. Surf shops are, as surf journalist Craig Stecyk lists, 'the sport's information

[10] Sam George, 'Shop Talk.'
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

centers, supply depots, halfway houses, classrooms, libraries, churches, banks and museums.'[14] Put simply, the surf shop is now a multi-purpose centre for all things surfing; a sacred cultural and commercial anchor that has propelled a novel Californian way of life from within its walls.

Unlike the everchanging dispositions that correlate with the ocean and wider societal shifts, the surf shop has remained a mostly stable environment for its clientele. It was designed as an antidote to juxtapose the untameable and unstable nature of the wild currents and swells produced by waves. The ocean is a contested space; it is where surfers compete, not only with themselves and the environment, but with other beachgoers. Conversely, the shop produced a cohesive, predictable and safe space. The surf shop is a humanmade enterprise, founded *by* surfers *for* surfers, as a temporary escape from the world outside. Thus, the surf shop and the act of wave-riding worked in tandem to fulfil different needs of the surfer.

Since its beginnings, the surf shop has been a necessary central base, designed from bricks-and-mortar, offering stability and safety to surfers – when the sport itself did not. In its founding decade, the surf shop began as a pioneering hub for local male surfers, most of whom were white, working-class veterans from the Second World War. These spaces were experimental and active workshops, with the wartime technological revolution allowing shapers to trial novel materials and shapes to progress surfboard designs. The surf shop, however, was not exclusively a white, fraternal space. Similarly, surfing was never simply a white-only sport. Woven throughout this thesis are discussions of race and gender during surfing's growth in Southern California, with an examination of both the hindering systemic laws and the influential ideas by minority pioneers. Certain elements within the surf shop were first crafted by non-white surfers and clothing manufacturers that furthered the capabilities of wave-riders. Although primarily constructed by male surfers in Southern California, the surf shop was a grassroots community project which also harboured contributions from diverse and global populaces. As a result, this communal hub and space of stability offered an opportunity for a new culture to be born, nurtured and exported, in the 1950s.

[14] Matt Warshaw, 'Surfboard Shop,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/encyclopedia/surfboard-shop> [accessed May 2024].

This is by no means a phenomenon limited to the walls of surf shops; the development of familiar cultural anchors across public spaces is noted as an integral part of postmodern geography and social developments. Commercial cultural anchors are integral institutions that range across the urban-scape. These spaces are hubs of socio-cultural power that offer a distinct experience for a specific subgroup. Geographer and spatial theorist Edward Soja refers to these spaces as part of the "Thirdspace Theory."[15]

Through Soja's theory, the Thirdspace is the coming together of two key factors in an urban environment. The first factor is the physical building and architecture of a space, a quantifiable and easy to see place. It is produced from physical materials. The second factor is a conceptual space, how people think and act in a certain environment. Combining these two factors produces the Thirdspace, 'a vital third mode of practical and theoretical understanding.'[16] A Thirdspace is where a real space meets an imagined space, to produce a subjective feeling for the visitor. Similar to the theological studies of sacred spaces, the Thirdspace offers a further step as to why modern urban spaces may produce similar feelings of personal and overwhelming emotional connections. Explaining why his theory is key to developing spatial understanding, Soja wishes 'to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness' to rebalance the 'trialectics [*sic*] of spatiality-historicality [*sic*]-sociality.'[17] Thus, a physical environment may awaken a human consciousness to such an extent that a space gains its own rich cultural history, embedded into its walls.

The Thirdspace theory proposes that a space can trigger a human response, which impacts a wider environment to such an extent, it becomes a treasure trove of historical worth. Human consciousness in a space affects one's *habitus* – personal dispositions such as points of view, tastes, or lifestyle choices. In his research on furthering the theory, John Archer believes that a stable Thirdspace could 'sustain, protect, and perpetuate those identities and social relations' to produce a spiritual and metaphysical connection.[18] Distancing this thesis from archaic theological reasonings, the surf shop's value is defined by the spatial analysis set by the Thirdspace theory, perpetuating that certain modern spaces are worthy of cultural-spatial scholarship.

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[15] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
[16] Ibid., p.6.
[17] Ibid., p.10.
[18] John Archer, 'Social Theory of Space: Architecture and the Production of Self, Culture and Society,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* 64:2 (December 2005), pp.430-433 (p.431).

The cultural value of this specific commercial outlet on California's coastlines and elsewhere can be particularly acknowledged in the last two decades. Despite the growing temptations from modern technology in the age of e-commerce, surfers have remained loyal companions to their local commercial outlets. With everything soon to be 'sold on the Internet,' in an 'empty soulless, human-free hell […] the Surf Shop will still be where we'll go,' surfer Nick Carroll promised, after the turn of the millennium.[19] This is because the surf shop 'was never just a shop,' as Caroll reminded the surfer, it 'cling[s] to the shreds of sanctity.'[20] In 2015, 20 surf shops were formally acknowledged by the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association (SIMA) as having been in business for 50 years or more.[21] Being over half-a century-old, surf shops are also local museums holding treasures, having witnessed a series of integral technological and cultural evolutions within the sport. With long-standing structures across California's communities, surf shops have become familiar and beloved spaces found along California's highways and boulevards.

This is further impressive from a wider lens. With California established as a state in 1850, surf shops have been a part of its landscapes for 42% of its existence, as of 2024. Since the shop's foundations in 1950, there has been an interplay between the surf shop and wider State policies, and this thesis will interact with both aspects of content and context to reveal critical links as to why the surf shop was founded in California. From the weekly wages offered by the GI Bill, to the silver screens of Hollywood, California was an active stage that encouraged change within the surf shop space as it developed, both inadvertently and purposefully. The intertwining of both a micro and macro historic lens is a necessary observation to highlight the contextual impact of society on the founding surf shop outlets, and vice versa. This thesis will position the surf shop in historical contexts, navigating how the space influenced or became influenced by societal events. The surf shop is not a single cultural story of one space in a single timeframe; it is part of a wider and more complex socio-economic history, which has been woven deeply into California's identity.

This was recently noted in 2020, when the surf shop as a community was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic. The surf shop's value in society came to the forefront of

[19] Nick Carroll, 'Drop till you Shop: Why the Surf Shop is Sacred Ground.'
[20] Ibid.
[21] Andrew Asch, 'SIMA Honours Legendary Surf Shops,' *California Apparel News* [online], 22 January 2015 <https://www.apparelnews.net/news/2015/jan/22/sima-honors-legendary-surf-shops/> [accessed May 2024].

discussions linked with the outbreak of COVID-19. The loyalty between surfer, State and surf shop was particularly tested during the health crisis, with a list of stringent lockdowns prohibiting access to the sport and beaches. The survival of the surfer's relationship with the surf shop was questioned with urgency and anxiety during the pandemic, as travelling restrictions had the potential of jeopardizing the once sacred space and also turning it into an online enterprise. However, the effect of the pandemic resulted in the contrary.

As Mara Pyzel noted in *The Intertia,* the pandemic proved and emphasized that the shop was an 'essential' space, as it had always been a 'sure-fire remedy' for surfers.[22] Surfers found familiar refuge in the shop, amongst its products, which helped to ease the ferocity of societal and environmental changes. Even whilst dealing with major supply issues from material importation during the pandemic, Grayson Nance, a surf shop owner, stated there was enough demand to sustain business. Nance believed the pandemic supported 'the potential for longer-term relationships' with customers.[23] Surfers actively shopped more local and supported these Californian hubs, in a time of uncertainty. A need for familiarity overcame a desire for convenience, illustrating the influence of this space.

Therefore, it would be inaccurate to refer to the surf shop as a mere commercial outlet; it has been the untouchable sacred house and predictable cultural anchor for Southern California's surfers ever since Dale Velzy opened the doors of the first surfboard workshop in 1950. Throughout moments of societal change, the surf shop has been a consistent and familiar space along California's beaches and highways. This thesis will formally recognize the relationships formed within the surf shop, both with the individual and the community it is situated within.

Thus, between 1950 and 1972, the surf shop was a radical space, as it played a revolutionary role in shaping Southern California's post-war surf culture, profoundly altering the social and economic trajectory of the sport. It is radical under the definition of being fundamental to something, 'the most important parts of something or someone; complete or extreme,' rather than its alternative use to describe the

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[22] Mara Pyzel, 'How the Surfing Industry Has Experienced Both Boom and Bust During the Pandemic,' *The Inertia* [online], 30 December 2020 <https://www.theinertia.com/surf/how-the-surfing-industry-has-experienced-both-boom-and-bust-during-the-pandemic/> [accessed May 2024].
[23] Ibid.

advocating of far-reaching social or political change.[24] Birthed from a handful of humble surfboard workshops and backyard garages along the shores of South Bay in the early-1950s, the surf shop transformed the act of wave-riding into a commercialized lifestyle with state-of-the-art factories, marketing strategies and neoprene fashions. As a result, the surf shop has become a permanent and historic fixture amongst the boulevards and beaches of California. In his work on the globalization of the sport, Scott Laderman states that the first surf shops were integral 'organic outgrowths of an exploding surf culture,' the 'social anchors in beachside neighbourhoods.'[25]

Through this definition, the radical nature is situated within the importance of the surf shop as a cultural anchor, rather than the surfers themselves. As Laderman critically comments, California's surf culture was, from a broader perspective, 'entirely selfish. Life was about unrestricted hedonism, not social transformation.'[26] Surfing is hedonistic; wave-riding is a self-fulfilling act. Southern California's surfers self-indulged in their own wants to advance the technical nature of wave-riding, to evoke an ethereal "stoke." In the post-war decade, the primary goal of California's surfers was to transform a pastime into a way of life, exclusively for themselves. Consequently, surf shops did not promote a far-reaching political, environmental or social change. A surfer's 'subversive image is just that – an image,' as furthered by Peter Westwick and Peter Neushul.[27] Surfers were not socially nor politically revolutionary in their lifestyle; instead, surfers remained reactionary to their environment, as observed through later discussions on race and gender within the sport. Thus, this thesis contends that radicality is found – instead – within a space. The surf shop was the pioneering space of technological discoveries and architectural blueprints, which led to the commercialization of surfing and its development into a global industry, whether intentional or not. This space, and the pioneers within, permanently altered the cultural identity and consumption of the sport in California.

This thesis explores why the surf shop is a key Thirdspace in understanding California's coastal heritage. With limited deviations from the founding blueprints, the

[24] 'Radical,' *Cambridge Dictionary,* Cambridge University Press [online] <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/radical> [accessed May 2025].
[25] Scott Laderman, *Empire in Waves* (University of California Press, 2014), p.151.
[26] Ibid., p.149.
[27] Peter Westwick and Peter Neushul, *World in the Curl: An Unconventional History of Surfing* (Crown, 2013), p.89.

minimalistic simplicity of these commercial outlets created a beloved prototype and social hub that has been supported and preserved by surfers for over 70 years. It is a calculated space that has stayed true to early ideas of combining a cultural space with commercial sales. In turn, the repetitive aesthetic of this model of space has allowed the shop to be a recognizable and sacred place. The surf shop has not only nurtured a distinct spatial aesthetic, but a modern surf culture that has engulfed California and beyond. This thesis will focus on the surf shops that opened in the epicentre of "Golden California," which includes Southern California and Orange County. These areas are labelled by Soja as the 'make-belief paradise' and 'the most irresistibly California-looking of all Californias.'[28] The surf shop played a significant role in creating this mystical beach paradise. No surf shop is architecturally identical, but its consistent nature in offering function and familiarity has allowed the space to be the anchor, the nurturer, and the sustainer of modern California's surf culture.

The Surf Shop's Place in Scholarship

Despite some recognition in leisure journalism, the cultural value and social impact of surf shops on California's society has evaded historical scholarship. With its unobtrusive design and humble aesthetic, the surf shop has been bypassed by academics looking at California's wider cultural developments. While it has been observed by surf journalists such as George, Carroll and Pyzel as an essential and holy space, its cultural value across a wider context has yet to be formally placed or recognized in academic scholarship. This thesis will acknowledge the value of surf shops and why the founding years worked in tandem with California's post-war society to build a new identity for the State. The surf shop was not just a sanctity for surfers; it was a catalyst for a significant transformation that shifted California from citrus groves and ranchos, into a golden and shimmering haven of sun, sea and surf. With this argument, the surf shop deserves a place in historic scholarship, and a significance beyond the boundaries of surf studies.

Academics who specialize in the history of California often neglect the surf story from their works, especially when the narrative is on wider socio-economic shifts. For

[28] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace*, p.10; p.274.

example, Kevin Starr's *California: A History* (2005) does not mention the role of surfing in his book dedicated to understanding what 'shifts of demography and social aspirations had caused the population of California to shoot up from seven million in 1940, to seventeen million in 1962?'[29] Yet, California's surf culture played a significant role in promoting regional tourism, which caused demographical changes. The sport increased the public's interest and investment in the State's golden identity. Between 1940 and 1962, surfing was advertised visually to those that visited the State, such as during wartime or vacations, which propagated a want for permanent migration. The exotic and unique cultures of Southern California, especially its beach lifestyle, became a promotional tool used by the State and Hollywood, to draw in white, affluent migrants, which increased infrastructure funding to develop middle-class suburban areas. Surfing showcased the State as a hotspot for ocean leisure. To see surfing, and its commercial outlets, as merely a cultural trend and a micro history reduces its value in California's scholarship. Surfing, or at least the surfing image, was a novel socio-economic tool used by the State to develop its society away from an identity of rural ranchos and trading ports. This thesis addresses this gap in literature, offering to situate the surf shop story and its impact within the State's history.

This thesis will examine various scholarships from multiple disciplines and academic fields; these works will supplement and assist in critical examinations of surf interviews, biographies and magazine articles, to understand the wider Californian society. It will integrate works and case-studies on California's sociopolitical and economic policies to further the contextual importance of these external forces on the surf shop's development, demographics and architecture. For example, social studies by John J. Bukowczyk, "California Dreamin', Whiteness, and the American Dream (2016)," and Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits* (2003), are utilized within this work to critically examine California's beach accessibility, or lack thereof, and surfing cultures amongst minority races, with de facto segregation along California's shorelines during the 1930s and 1940s.[30] As a result, these works critically examine the fictional and constructed "whiteness" of surfing and the socially exclusive nature of the "Golden California" narrative. This thesis will also include urban geographical and

[29] Kevin Starr, *California: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2005), p.x.
[30] John J. Bukowyczyk, "California Dreamin', Whiteness, and the American Dream," *Journal of American Ethnic History,* 35:2 (Winter 2016), pp.91-106; Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles From the Great Depression to the Present* (University of California Press, 2003).

environmental studies. Works by Ronald A. Davidson, "Before Surfurbia (2004)," and John Chase, "Unvernacular Vernacular (1986)," discuss the purposeful construction of the State and its wider architectural evolution.[31] Through these works, the surf shop's blueprint can be observed as a product built from other contemporary architectural and commercial spaces. Thus, this thesis will intertwine a series of multidisciplinary works to critically examine the surf shop's exceptionalism and its involvement in wider societal developments.

Another key text discussed, that does not explicitly explore the surf shop, is Lawrence Culver's *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (2010). Although recognizing that surfing offered a 'premier recreational amenity for the entire region,' there is a neglect in furthering how wave-riding became a 'central component of the projected Southern California good life.'[32] Although surfing is recognized as a significant contributor to California's modern identity, its reasoning for the label is not explained sufficiently to the reader. Yet, Culver does explore other leisure activities during this timeframe in great detail, with an emphasis on white, middle-class suburban sports. His examination on Palm Springs and California's suburbs enables this thesis to illustrate how surfing was just one of many sports utilized and manipulated by California to propel its Golden Dream. The exploration of this Golden Dream and its fictitious ideals assist in understanding the national appeal of surfing. This work illustrates that surfing was one of many other activities fulfilling certain ambitions of the State, reducing the sport's rhapsodized and isolated identity observed within surf scholarship.

Therefore, to find more comprehensive works that focus solely on the history and impact of the surf shop, one must turn to microhistories, which feature under a subcategory of cultural history: surf studies. This is an interdisciplinary field written by surfers, for surfers, to understand their heritage. However, this field has several significant gaps in its organization. In summary, surf scholarship is branched into three main categories: biographies, encyclopaedias of general surf themes, and journal

[31] Ronald A. Davidson, 'Before "Surfurbia": The Development of the South Bay Beach Cities through the 1930s,' *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers,* 66 (2004), pp.80-94; John Chase, 'Unvernacular Vernacular: Contemporary American Consumerist Architecture,' *Design Quarterly,* 132 (1986), pp.1-32.
[32] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p.70.

articles that analyze the cultural and psychological aspects of surfing. Despite meeting a multitude of different disciplines and locations, surf history is still a relatively small field, formed by sport scientists, geographers, sociologists, historians and anthropologists. As surf scholarship is not exclusively or directly linked to one particular branch of academia, these works are difficult to compare and locate within archival searches.

In order to produce cohesion within surf studies, this thesis has opted to construct a common thread that connects some of these works together, with the use of spatial theory and geographical studies. With the act of surfing requiring a littoral and oceanic environment to synergize with the action, and a brick-and-mortar space to produce the necessary products, space has situated consistently within the surf story. With spatial aspects being at the forefront of this work, this thesis situates itself as member of the *spatial turn,* a movement that encourages critical spatial consciousness and spatial causality. The movement proposes that 'space is every bit as important as time in the unfolding of human affairs, in which geography is […] intimately involved in their construction,' according to two members of the *spatial turn,* Barney Warf and Santa Arias.[33] Further, this field of cultural geography explains '*where* things happen' in order to understand '*how* and *why* they happen.'[34] By exploring both the surf shop and California, as micro and macro spaces, this thesis will explain why and how a new surf culture began in this region.

Through a spatial lens, surf studies will have a consistent focal point; this lens propagates that surfers require an appropriate environment to develop their history, culture, and technologies. By combining a wider spatial understanding, with critical microhistories by surf scholars, this thesis will use an inter-disciplinary approach to catalogue a collection of cultural threads. Finding cohesion offers to bridge together previous surf scholarship, often isolated from peers, in order to preserve the importance of this field, and to promote wider group discussions outside of surf scholars.

[33] Barney Warf and Santa Arias, 'Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space into the Social Sciences and Humanities,' in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinarity Perspectives,* ed. by Barney Warf and Santa Arias (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2008) pp.1-11 (p.1).
[34] Ibid.

A predominant reason for scholarship isolation within the surf studies field is that the story has been guided by a focus on biographical studies.[35] Most of these biographies act as a celebration of life, dedicated to recently deceased surfers. As a result, biographical authors pay tribute to their subject's once active role in the community, propagating cultural martyrdom and rhapsodizing their legacy.

Filled with family photos, interviews and personal anecdotes, these biographies shed a light on their protagonist's internal thoughts, relationships and ambitions. They provide a valuable glimpse into the private spheres of people who published little about their personal lives. This can be noted in *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (2005), by Paul Holmes, a book dedicated to the outlandish and reclusive Dale Velzy, the founder of the first surf shop. In his prologue, Holmes explains the initial process of consultation for the book. The author sat at the dining table in Velzy's home, next to an opened bottle of vodka, waiting for the appropriate cue to begin the interview. Holmes, 'grabbed the bottle, took a slug,' winning the trust of Velzy, which allowed him to begin his introduction.[36] To write a biographical piece on a surfer, one had to gain their trust and admiration. As it is written from someone within the local surfing network, it is highly exclusive in both penmanship and readership. Working in tandem with Velzy whilst alive, Holmes' biography, which was published after Velzy's death, succeeds in telling the in-depth story of the surfboard shaper. Yet, in this informal collaborative style, one which is reflected in several surf publications, biographical works illustrate several limitations.

To some extent, a biographical work in this manner offers a level of fallacy, as it is a predominantly one-sided evaluation of a history based on a limited perspective, due to its pin-pointed nature. In a critical discussion of biographical writings as a form of historical methodology, Lucy Riall criticizes the growing trend in celebrating "Great Men," especially when the work is dedicated to the living or 'warm dead.'[37] Biographical studies have long adored the powerful and leading males of society, and for surfer biographies, it harbours the same trope. They emphasize the power of an individual, at the risk of neglecting the wider factors that have enabled such actions.

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[35] Examples include: Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006); Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard* (Utah: Gibbs Smith: 2007); Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind and Waves* (Corona del Mar: Croul Publication LLC, 2013).
[36] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.7.
[37] Lucy Riall, 'The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography,' *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 40:3, Winter 2010, pp.375-397 (p.376).

Although the New Biography movement has intertwined micro-histories with more contextual themes, it is missing another key component. The focus on self-heroisms is designed to remove the importance of other key figures from the narrative. For example, the design of California's surf shops was a culmination of dozens of leaders and technological pioneers. By reducing the surf story, or the story of the surf shop, to individual tales and micro-histories, the ability for relationships and shared-stories to be observed is limited. Disconnected from personal connections with the subjects of this piece, the surf shop story here will weave individual stories together and produce a community-based history. The surf shop itself, is one built from cohesion.

To avoid a heavy focus on single individuals, this thesis will focus more on the relationship between surfboard shapers and spaces. It will employ artefacts and quantifiable sources, to remove doubts of fallacy and to add measurable support to biographical thoughts. Engaging with contemporary surf films, surf magazines, surf fashion, and the "holiest" of objects - surfboards, this thesis assesses how relevant objects are to forming spatial relationships. In doing so, the use of artefacts will reduce misconceptions about the triviality of everyday cultural objects, enabling multi-sensory observations about the space to recreate its design. Researcher of material culture Helen Sheumaker acknowledges that materialism 'epitomized a 20th-century American superficiality,' with citizenship equalling the quantity and quality of owned goods.[38] The observing of everyday goods reflects an intimate study of contemporary human thoughts and needs. Therefore, the study of artefacts within a set space will reflect the contemporary core values in the ownership of goods, allowing objects to be identifiers reflecting a past society. As this is a study of ontology, specifically the personal relationships within a Thirdspace, personal narratives will be situated alongside artefacts in the surf shop story.

Amongst the microhistories of the shop itself, a contextual history of commercialism and consumerism in California will be assessed during this timeframe. This thesis begins with a study on California's construction; in particular, the birth of "Golden California" and its impact on the State's demographics. California's surf culture was part of this historic and fictitious idea, built from the search for promised gold, hidden amongst the glistening mountains, oil fields and ocean. As a paradigm of the American Dream, the promises of

[38] Helen Sheumaker, *Artifacts from Modern America* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), p.1.

Golden California led to Californians yearning for ways to consume their lifestyles, hobbies and dreams. In tandem, a booming wartime economy and the rise of suburbia enabled and encouraged leisure commercialization. Through these factors, surfing became a commodity. The surf shop provided the pioneers, the tools and the space, to sell the sport globally, whether intentional or not. The consumption of surfing, as the sport transitioned into a commodity, should not be separated from the stage on which it belongs; it was a Californian design. Studies on suburbia, State policies and post-war economic developments, are also placed within this thesis, with an emphasis on their role in this Golden Dream. This work will remove the surf shop as a single entity of power in its development. This will further limit the microlens propagating the distinction and rhapsodizing of isolated factors in surf biographies. Upon integrating content and context, the surf shop will be used to both expand California's spatial history and the field of surf history as a whole.

Methodology

This thesis will analyze the founding decades of the surf shop story, asking the question, how did the surf shop become one of Golden California's cultural anchors? Primarily, this work will preserve the personal stories, artefacts, and architectures of the founding pioneers, and situate them firmly in history. All of whom that designed this space, were from Southern California – the birthplace of this now global industry.

Due to the interlinking nature of the State's socio-economic circumstances and the surf shop's foundations, the thesis will divert its attention away from examining the Hawaiian origins of the sport. As Belinda Wheaton explained, the post-war surf identity of California was birthed to perpetuate 'the white myth,' to place Californian values and hopes into the sport's image. Since surfing was brought to California in the midst of de facto segregation, it was political controls and 'sporting imagination' that enabled the culture to become 'phenotypically white,' creating a distinct surf identity that is considered the "modern" version.[39] As Wheaton concludes, the Californian surf culture – which this project is examining – contains a 'different ethnic form' to its Polynesian roots.[40] Thus, this thesis will be guided with a concentration on California's society, as it dissects the construction of the American Dream in Southern California's surf culture. To understand the demographics of wave-riding, it is

[39] Belinda Wheaton, *The Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports* (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p.121-132.
[40] Ibid., p.122.

necessary to evaluate the wider policies of the State, with a particular focus on racial and class segregation across the beachscapes. This thesis will examine the purposefully constructed communities of Southern California during its developmental years, as the State sought its own cultural commodities to sell to white, middle-class Americans. Wave-riding was a destination point of the Golden Californian dream; California's surf communities enabled the American Dream's key principals of leisure, freedom and whiteness to come into fruition, fictitious or not.

After building the contextual foundations within this thesis, the following chapters will examine the growth and evolution of the surf shop prototype in Southern California, with a particular interest in the fledgling years of the space between 1945 and 1972. These years observe how the surf shop transformed from a windowless garage situated at Manhattan Beach, into mass-producing factory outlets that inundated beachside boulevards and highways in the 1960s. As this history is linked with the Thirdspace theory, architectural and spatial analyses are presented alongside the human story of the surf shop.

The first half of this thesis will examine the earliest surf subcultures of Southern California between 1907 and 1950, the surfing predecessors that paved the way for the commercial leaders. This includes the analysis of the wandering nomads of San Onofre, and the suit-wearing members of the Palos Verdes Surf Club. With this foundation, the Second World War is determined as the main catalyst for the modern surf culture, as this is the point of significant historical deviation. The war produced pioneering veterans, novel technological materials and economic subsidies to offer a new direction for surfers. The war allowed the sport to change from a hobby into a lifestyle. Led by working-class veterans in the 1950s, the surf movement joined other fledgling, male-dominated countercultures to reject California's post-war society's promotion of the domestic, inland suburban dream. To nurture a fledgling counterculture, one that included exclusive memberships, a communal clubhouse that stocked token cultural markers was necessary.

In 1950, the surf shop was born. With additional time allocated to the sport and its developments, the immediate post-war years offered a time for material experimentation. To manage his experimentations in a protective environment away from the public eye, a balsa surfboard workshop was opened by a surfing veteran called Dale Velzy. In his attempts to create an All-American surfboard prototype, inspired by his observations in Hawai'i during his wartime service as a Merchant Marine, the workshop developed into the first surf shop.

By selling his surfboards in an enclosed building, rather than in a backyard or on a public beach, the taxman labelled Velzy's surfboard productions as a certified and taxable business. A brick-and-mortar cultural anchor was born, an inland private space for surfers to develop their identities through their products.

Subsequently, as the middle-section of this thesis explores, other surfboard shapers invested in this business proposal, seeking their own opportunities to experiment with different technological advances linked with the Space Age in the late-1950s. The surf shop acted as the antidote for practical surfers who wanted a full-time job, harbouring skills of carpentry, glassing and manufacturing, in a surfing environment. As new shapers and new ideas developed on how to manage these commercial and cultural hubs, the space illustrated the unique minds of the beholders. By 1955, more business-oriented surfers actively sought to invest in their own blueprint. Examining the youthhood of two other dominant shapers of the 1950s, Hobart "Hobie" Alter and Greg Noll, this section assesses how these men developed the surf shop into a global business empire.

The final thematic sections of this thesis will discuss surfing's impact on popular culture, and how these shapers redefined what it meant to be Californian. Thread amongst these microhistories, wider themes of contemporary fashion, film, music, and global politics are discussed, in order to establish the context of the timeframe analyzed. By 1965, surf fashions, surf films and surf magazines showcased the Golden Californian dream to both national and international audiences. No longer controlled by surfers, these chapters identify the fabrication and manipulation of the surfing image by external factors, as many inland Americans yearned for a golden, middle-class lifestyle. Throughout the 1960s, the surf shop was an industry that had a great cultural impact on California's tourism. Surfing was a novel and exotic All-American sport, one that was easily consumed in an era and landscape of mass consumption. As surfing turned into an attractive golden product, some traditionalist surfers retaliated through acts of violence and territorial aggression, known as "localism."

As surfing's popularity soared, the act of wave-riding became a 'disembedded product' rather than a lifestyle, and the traditional surf shop suffered, as sociologist Christopher T. Daskalos acknowledged.[41] Surfers were 'enmeshed in a larger socioeconomic system' and the surfboard shaper had 'the most to lose.'[42] In 1972, with the national economy entering a

[41] Christopher T. Daskalos, 'Locals Only! The Impact of Modernity on a Local Surfing Context,' *Sociological Perspectives,* 50:1 (2007), pp.155-174 (p.170).
[42] Ibid.

period of stagnation, and other surf shops popping up globally, California's founding surfboard shapers could not keep afloat during the global surfing boom. Surfboard shapers, those who 'knew the history and handling characteristics of the multitude of surfboard shapes and designs,' now had to compete with 'cheaper imports' and 'mass-produced generics.'[43] To conclude, this thesis will examine the future of the surf shop and the importance for its grassroots beginnings to return in the 21st century.

Conclusively, the aim of this thesis is to discuss how the humble surf shop became a holy Thirdspace that nurtured a modern surf identity that has helped define California as the United States' modern golden paradise. Intertwined with the sociopolitical and economic policies of the State, the surf shop was both a constructed space by California, and a space that constructed California.

[43] Christopher T. Daskalos, 'Locals Only! The Impact of Modernity on a Local Surfing Context,' p.171.

1. Constructing "Golden California:" A Place of Communalism and Segregation

In the 19th century, California earnt its nickname "the Golden State," from the rich veins of gold discovered along its vast lands and primordial mountains. In January 1848, James Marshall had unearthed the mineral while constructing a mill, revealing the possibility of further undisturbed tiny flecks and elements of gold across California, tucked amongst rocks and riverbeds. The discovery of gold, and, more importantly the hope of one's own gold, had a profound impact on California's economic, demographic and cultural identity. The temptation of finding one's own golden nugget and securing large wealth and glory overshadowed California's known topographical hazards of drought, high temperatures and limited settlements. In his analysis on the Gold Rush, James Rawls identified this discovery as the beginning of California's title as the land of "golden dreams," with migrants being 'gold-possessed.'[44] Gold was the 'very creation of California,' the stepping stone that caused 'ripples in a pond' as news of its discovery trickled across the globe.[45] The promise to own a slice of the frontier's wealth had a universal appeal, leaving a pin firmly in California on the world map.

The cultural-geographic foundation of Southern California's surf story, as with other modern Californian cultural practices, developed from the designation of the State being distinctively "golden." The discovery of gold, and the wealth accumulated thereafter, altered the prospects of the State; the idea of anyone finding a pot of gold, whether attainable or not, perpetuated the State as the final space of endless possibilities in the American frontier. In reality, the Golden Dream was a mere hope, and never static in its social loyalties. Simply, it was a myth, particularly for those that could not fit into its idealized and exclusionary narrative. Kevin Starr defines this Golden Dream as 'never resolvable into a clear formula;' it proposed to capture the 'best moral, intellectual and aesthetic possibilities of America,' which altered as the State constructed its ambitions.[46] To manufacture this lifestyle, the State sought non-white manual labourers, blue-collar industrial workers, artisans, surfers, military personnel, tourists and suburbanites. Thus, the Golden Dream was a superficial identity, built from the labour of many. As Edward Soja summarized, California showcased:

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[44] James J. Rawls, 'A Golden State,' in *A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California,* ed. by James J. Rawls and Richard J. Orsi (University of California Press, 1999) pp.1-23 (p.2).
[45] Ibid., p.2-3.
[46] Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915* (Oxford University Press, 1973), p.415, 421.

> ‘A fountainhead of imaginative fantasy, emitting a mesmerizing force that obscures reality by eroding the difference between the real and the imagined, fact and fiction. As one observer put it, Los Angeles has a “history of forgetting,” swallowing its past and re-creating its own fantastic reality.’[47]

Although its roots belong to the Gold Rush, the golden narrative, and the white myth produced as a result, created a long-term allure of success, self-expression and boundless opportunities. The vast wilderness of the Californian frontier, and the opportunity for one to harness and enjoy it, was central to the Dream. Anything, or anyone, that threatened this dream was removed from the narrative. Whether this was found through gold, oil, or riding the Pacific Ocean’s waves, the same thread of ideology continued. By harnessing the natural treasures of California’s environment through one’s perseverance, a person would gain access to a second start for a better life.[48] As Starr adds, ‘rarely had nature been so thoroughly reorganized through public works,’ as it had in California’s early developments.[49] Surfing did not emerge from its own isolated, cultural vacuum. It emerged as another form of marketable gold, as Californians yearned for the purest version of the American citizen.

Therefore, ‘to view the coast in isolation from the development and entrepreneurship that it has made possible, is to strip it of much of its significance,’ as cultural-geographer Ronald A. Davidson articulated in his analysis of surf geography.[50] Thus, California’s surf culture did not merely appear on the State’s shores; it was superficially promulgated to perpetuate an already existing and wider Golden Californian dream.

A Global Gold Rush

In 1848, the news of untampered gold hidden in Southern California’s nooks spread quickly across global waters, luring in populations. Before the call to gold reached the East Coast of the US, Hawai’i was one of the first nations to publish the sighting in its local newspaper, the *Polynesian.* The article described the arrival of ‘a terrible fever which has nearly depopulated all the seaport towns and caused a general rush to the interior’ of

[47] Edward Soja, *My Los Angeles: From Urban Restructuring to Regional Urbanization* (University of California Press, 2014), p.1.
[48] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p.12.
[49] Ibid., p.32.
[50] Ronald A. Davidson, ‘Before “Surfurbia”: The Development of the South Bay Beach Cities through the 1930s,’ *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers,* 66 (2004), pp.80-94 (p.82).

California, 'a fever for a yellow substance called gold.'[51] California's populaces charged north to Sacramento in search of this valuable mineral. After witnessing two pounds of gold from a supercargo as he arrived in Hawai'i, the article's author wrote of seeing 'the gold with our own eyes, and it really benefitted our optics.'[52] With the promise of fast wealth, the author hoped California's 'greatly depressed' economic state would soon be over, allowing 'California traders to pay the large amounts [$150,000] already due to our merchants.'[53] The discovery of gold had been the necessary lifeline to protect California's economy from further decline.

As news of the element spread, an ethnic mixing pot arrived across California's inland streams, mountains and wilderness. The landscape, as Sucheng Chan described, was 'a truly variegated mosaic.'[54] Migrants from Hawai'i, China, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico and Chile arrived in the rural, mountainous and forest lands, with the use of existing trade routes across the Pacific Ocean. The building of Golden California was a global enterprise, with Hawai'i and Chile exporting large commodities to the State and its miners, such as flour, dried beans, furniture and prefabricated housing.[55] Chinese migrants, after hearing of the *Gam Saan,* gold mountain, arrived in San Francisco Bay to claim the lots Californians had abandoned. With access to hydraulic mining, Chinese miners utilized their technological advances to harness wealth from neglected lands. Further, with a need for labour, the State did not prohibit the arrival of free Black Americans. Four years after the discovery of gold, 1,000 black miners found work in the mines, with 400 Black Americans residing in San Francisco.[56] The mines propagated a wealth for all to seek, regardless of one's ethnicity or past.

In the first few years of the Gold Rush, California broadcast that labourers would strike it rich by toiling through the State's rugged and untamed nature. However, as Eastern Americans rushed to the epicentre of gold fever in 1850, the lone, white pioneer was portrayed as the seeker of California's wealth. The non-white labourers that had built the mining communities were replaced by the image of the "Yankee Argonaut," the white male mass migrating from poverty in the East. This white, healthy, Protestant miner was favoured as the 'universal

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[51] 'California,' *Polynesian,* 24 June 1848, p.22.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Sucheng Chan, 'A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, Racism in the California Gold Rush,' *California History,* 79:2 (Summer 2000), pp.44-85 (p.44).
[55] Ibid., p.52.
[56] Ibid., p.68

man,' as Chan described.[57] By the early 1850s, the gold was difficult to obtain, particularly without large machinery, prior knowledge of mining, and communalism, which many skilled international miners possessed. For example, those from China built large communities around mines through organized groups, and utilized modern hydraulic systems for effective gold removal. Racial tensions grew as the individual miner's discovery of golden flecks declined. White Californians and eastern migrants feared the loss of "their" gold. As a result, Californian officials produced a foreign miners' tax for noncitizens to pay an additional fee, in 1850.

After the introduction of this tax, which promoted the "othering" of non-white miners, California observed an increase in lynching of and violence towards non-white miners and migrants. This can be observed in the murder trial of Chinese miner Ling Sing. The accused, white American George Hall, questioned the legal rights of non-white miners to prevent eye-witness accounts of the murder from Chinese miners in court. As a result, the Supreme Court of California ruled that the testimony of a Chinese man in court was now inadmissible. In the case *People V. Hall,* 1854, Hall referred to the Act Concerning Civil Cases, stating 'No Black, or Mulatto person, or Indian shall be allowed to give evidence in favor of, or against a White man […] Chinese and all other people not white, are included.'[58] Hall was freed. Further, enslaved Black Americans and Indigenous populations were subjected to poor conditions by white miners, with increased oppression and violence as they toiled through the earth. Although housing free Black Americans, the State turned a blind eye to the use of slavery amongst the mines and ranchos. The Golden Dream, once promising wealth and gold to any person, manifested itself as a myth for the non-white miner, as racial othering increased.

For the lone Yankee Argonaut from the East, the hope of finding gold with picks, shovels and pans, also led to bitter disappointment. Without a community, hydraulic technology and access to fresh food, the lone miner struggled to find the remaining surface gold. One ballad illustrated this frustration, published by John A. Stone, in 1855. The final stanza reads,

> "Oh, land of gold, you did me deceive,
> And I intend in thee my bones to leave,

[57] Sucheng Chan, 'A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, Racism in the California Gold Rush,' p.47.
[58] 'People v. Hall,' 1854, Supreme Court of California, 4 Cal. 399, *Immigration History* [online] <https://immigrationhistory.org/item/people-v-hall/> [accessed April 2025]

So farewell, home, now my friends grow-cold,
I'm a lousy miner,
I'm a lousy miner in search of shining gold."[59]

Although the majority of lone miners did not strike it rich, the possibility of finding gold in the wilderness of California continued to capture the attention of many white, Eastern artisans, writers and entrepreneurs. In his analysis on the State, Lawrence Culver summarized that Golden California was 'dreamed into existence' from frontier romanticism sold by those intrigued by the search for gold.[60] These myths, as Culver emphasized, were not a 'sinister' plan grown from elites, but a dream many individuals actively wanted to believe in.[61] In the decades proceeding the Gold Rush, California conjured an image of limitless possibilities for the individual. Taming the last frontier of the American West captured the hearts of many, particularly the white artisan class.

In 1856, during her migration as a child, Eliza Farnham penned the term "Golden State," in reference to California. She wrote of life in the 'hopeful state,' both the beauty and trials encountered.[62] Farnham recalled 'as we sat about the warm, bright fire, and saw the chill mist driving over the hills before us, and heard the surf madly chafing at the foot of the rocks, we felt much of the cosy comfort of a snug at home.'[63] As the fog began to clear, 'momentary glimpses of blue sky and golden clouds' appeared, as she 'felt every victory to be a step toward a higher life' with no 'bitter consciousness.'[64] These frontier publications fuelled more migrants from the East, with the promise of a better life. Shifting away from the golden nugget, the gold was found in California's promise of a new way of life, regardless of its fictionality.

California's environment also developed quickly with the arrival of irrigation systems, farms and global knowledge from migration. California's lands were developed into ranchos, groves and orchards, to feed and sustain the mining efforts. The imported items once invaluable to miners' successes, were able to be grown, farmed and exported from California itself, through global irrigation techniques and trade. As wealth developed and gold declined,

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[59] John A. Stone, *Put's Original California Songster* (New York: D. E. Appleton, 1868), p.48.
[60] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p.4.
[61] Ibid., p.5.
[62] Eliza W. Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co, 1856), p.ix.
[63] Ibid., p.219
[64] Ibid., p.220.

white Americans congregated around Northern California's mining districts, pushing minority races and non-English speaking persons to Southern California and the port areas. As a result, these marginalized miners turned to building ranchos, farms, water companies and railroads along the Southern Coast.

Culver commented that for white Americans, California's frontier described 'a space of technological advancement.'[65] The technological wonders and industrialization encouraged more eastern American populaces to travel and settle across northern California's terrain, with families arriving to enjoy the fruits of others' labour. Middle-class entrepreneurs and artisans relocated to California to invest in the State's growth and its wilderness. The American Dream was born; California was a bountiful frontier for the opportunist.

In his analysis on California's search for "The Ideal," James E. Vance Jr. states that the frontier narrative and discovery of natural resources allowed California to represent 'a new natural and social setting, where a New Life could be attempted.'[66] Consequently, the 'Golden State was never part of the American norm.'[67] For many, it was body-breaking, lonely and overcrowded. At the turn of the century, pockets of communities around California were built with the ambition of social immurement, distant from the gold mines. Instead of seeking isolationism, Californians searched for communalism. In particular, the communalism of oneself and the desired version of both self and the American citizen. Those that did not fit the narrative, such as collective groups of non-white miners, were banished to the arid lands of Southern California.

[65] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure,* p.2.
[66] James E. Vance Jr., 'California and the Search for the Ideal,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographies,* 62:2 (June 1972), pp.185-210 (p.201).
[67] Ibid., p.203.

Black Gold in South Bay



Figure 1.1. South Bay in the 'Maps of California,' a map, 1928-1930, retrieved from the *Library of Congress* [online], <www.loc.gov/item/2022589244/> [accessed April 2025].

At the turn of the century, the call for labour rang out in California again; however, the wealth found in Southern California was through black gold: oil. Unlike the migration to the north for mines during the Gold Rush, major oil refineries developed around the Los Angeles region, particularly the coastal area of South Bay. Southern California's barren coastline offered oil companies a unique sparseness in vegetation and a constant access to water from the ocean to cool the refineries. Along the coastline, as geographer and architectural critic Reyner Banham described, Southern California's beachscapes were surrounded with 'new wells and abandoned wells, capped wells and wells straddled by nodding pumps.'[68] The coastline was an industrial landscape. The sands provided the middle space that divided industrial California from the vast and wild Pacific Ocean.

[68] Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Economies* (University of California Press, 1971), p.33.

As a result, major residential developments occurred across California's South Bay region, consuming beachside towns such as El Segundo, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach and Redondo Beach. As Davidson commented, South Bay became the home to 'black gold suburbs,' offering quiet, beachside housing for employees and their families, rather than the typical urban, industrial housing lots offered inland.[69] With blue-collar migrants available and searching for work in Southern California, the region utilized its skilled labour force to work in the prospering oil, lumber and steel trades. Along Hermosa Beach, stucco-box shops and frontier cottages popped up to form the central arteries of the towns. The beachscape, for blue-collar residents, was the 'true artery,' according to Banham.[70] It provided a space where a 'man needs to own only what he stands up in – usually a pair of frayed shorts,' forgetting his status in society.[71]

Surf historian Mark Zambrano confers that the discovery of oil fields and the arrival of surfing in California were 'intricately linked,' as the growing populations of the region, employment, and wealth distribution, encouraged increased beachside leisure opportunities in Southern California.[72] The working-class populaces of South Bay found solace in the simple leisure provided by the ocean, in the early decades of the 20th century. During the warmer months, men and women competed in aquaplaning races, fishing, swimming and bodyboarding on wooden planks. Southern Californians indulged in the inexpensive leisure opportunities, when not working in the many industrial markets of the area. A working-class frontier identity remained central in South Bay before its middle-class developments. Throughout the 1920s, as Paul Holmes described, Hermosa resembled a frontier town, with a 'smattering of saloons, bait and tackle shops and cigar stores.'[73] Nearby, from 1934 to 1938, Redondo Beach held annual Covered Wagon Days *fiestas*, with four days of cowboy games, such as rodeos, shooting exhibitions and staged shows about horse thieves.

For the children of blue-collar workers, such as Dale Velzy – later famed for his involvement in founding the surf shop – the beach was a central domain. During the 1920s, Velzy spent his childhood 'splashing in the shorebreak with his mother and father,' eventually 'playing in the breakers, bodysurfing, [and] jumping from the pier.'[74] Growing up in Hermosa Beach, a

[69] Ronald A. Davidson, 'Before "Surfurbia:" The Development of the South Bay Beach Cities through the 1930s,' p.87.
[70] Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Economies,* p.30.
[71] Ibid., p.21.
[72] Mark Zambrano, *Surfing in Huntington Beach* (South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2019), p.17.
[73] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.22.
[74] Ibid., p.21.

'quiet country cousin to the city of Los Angeles,' Velzy navigated the former frontier land during its construction and redevelopments.[75] As biographer Holmes commented, 'times were hard for the Velzys,' as Velzy and his sister queued and collected the family's weekly 'government handouts of rice, beans and dried fruits.'[76] However, the ocean offered additional food, with seafood and fish available. In some instances, Velzy's father managed to exchange mechanical work for lobsters and swordfish for the family's meals.

Despite the monetary difficulties, Velzy found solace amongst the natural wonders that California offered. In a vacant lot beside the beach, which had once been the concrete plant for Hermosa Bay's sidewalks, a neighbourhood farm developed, with hens, pigs and bull calves. His horse was also kept there, a black mare called Gypsy. Velzy rode Gypsy along Hermosa's sands, and raced alongside passing trains, 'whooping and hollering, pretending we were like the Indians we had seen in the movies.'[77] Hermosa Beach mirrored an earlier pioneer way of life, as inhabitants nostalgically reminisced its romanticized frontier past.

This is furthered by Jack O'Neill – later famed for his invention of the modern wetsuit – who was also raised during the Great Depression years. In the early-1930s, O'Neill recalled that 'kids went barefoot to school,' a journey which included crossing the railroad.[78] After school, 'we used to play on the freight cars,' hoping not to get trapped behind the metal doors of the ice cars.[79] O'Neill witnessed the growing financial pressures of the Depression in South Bay, with the family's car repossessed and little food on the table.[80] To help build funds, O'Neill 'had lots of jobs before I got out of grade school, but it seems like I always had the paper route,' first with a bag and then with a cart, as he sold more papers.[81] For the children of blue-collar workers in South Bay, one had to be frugal and hardworking to survive.

South Bay also mirrored the frontier lands, due to its ethnically diverse populaces. This is observed by Fred Glass, as he examined the social relations of the blue-collar workforce around the Los Angeles area. From 1900 to 1920, the white working-class majority 'coexisted with the earlier inhabitants – Indians, Chinese and Mexicans – viewing them as

[75] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.22.
[76] Ibid., p.21.
[77] Ibid., p.27.
[78] Drew Kampion, *Jack O'Neill: It's Always Summer on the Inside* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011), p.32.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., p.33.
[81] Ibid., p.33.

remnants of the Wild West.'[82] After the annexation of California in 1848, the "modern" State remained an important historical borderland between Mexico and the rest of the US. Its colonial history remained visible through its landmarks, city names and Mission architecture. As Culver observed, 'the region retained ties to this Native American, Spanish colonial, and Mexican past.'[83] For example, in 1910, California began to build homes with a distinct architectural style of bungalow with stucco exteriors and red-tile roofs, to mirror the Mission homes of its past.

In tandem, constellations of black neighbourhoods developed along Southern California's beachfronts, with the population of Black Americans in the State reaching 11,045 in 1900.[84] Southern California initially observed a freedom of leisure to non-white residents, as the State did not enshrine Jim Crow laws. In the 1883 statutes of California, it was declared 'unlawful for any corporation, person, or association or the proprietor, lessee, or the agents' of a 'place of amusement or entertainment, to refuse admittance to any person' unless that individual is under the influence of alcohol or demonstrates 'immoral' character.[85] Segregation, therefore, was not a legal requirement written into California's constitution in these pioneering decades of development.

Many black migrants sought and accessed beachside leisure, during the first two decades of the 20th century. Ryan Reft, in his analysis on the Black American's fight for leisure, commented that there were several black-owned businesses in South Bay, such as La Bonita Bathhouse and Thurman's Rest a While Apartments.[86] Glass further acknowledged that 'mile after greasy mile between downtown Los Angeles and the San Pedro Harbor' one could find 'industrial operations and working-class residential neighborhoods blended together.'[87] Southern California proposed that the Golden Californian dream *was* attainable to minority groups.

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[82] Fred Glass, *From Mission to Microchip: A History of the California Labor Movement* (University of California Press, 2016), p.80.
[83] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure,* p.7.
[84] John J. Bukowczyk, 'California Dreamin', Whiteness, and the American Dream,' *Journal of American Ethnic History,* 35:2 (Winter 2016), pp.91-106 (p.93).
[85] *The Statutes of California and Amendments to the Codes,* CLXXXV (Sacramento: James J. Ayers, Supt. State Printing, 1883), p.220.
[86] Ryan Reft, 'Fighting for Leisure: African Americans, Beaches, and Civil Rights in Early 20th Century L.A.,' *Tropics of Meta* [online], 3 July 2014.
<https://tropicsofmeta.com/2014/07/03/fighting-for-leisure-african-americans-beaches-and-civil-rights-in-early-20th-century-l-a/> [accessed April 2025]
[87] Fred Glass, *From Mission to Microchip: A History of the California Labor Movement,* p.197.

While Standard Oil Company developed the large-scale oil industry, Southern California modernized its frontier infrastructures to cater for the rise in its diverse populations. Although much of South Bay's appeal was found through its natural resources and environmental treasures, as Starr examined, it had to be 'thoroughly reorganized through public works,' to become a part of California's garden.[88]

As the economy boomed, the development of South Bay and its growing need for housing proved difficult for housing developers. Its beachside environment was not suitable for larger populaces. For example, the sand dunes lining Manhattan Beach pier often piled onto railway lines and into housing foundations, particularly after strong winds. To solve this issue, industries shipped sand to Waikīkī Beach to reduce its pebble shores, with sandy beaches offering a greater appeal to tourists in Hawai'i. Further, the region observed water scarcity and regular wildfires, due to its warm temperatures and dry terrain. In 1913, investors Elihu Root and Fred Eaton developed the Los Angeles Aqueduct, to resolve the limited water supply to the region. This focus on irrigation was soon followed by the Bureau of Reclamation's investment in irrigation projects for local farmlands. Thus, the capital produced from the oil, steel and lumber industries was poured into improving the frontier's infrastructure to attract more workers and families to the once male-dominated region. Southern California transformed from budding frontier communities into an industrious capital of the Golden State, with private investors securing the wealth and lessening the hazards of its environment.

The promise of a golden landscape of leisure and a simple life caused a wave of migration from the East, during the Great Depression years of the late-1920s and early-1930s. As Starr acknowledged, California has repeatedly developed through a series of booms in which large influxes of people searched for a better life, whether imagined gold, land, employment or merely a second start.[89] The Great Depression had caused many to seek a new way of life. City officials honed in on this want for mass migration, utilizing its newfound wealth to attract white, middle-class Americans to enjoy the State's luxuries. Although the area contained a mixing pot of ethnicities, South Bay promoted its new beachside housing to middle-class, white-collar workers and their families – to encourage investments to the State.

[88] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California,* p.32.
[89] Ibid., p.12.

The beach, as Elsa Devienne described, 'with its wide and sandy strands' was 'somewhat exotic, yet domesticated.'[90] It greatly appealed to white-collar workers from the urban east.

With grand national parks, mountains and long stretches of sand, California's topography was unique in its leisure opportunities. In 1901, the 'glories of California in summer' was discussed by the *Los Angeles Times*, calling for 'those ignorant of the Pacific's charms' to set forth to the West.[91] Alongside the article, Santa Fe Railway Company released a series of advertisements and pamphlets, proposing that Southern California 'is sure to win summer tourists,' particularly the 'pleasure seekers who can afford to take the longer trip.'[92] The emphasis on promoting a wealthier, white migration illustrated an early commitment to sell the South Bay area as a luxury product. In addition to the press, middle-class associations worked in tandem to build the prestige of California, nationwide. In 1910, the Hotel Men's Mutual Benefit Association sponsored a monograph that discussed the resorts, hotels and architectures of the State. President of the association, Fred Van Orman, believed that 'under no other skies in this wonderful nation, is it possible to unite where there is so much of health, so much of beauty, so much of pleasure, enjoyment and true hospitality as it is in the great Golden State of California.'[93] With its golden orange groves and the hues of the Californian poppy, the state oozed welcoming and warm colours. The State was an environmental marvel that offered such vast and diverse activities.

As middle-class investors flocked to the developed Southern California, to invest in this golden narrative of environmental bliss, those who had participated in building this golden empire were quashed by local, legal restraints, once more. As Devienne adds, elites sought to 'bring order' to the beaches, by creating 'some semblance of class segregation.'[94] With more middle-class resorts being built along the coastline, the beachscape transformed into a privatized and regulated space of California. In tandem, as more migrants travelled from the East, the Jim Crow laws' ideals were rapidly developing along the shores. To appease the new residents of a budding middle-class South Bay, a series of laws were created to regulate the labour, land ownership and social status of Black Americans. As Culver adds, Black Californians could not be easily 'passed off as quaint relics of regional history,' as observed

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[90] Elsa Devienne, *Sand Rush: The Revival of the Beach in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Oxford University Press: 2024), p.8.
[91] "Glories of California in Summer Season," *Los Angeles Times,* 12 August 1901, p.6.
[92] Ibid.
[93] George Wharton James, *The 1910 Trip of the H.M.M.B.A. to California and the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco: Press of Bolte and Braden Company, 1911), p.97.
[94] Elsa Devienne, *Sand Rush*, p.13.

with views towards its Asian and Mexican populations.[95] This change in social acceptance is observed through the State's involvement in the removal of black-owned resorts.

Bruce's Beach was a Black American beach resort in Santa Monica, built by Charles and Willa Bruce to allow the black community access to its beach and lodge. The resort offered breathtaking views of the ocean, and the ability for black residents to learn how to swim and bodyboard. The resort opened its doors and beach access in 1912. After a slew of complaints by white landowners, in 1924, Manhattan Beach city officials took control of Bruce's Beach and other black-owned properties along the strand. Bernard Bruce, descendant of Charles and Willa, stated that, 'they saved their money, they put up a resort, and lost everything.'[96] With a want to make Southern California's beach communities exclusively for white populaces, to attract middle-class tourism from the segregated eastern states, Californian officials deployed zoning laws and private covenants to remove marginalized groups from desired lots.

In some instances, segregation was controlled by local residents, who sought to abolish Black Americans' access to beaches. In 1925, a Black American resort was set to open in Huntington Beach, a region of Southern California possessing one of the highest percentages of white Americans. The Pacific Beach Club was to offer a prestigious and luxurious escapist experience for middle-class Black Americans. Near completion, the resort was burnt down by arsonists, before it had a chance to open its doors. The *Los Angeles Times* article, "To Oppose Proposed Negro Club," criticized any further plans for Black American resorts, stating, locals 'oppose any further efforts of negroes to establish a colony on the ocean front.'[97] Although segregation was not formally written into its laws, California's populaces and local officials utilized fearmongering and violence to prevent non-white access to beaches.

As a result, throughout the 1930s, minority racial groups were pushed inland, or into the "urbanscape" of Los Angeles, to remove their existence from the growing affluent, white suburbs developing on the shorelines. In his analysis on the American Dream, John J. Bukowczyk explained, white Californians were culturally segregating their beaches to reinforce 'the social distance between themselves and their racial Others […] whiteness itself was being constructed.'[98] Non-white workers were consigned to manual labour in the service and agricultural sectors further inland. As Soja summarized, 'the great American land grab

[95] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure,* p.57.
[96] Ryan Reft, 'Fighting for Leisure: African Americans, Beaches, and Civil Rights in Early 20th Century L.A.'
[97] 'To Oppose Proposed Negro Club,' *Los Angeles Times,* 22 November 1926, p.10.
[98] John J. Bukowczyk, 'California Dreamin', Whiteness, and the American Dream,' p.92.

would […] take the gold of Northern California while bleaching LA non-Hispanic white.'[99] In a similar fashion to the Gold Rush, Southern California illustrated that the Golden Dream was prioritized for the white American, and those who built the dream were not allowed to revel in it. Thus, as Culver concludes, California's 'history, whether real or imagined, was endlessly promoted to tourists and residents, influencing urban and regional developments in profound ways.'[100]

For middle-class residents and tourists, a series of resorts, plunges and baths opened along the coastline for white Americans, offering spas, infant pools and heated waters, throughout the early 20th century. Located within grand bathhouses, the buildings offered classical columns and domed roofs. Inside, one could find mosaics of tiles, offering an escapist and exotic experience for the visitor; its colonial architecture linked with both Mission and European spaces. As Jennifer Krintz examined, these spaces catered for the burgeoning middle-class American, designed at a 'palatial scale to cater to the fantasyland atmosphere that was created at the beach.'[101] The coastal plunges offered the services of lifeguards and female-only sessions, creating a safe and welcoming space for tourists and white locals alike.

In 1909, Redondo Beach opened its grand bathhouse, with three plunges and over 1,300 dressing rooms. The *Los Angeles Times* recalled witnessing 'one of the biggest and jolliest crowds of the season and a record-breaker,' with 6,000 people arriving on its opening day.[102] The Golden Dream continued to prosper, turning to the glitz and glamour of the ballroom and resort. For blue-collar workers and marginalized ethnic groups, this dream remained a mirage that attempted to erase their presence, through entertainment and tourism. With restrictions made to limit non-white individuals from accessing plunges, beaches and swimming pools, non-white individuals could not learn how to swim or enjoy water sports safely.

Consequently, only one beach, a two-block area in Santa Monica, welcomed Black Americans. The segregated area of beach was labelled the "Inkwell," a place for black beachgoers and families to visit the shores without violence or harassment from white authorities and tourists. As a child, surfer Rick Blocker visited Inkwell with his mother, 'a place she knew from her childhood, and she felt it safe enough;' it was a beach for Blocker 'to go and be free.'[103] Inkwell offered a space for black youths to bodyboard, swim, and later

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[99] Edward Soja, *My Los Angeles: From Urban Restructuring to Regional Urbanization,* p.2.
[100] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure,* p.7.
[101] Jennifer Krintz, *Redondo Beach Pier* (Arcadia Publishing, 2011)*,* p.96.
[102] 'Summer Girls Try New Bath,' *Los Angeles Times,* 2 July 1909, p.I19.
[103] *12 Months North: The Nick Gabaldon Story,* dir. by Richard Yelland (Curtis Birch, 2012), [Documentary].

surf, in the Pacific Ocean's waves. However, with limited public transportation to Inkwell, non-white Americans could not reach this leisure space easily. As a result, as the sport of surfing developed along the coast, non-white Californians were disadvantaged and lacked the fundamental water skills necessary to surf. Segregation at beaches was officially outlawed in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, four decades after the removal of Black American resorts along South Bay. Despite being outlawed, many non-whites remained in urban ghettos, a location with little access to water sports and swimming pools.

Thus, the promise of a Golden California, both through its environment and social structures, was an artificial creation. It was built from the industrious efforts of blue-collar workers, as they toiled its environment in search of both physical and metaphorical gold. Although some revelled in the State's wealth and landscapes, many fell victim to its fictitious narrative, which othered those that did not fit the white, middle-class image. Consequently, as Bukowczyk concluded, the State 'suborned and sustained racial oppression' and class divisions.[104] In South Bay, the once neglected frontier land was soon swarmed by housing developers and resorts, with the aim to attract a new type of American citizen. The target audience was the white, affluent, middle-class American, who sought to consume a lifestyle of consumption – a decade prior to the discovery of post-war suburbia. By the end of the 1920s, as Reft concludes, the beaches became California's 'most viable tourist and recreational asset' which had to remain 'under white ownership' to succeed in attraction.[105]

In his assessment of this fantastical landscape, Soja summarized Southern California as 'a theme park-themed paradise where the American Dream is repetitively renewed and made infinitely available. The resplendent bazaar of repackaged times and spaces allow all that is contemporary (including histories and geographies) to be encountered and consumed.'[106] Although California's landscapes were built from a multitude of histories, ethnicities and cultures, 'the ever-present Now-ness of Tomorrowland makes the Then hard to find.'[107] Distancing themselves from the State's diverse past, and those who built it, middle-class Californians focused on constructing a new and attractive model society that resembled the utopic American Dream. By 1940, California had a firm grip on what it wanted to achieve from its beachscapes: a propagated visibility of leisure and whiteness. Starr concludes, these 'magic kingdoms' were being built for a 'new class of people: the family-centered middle

[104] John J. Bukowczyk, 'California Dreamin', Whiteness, and the American Dream,' p.91.
[105] Ryan Reft, 'Fighting for Leisure: African Americans, Beaches, and Civil Rights in Early 20th Century L.A.'
[106] Edward Soja, *My Los Angeles: From Urban Restructuring to Regional Urbanization*, p.89.
[107] Ibid.

class.'[108] In reality, California remained a stage and home for a multitude of ethnicities, cultures, classes and migrants. Its golden wealth, whether through the Gold Rush, black oil, or beach leisure, was built from blue-collar workers and non-white labourers. South Bay's quiet shorelines became the next golden landscape to be harnessed in the search for the American Dream. This dream was found in the sun, sea, and sand, through South Bay's abundance of leisure. As the nation hungrily sought more golden and exotic treasures along California's shores, a budding sport from Hawai'i was introduced to its waters and white populaces: surfing.

[108] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California,* p.15.

2. Surfing the Frontline of War: The Rise and Fall of Surf Clubs, 1939-1945

In 1890, outdoorsman and conservationist Theodore Roosevelt published a plea to the scholastic reader that American society must find a way to reconnect physically with the natural world. For society to thrive, one must dedicate time to develop 'athletic exercise and manly out-door sports,' to attain 'such qualities as courage, resolution and endurance.'[1] By participating in outdoor sports, citizens performed an 'honorable function' to both community spirit and personal health.[2] There was one condition; the sport should not consume one's behaviours as their 'main business,' for then the person 'ceases to be a particularly useful citizen.'[3] Sports must remain a hobby, not a lifestyle. Organized outdoor activities were deemed as the affordable solution to a healthy and thriving society during industrial growth, according to the statesman. A decade later, Roosevelt completed his oath of office, becoming the 26th president of the United States.

In 1903, President Roosevelt continued to embrace his search for the outdoor antidote, as he rhapsodized the beneficial beauty of Golden California's environment in an address titled "Remarks at Surf." Witnessing the 'greatest of all oceans,' he marvelled:

> 'It has been to me an education to come here to California. I did not need to feel what I felt already, how much of our destiny lay on the Pacific, but I am glad to have seen your people. I have realized more even than I already realized it, the fundamental oneness of the American nation […] I believe that your future will be even greater than your past.'[4]

His speech was part of the radical Progressive Era movement's search for nationwide social reforms, piloted by Roosevelt. He homed in on Californians reaping the benefits flowing within the Pacific Ocean, to enlighten oneself and improve one's productivity. In his prophetic speech, he called for California to invest in and take advantage of its abundance of outdoor leisure.

The act of wave-riding was soon realized as the solution to this proposal. In 1907, Hawaiian surfer George Freeth was invited to perform his wave-riding talents at Redondo Beach,

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[1] Theodore Roosevelt, '"Professionalism" in Sports,' *The North American Review,* 15:405, August 1890, pp.187-191 (p.187-188).
[2] Ibid., p.190.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Theodore Roosevelt, 'Remarks at Surf,' a speech, 9 May 1903, *The American Presidency Project* [online] <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-surf-california> [Accessed May 2024].

Southern California, through a series of demonstrations paid for by the Pacific Electric Railroad. His task was to engage with and encourage white Americans to participate in ocean leisure. Dubbed the "Bronze Mercury," Freeth demonstrated effortless gliding along the soft waves of California, offering more than merely a performance of Hawaiian culture.[5] He reignited the desire for Californians to reconnect with the ocean, a space that had previously been seen as an untameable environment that stole lives. As presented across regional press, ocean drownings were increasing, with the majority of victims having little to no experience in water. One example is observed in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1904, which discussed a near-drowning at Redondo Beach. A local woman who 'could not swim a stroke, but has been in the habit of dipping in the breakers,' got caught in the undertow.[6] With local beachgoers wanting to engage in more outdoor activities, it was necessary to have the appropriate safety precautions in place. Throughout his several years of residing in Redondo, Freeth offered lessons on beach safety, including how to spot the signs of riptides, undertows and currents.

Soft-spoken and gentle in character, Freeth provided the necessary lifeguarding skills for the community, as they navigated the waters. Young lifeguards joined the plight and were trained by Freeth up and down the coast to assist in this transformation. As Craig Stecyk comments, California's earliest lifeguards were 'generally unrecognized and went unrewarded for their heroism.'[7] Despite their dedication to supporting the community, the career was seen negatively by many. As work was seasonal and financial situations dire in the early 20th century, many lifeguards resorted to residing and hiding in lifeguard huts to avoid economic contributions to the state. At best, society treated them with 'heavy suspicion.'[8] Yet, with the help of Freeth, lifeguards were declared an asset to public health. Lifeguards engaged in more desired skills, including how to search for missing persons and "suicide watch."

The lifeguard crews of California pioneered new standards on how to prevent ocean-based deaths. In July 1908, Freeth and two lifeguards, Louis Hammel and Frank Holborrow, rescued a canoer stranded at Ocean Park in under eight minutes, an extraordinary achievement. This proved that beach safety was improving rapidly for Californians. Due to the seasonal nature of lifeguarding, Patrick Moser refers to Freeth as a *keiki auwana,* "wandering child," a 'Johnny Appleseed of sorts, spreading surfing and lifeguarding from

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[5] Craig R. Stecyk, *Surfing San Onofre to Point Dume, 1936-1942: Photographs by Don James* (Santa Barbara: T. Adler Books, 1996), p.9.
[6] 'Redondo: Almost A Drowning,' *Los Angeles Times,* 9 September 1904, p.A9.
[7] Craig R. Stecyk, *Surfing San Onofre to Point Dume, 1936-1942: Photographs by Don James,* p.9.
[8] Ibid., p.12.

Los Angeles to San Diego,' as he looked for work.[9] Freeth planted a seed for surfing in California, one that grew steadily across the coast. Furthermore, Freeth was progressive, an egalitarian voice that fit the narrative Roosevelt was nurturing, offering his education to men, women, and children. Moser offers that the 'bicultural Hawaiian' sparked a 'novel way of seeing the beach that would grow to inspire the imaginations of millions of people around the world.'[10] Freeth had trained almost every surfer in California during his stay. With his native Hawaiian and Irish ancestry, the wave-rider proved to Californians that surfing could be achieved, regardless of race or gender. Ocean leisure was not just for Hawaiian vacations.

After contracting the flu, Freeth died at the age of 35. California's lifeguard crews, however, continued his legacy. One lifeguard in particular, Don James, captured his early years of sporadic lifesaving on his Kodak Brownie camera, throughout the interwar years. The camera documented everyday life whilst James was a teenager, as he observed the fewer-than-a-hundred surfers in the State. As the US headed into a great economic depression, he recalls, 'life in the Depression was hard, but it encouraged us to appreciate what we had and to live simple lives […] there was always a beach to turn to.'[11] Amongst the teenager's photographs featured a group photo of lifesavers from the Bel Air Beach Club, who were 'always ready to serve,' despite no formal municipal guard service.[12] By the mid-1930s, the act of surfing was defined as both a highly skilled hobby and as a selfless, life-saving community act.



Figure 2.1. 'Bel Air Bay Club,' a photograph, 1938, in Don James, *Surfing San Onofre to Point Dume, 1936-1942: Photographs by Don James* (Santa Barbara: T. Adler Books, 1996), p.22.

[9] Patrick Moser, *Surf and Rescue: George Freeth and the Birth of California Beach Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2022), p.4.
[10] Ibid., p.5.
[11] Craig R. Stecyk, *Surfing San Onofre to Point Dume, 1936-1942: Photographs by Don James,* p.11.
[12] Refer to Figure 2.1.

As the populace of surfers reached 400 in the 1930s, surf-specific clubs developed, a formal and recognized subgroup of wave-riders that envisioned validating the sport as worthy of organized competitions. In the interwar years, although club membership was not mandatory, only a few surfers did not invest in affiliation. Surfing became a regulated outdoor club for men, which had a focus on the health, physical strength and machoism of Californians. It adhered to what Roosevelt had idealized almost half-a-century prior.

The Golden Age of Surf Clubs

In the 1930s, along the affluent peninsula of Palos Verdes, a quiet coastline surrounded by rolling groves and ranchos, a handful of pioneering wave-riders developed the potential of surfing as a regulated sport. The peninsula was California's earliest 'surfing fertile crescent,' for those who participated in this novel activity.[13] Since 1934, the peninsula had become popularly known across fledgling surf communities as being the favoured spot of the Palos Verdes Surf Club (PVSC), a prestigious club of wave-riders that had 'blossomed' in the community, as Steve Pezman appreciates.[14]

Palos Verdes offered an ideal sheltered surf break with stretching walls of waves and four reef-breaks for surfers of all abilities to enjoy. Yet, it was no easy feat for club members to access these waves. To get to the shoreline, wave-riders had to be physically strong enough to carry their 90-pound redwood solid planks down a half-mile dirt trail to the water. Surrounding the waters, the cove was lined with dramatic cliff walls, and any cheers produced a raucous echo that could be heard across the sands, drawing the attention of those passing by. The loudest member of PVSC, Gard Chapin, would often be heard howling as he curved through the glassy face of the wave, avoiding the others paddling out as if it was a slalom course.[15] Standing at a little over 6ft, his large muscular frame cut through the water as he performed his signature manoeuvre called the "Chapin Turn," catching the gazing eyes of younger bodyboarders.

In the years before the war, this isolated surf spot was one of only a handful found along California's rugged coastlines. Offering comradery in the water, PVSC member Calvin

[13] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves* (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2008), p.36.
[14] Ibid.
[15] 'Gard Chapin, The Living End: An Oral History,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 27th February 2019 <https://www.eos.surf/feature/gard-chapin-the-living-end-an-oral-history> [accessed May 2024].

"Tulie" Clark recalls how at the cove 'nobody ever got out of hand, everybody was courteous, we were nice to each other.'[16] In the interwar years, the scattering of local surf club members dominated and regulated California's prime beaches as both lifeguards and entertainers, offering a safety net to local beachgoers.

The predominant reason for the propagation and celebration of surf clubs in the interwar years was the communal nature of the early surf ethos. The sport symbolized an organized and regulated fraternity; one that was allocated for highly-skilled watermen, and a handful of tandem-surfing women, that meticulously studied tides and swell developments. Watching those in Palos Verdes, as Joe Quigg compares, was similar to watching 'fishing.'[17] The members exhibited a show of patience and discipline, as they waited for a wave to catch. Built upon the comradery of those that could patiently read and understand the water for its treasures, surfing was seen as no different to any other rehearsed outdoor American pastime.

This pastime was particularly desired with the Great Depression encroaching across the nation towards the Pacific Ocean; the ocean offered an escapist experience for beachgoers. Surfers made-do with the limited resources they had access to and surfed on whatever materials they could, finding joy regardless. Different household objects were trialled as surfable, as there was no specific space to purchase pre-made surfboards. San Diego Surfing Club member and lifeguard Emil Sigler was one of the earliest surfboard manufacturers for lifeguards and club members. In the late 1920s, Sigler learnt to surf on the only stand-up surfboard in San Diego, owned by the city's first surfer, Charlie Wright. The surfboard had an iron plated nose at the tip of the surfboard. With only one surfboard in the region, Sigler collected good quality redwood, mahogany and balsa wood at the San Diego Lumber Yard, to design his own community surfboards. Produced using lighter woods and bolts, without the iron tip, his surfboards grabbed the attention of Southern Californian lifeguards. Sigler stored them on the sands at Mission Beach, San Diego. However, as David Aguirre states, 'tourists would carry them off and chop them up for fire wood,' unaware of their purpose.[18] On the other hand, lifeguards who did know the use of surfboards, opted for Sigler's creations instead of the standard lifeguard dories. Surfboards, during the founding decades of surfing in California, were products of local community.

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[16] Calvin Clark, 'Calvin "Tulie" Clark Interview, 1995,' interview, *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/interview/calvin-tulie-clark> [accessed May 2024].
[17] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves*, p.38.
[18] David Aguirre, *Waterman's Eye, Emil Sigler – Surfing San Diego to San Onofre, 1928-1940* (San Diego: Tabler and Wood Publishers, 2007), p.18.

In this era, the materials used for surfboards were limited to the most abundant and cheapest woods at the time, which were not highly waterproof nor sturdy enough for the unforgiving waters. Most members carved their own wooden surfboards from cheap materials offered by the Los Angeles construction company "Pacific Systems Homes," following Sigler's motivation; whilst others stripped the cloth from old ironing boards to bodyboard on the shallower waves. As the Depression-era motto stated, Americans had to "Use it up, wear it out. Make do, or do without" and surfers did just that.[19] Even though these items were rideable, these early surfboards were challenging to ride; natural wood got sodden easily and splintered in rough surf. If dinged in rough waters, surfboards were patched up with sawdust and glue, offering little relief. Surfing proved to be tedious to learn and even more tedious to excel in.

Despite these challenges, surfing allowed Californians to engage in free leisure during economic hardships. To maintain control of the surfing population pockets, allocated surf club leaders ensured members remained loyal towards the idea of contributing to society. Surfing involved a concoction of wave-riding, entertaining and lifeguarding. Surfing was not a lifestyle in the interwar decades, it was a pastime offering escapism, to counteract the uncertainty of society combatting economic deprivation.

By the mid-1930s, several prestigious surf clubs existed across California, including the PVSC. The clubs' membership schemes offered a limited number of local surfers' placements by invitation-only. The first and largest of these clubs in the State was the Corona del Mar Surf Board Club, which hosted the first annual Pacific Coast Surfing Championships in 1928, bringing popular surfers to the region. Formed six years later, the PVSC became another one of these 'sophisticated' clubs, 'virtually from inception.'[20] Its sophistication derived from the rules implemented within the clubhouse. PVSC members could not drop out of college, members had to give progress reports, and many wore the club's patch on the left-breast of their jackets.[21] Surfing was observed as an elite fraternity of discipline and teamwork, bringing out the best in each other, whether to improve in surfing or for personal growth.

Thus, surf clubs were regulated groups, where members worked together to promote surfing as a serious and rewarding sport, that benefitted society. Everett J. Oshier, a long-standing

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[19] Rodney P. Carlisle, *The Great Depression and World War II* (New York: Facts on File Incorporated, 2009), p.33.
[20] Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Legendary Surfers: The 1930s* (Lulu.com, 2012), p.217.
[21] Matt Warshaw, 'Palos Verdes Surfing Club,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/history/gliding-return/palos-verdes-surf-club> [accessed May 2024].

member of the PVSC, reflected in his interview with Malcolm Gault-Williams, that the club ensured the 'aloha spirit was very prevalent. Everybody knew everybody […] and, so everybody got along, rode their waves.'[22] Surf clubs were not isolated entities and spaces, instead they were intertwined with other clubs across the region. Members were willing to divulge in pioneering ideas and knowledge to others, regardless of their water sport level.

An example of comradery in early surf groups is anecdotally told by surfer Bob Beadle. During this era, Beadle remembers when 'driving down the highway, you'd see a car you hadn't seen before, with boards on it, coming your way. You'd both stop, somebody would do a U-turn and ask why you were going that way.'[23] In response to this reminiscing, as long time Malibu surfer Mysto George adds, 'but nowadays if you see somebody with a surfboard on their car, you hope they get in a wreck before they get to the beach.'[24] Animosity between surfers, even as the wave-riding populace reached one thousand, was rare at the time. Surfers did not "own" their local surf breaks, which allowed surfers of different localities to join on expeditions. Regional community events, called "surf safaris," allowed surfers to go to new surf breaks, an act welcomed by the PVSC. As Gault-Williams concludes, the organization of the PVSC was 'impressive even compared to today's standard.'[25]

To understand how the surf club's inclusive ethos began, one must explore the club's founder John Ball, fondly known as "Doc." Situated directly above a movie theatre, Doc's five-room apartment at Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, became the PVSC clubhouse. Clubhouses were the first communal indoor space for surfers, allowing wave-riders to develop a cohesive identity within the group. As a trained and practicing dentist, Doc's space was split between his many occupations, including that as Club President. This small property had three main sections: a room for his dentistry patients; living quarters, that worked hand-in-hand as a dentistry office, a photography darkroom and laboratory; and the clubhouse. The latter of these rooms held the PVSC's President's desk, which was positioned by walls lined with high-quality photographs of members nimbly walking along the nose of their surfboard or standing with their tall planks on the sand. Photography was Doc's third occupation, one that would later become nationally acknowledged to the American public during the war years.

[22] Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Legendary Surfers,* p.237.
[23] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.36.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Legendary Surfers,* p.217.

To Doc, surf photography was its own branch of the arts. Using his "shoots box" camera out in the diverse Californian waters, Doc was already a household name in the Southern Californian surf community. By waiting in the waters as the edge of the breaking wave curled near to the lens, his captivating photographs captured the art of surfing in a new and exciting way. In the midst of action, surfers were captured on his Series D Graflex camera, which was then stored on large 12-shot rolls of Kodak film. The camera itself, Doc had traded for it in 1937, whilst working on the teeth of the chief of the Los Angeles Fire Department arson squad. In return, Doc offered him a three-unit gold inlaid bridge for his teeth.[26] Through Doc, the camera transformed into one that was state of the art. His new design included securing an outer waterproof housing made from thick plywood, stainless steel and waterproof glues, which kept the salt water out of the lens and from damaging the film. In addition, the Graflex offered high quality, large size shots of surfers, which he developed in his darkroom to return to his friends. With his well-known photographical skills, wolfish grin, and modest charisma, Doc allowed the PVSC to climb the surf clubs' popularity ranks across the locality.

In particular, the PVSC focused on enforcing discipline. Surf club members organized their everyday lives around a self-written constitution that listed the procedures and rules for them through a series of articles and sections. When sworn in at Vermont Avenue, a suit and tie was necessary for the affair; although a torn-off pair of Levi's became the most common daily dress code. The PVSC's Constitution was located on a set of shark jaws in the clubhouse. In his analytical biography of the Club, approved by its former members, Gault-Williams comments that Doc issued these rules with a 'sergeant-at-arms' approach.[27] To follow his detailed co-ordination of events, surf practices and water polo matches, Doc ensured that discipline was at the heart of the club. One rule that the founder particularly enforced was the forbidding of smoking. Although he could not prevent smoking outside of the clubhouse, Doc remembered the moment that member, Jean Depue, quit smoking whilst surfing out at Hermosa Beach. He 'couldn't punch through like the rest of us. He ran out of breath. That slew the cigarettes on his behalf; never touched 'em again.'[28] This discipline about physical fitness and commitment to the sport's routines enabled Club members to have the strength, health and skills to surf throughout the year, even without the invention of wetsuits.

[26] Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Legendary Surfers,* p.135.
[27] Ibid, p.132.
[28] Ibid.

The PVSC was only one of several surf pockets that appeared along the coast, and it attracted more to involve themselves in the sport. After being selected for the PVSC in 1936, Oshier compares that his experiences as a club member were 'straighter.'[29] Born and raised in Oakland, California, Oshier was keen to be part of the ocean community. When he was a child at the Los Angeles Junior College, Oshier met and befriended some young swimmers that showed to him a ritual they had learnt from Hawai'i. The swim team carved hollow wooden paddleboards and went out to ride them on the water, offering Oshier a chance to try surfing. Oshier and several members of the swim team were some of the founding members of the PVSC, a decade later. Despite living in Oakland, Oshier was committed to the PVSC's calendar. After finishing his week's work on a Friday night, Oshier would hop straight into his Plymouth automobile to the coast. Packing only a sleeping bag and junk food, he would spend his nights in a secluded barn owned by another surfer's mother near the PVSC.

Reflecting on his own path into surfing, Oshier focused his time on welcoming youths and novices into the sport through lessons of surf etiquette and styles. In particular, his focus was on educating those struggling to navigate the sport. This was noted during a "surf safari" in Santa Cruz. When Oshier arrived at the beach, he observed that most of the local surfers there were on sodden paddle boards, just picking waves, standing up and heading straight towards the shore. Together with a Venice surfer, Duke Horan, and the PVSC, Oshier led revolutionary change. Reminiscing on his trip, he realized some surf spots required a 'sort of grab it by its boot straps and pull it up into present surfing styles […] we got along fine with the locals' and 'we loved it!'[30] Surfing was becoming more than merely catching a wave, it was about helping surfers to discover their potential.

Surfing San Onofre

The attempt at breaking free from traditional surfing took an alternative route in Southern California's waters of San Onofre, with surfers refusing to regulate the sport they loved. In comparison to the organized surf clubs, such as the PVSC, a handful of nomadic surfers in San Onofre refused to collectivize or form their own club. The emerald waters there became a space built on isolationism, individualism and disorderly behaviour, unlike other

[29] Malcolm Gault-Williams, 'E J Oshier: Between the Cove and Nofre,' *Legendary Surfers* [online], 15 September 2021 <https://legendary-surfers.blogspot.com/2021/09/ej-oshier-between-cove-and-nofre.html> [accessed May 2024].
[30] Ibid.

surf club spaces. Oshier, who visited these surfers several times, commented that they 'didn't want to act as a group […] they were all independent spirits.'[31] Despite this alluding to divisions and tensions across the surf communities, Oshier and many club members still spent time with the San Onofre surfers, finding 'buddies' there.[32]

Prior to the nuclear generating station being built in 1964, San Onofre was a hidden surfing gem along California's coastline, directly in between Los Angeles and San Diego. Located amongst the expansive Rancho Santa Margarita y Los Flores, surfer Bob Sides first spotted the waves during his expedition down the dirt tracks of the area. After sharing his findings in 1933, several surfers from Newport Beach did a two-day trek down unpaved roads to see what was hiding in San Onofre. It was common on the journey to receive flat tyres, before getting close enough to the shoreline. In 1937, James captured the moment his car got four flat tyres, on his camera. Reflecting back on the image, James stated, 'a typical trip to San Onofre usually involved four flats […] when we were lucky, we could patch a small hole in the tyre by wedging in a boot heel.'[33] At a glance, San Onofre was covered in bushland, with cattle grazing along the vast lands. Nearby was a fishing camp and a Texaco gas station, the closest sign of civilization to the surfers; except for the washed-up treasures found on the sands, including road signs suitable for firewood.

The unremarkable surf spot was nonetheless remarkable, due to this very nature. As Matt Warshaw explains, 'there was no outdoor influences at San Onofre […] no club rules. For the first time in its modern era, the sport had a space in which it could develop on its own.'[34] It was the 'nearest faraway place' for surfers.[35]

Labelling San Onofre as "The Place," Dorian Paskowitz recalls his experiences spending his youthhood there during the inter-war years. For him, this was a landscape where 'you could fall down on the beach dead drunk and wake up the next day' and stay 'on the beach for a whole week naked. [But] That's gone now.'[36] The individuals at San Onofre were by no means merely "Beach Bums." For example, Paskowitz was a trained physician. To support their nomadic surf life, San Onofre surfers still had to work full-time. The bohemian nature of

[31] Malcolm Gault-Williams, 'E J Oshier: Between the Cove and Nofre.'
[32] Ibid.
[33] Craig R. Stecyk, *Surfing San Onofre to Point Dume, 1936-1942: Photographs by Don James,* p.125.
[34] Matt Warshaw, 'San Onofre: The Nearest Faraway Place,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/history/gliding-return/san-onofre> [accessed May 2024].
[35] Ibid.
[36] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.37.

surfing was a preferred choice, not their lifestyle. For those in San Onofre, surfing was a casual affair, one which was seasonally dependent. Pezman furthers that these wayward individuals were disinterested in learning about the sport's possibilities, instead choosing to be "cruisy" in scoring the attention of females and drinking wine.[37] As Oshier continues to recall, the summer months became the 'party type, you know; hula dancers, singing and all that stuff […] but I was there [surfing] *every* weekend. Every weekend.'[38] Although only a minority culture in the inter-war years, due to the popularity of surf clubs, San Onofre had sown the seeds of a new liberating surf identity, pioneering a new Californian culture.

In 1938, San Onofre was selected to host the Pacific Coast Surf Riding Championships. Not only were competition categories and prizes adjusted, but new social events on the sands were implemented. An assortment of surfers, friends, partners and family members mixed on the sands of San Onofre. Without nearby hotels, clubhouses or restaurants, the Championships offered many visitors to explore different beach activities. Surfers sat around giant cook pots to share a fresh fish dinner, carried folded pocket cameras to capture moments of excitement, and watched a fire pit glow. As Warshaw noted, this nomadic behaviour has 'little or nothing to do with Hawai'i.'[39] San Onofre was the first example of a unique Californian beach culture. It was an ethos that celebrated surfing as an exclusive beach community.

The War and Decline of Surf Clubs

The "golden years" of the surf club fraternity came to an abrupt end, just seven years after the PVSC was founded. In 1941, the Second World War arrived on the doorstep of the US, reshaping every aspect of the pre-war dynamics that had constituted California's society. A year prior, Oshier had anticipated this event, stating that 'it more and more looked like there'd be a war,' as he enlisted to be part of the National Guard.[40] Since 1939, war was already a reality for many people as it spread across Europe, Asia and Africa. Yet, for the first couple of years, the US remained isolated. In December 1941, Japan joined the Axis powers and began its attacks on territories across the vast areas of the Pacific Ocean, travelling eastward. When the Japanese troops reached and attacked the US territory of Pearl Harbor,

[37] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.37.
[38] Malcolm Gault-Williams, 'E J Oshier: Between the Cove and Nofre.'
[39] Matt Warshaw, 'San Onofre: The Nearest Faraway Place.'
[40] Ibid.

Hawai'i, on the 7th December 1941, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, declared war. Much of the US fleet, and nearby airfields of Hawai'i, had been destroyed by 353 Japanese planes, which led to 2,400 American deaths. In his address to Congress, requesting a declaration of war, Roosevelt accurately predicted that the attacks witnessed that day would be 'a date which will live in infamy.'[41] The shock of the events sent ripples of panic across the USA, in particular for the states bordering the Pacific Ocean, embedding itself in public memory.

On the day of the Pearl Harbor attacks, Oshier vividly remembers enjoying California's springtime swell at Rivermouth, Santa Cruz. It was a spot famous for its large sandbar at the edge of San Lorenzo River, which created some rare offshore waves. It was during this surf that he heard the news of the attack. After already enjoying a few hours of surfing, as Oshier described, a man came up to him. He said, "Hey! You better get out of there and get back to your car and go to San Luis Obispo [The National Guard's camp]. The Japs just bombed Pearl Harbor!"[42] That was the last time Oshier surfed at Santa Cruz and he spent the remainder of the war as a Military Policeman. This feeling of disbelief was shared amongst the surf clubs. The call to war was heard. With surf club members already committed to a regimented lifestyle, physical discipline and community protection, surfers sought to enlist in the war to continue doing these acts for their country. LeRoy 'Granny' Grannis, recollects that 'just about all of us ended up in one branch or another [of the armed forces].'[43]

Although the attack on Pearl Harbor was a strategic one to secure more natural resources, such as oil, through territorial capturing, it had sent ripples of cultural change across the states bordering the Pacific Ocean. Emily Rosenberg, daughter of a US Navy veteran in the Second World War, states that the Pearl Harbor attacks became a turning point in national historical memory. Rosenberg states, 'the words "Pearl Harbor" quickly became one of the most emotive icons in American culture.'[44] It was seen as a tragic spectacle, one which many felt had to have a purpose, inspiring young and healthy men to enlist in the war. The public's shock was felt across the nation. Whilst trying to process what had happened, only 13 days

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[41] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 'Joint Address to Congress, Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan,' a speech, 8 December 1941, *Archives.gov* [online] <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/joint-address-to-congress-declaration-of-war-against-japan#:~:text=I%20ask%20that%20the%20Congress,States%20and%20the%20Japanese%20Empire.> [accessed May 2024].
[42] Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Legendary Surfers,* p.265.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Duke University Press, 2003), p.2.

after the Pearl Harbor attacks, another Japanese submarine fired a torpedo and sunk the *Emidio,* a tanker stationed off the coast of Northern California. The war had been brought to California's shores, transforming it into one of the key Pacific frontlines. With San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego offering three major gateways to the Pacific, this landscape became the hub of military advances, stations and industries. Leonard Lueras summarized that, for the PVSC members, 'their every bit of free time *on the blue* became, by Executive Order, *boys in blue*.'[45] Surfers who were committed to protecting those in and around the ocean continued this duty throughout the war.

The war was also seen as a direct threat to the ocean, the surfer's playground. The destructive nature of the attack spread across the ocean and lochs of O'ahu, through the slow leaking of oil from sunken vessels. The 'black tears' from the USS *Arizona* are expected to leak into O'ahu waters and ecosystems for another 500 years, as the vessel corrodes.[46] In an examination on the harbour area after the attack, Tom L. Ashwood and Curtis R. Olsen have observed that the bombings 'resulted in about six times more lead input to this estuarine area than the total combined lead input from sewage and naval maintenance operations during the succeeding 45 years.'[47] Thus, the war directly impacted the ocean, its ecosystems and the health of populations along the shorelines. A similar attack on California's shorelines would threaten its marine life, ocean leisure, and welcoming golden identity.

As Paul Holmes acknowledges, the most significant national wake-up call for the reality of the war on mainland US occurred in California on 25th February 1942.[48] In the early hours of this day, air-raid sirens shrieked across Southern California and power was cut, leaving the region under darkness. With searchlights in the sky and anti-aircraft gunfire sounding across the night, over 1,000 shells were fired at the enemy. Unbeknownst to the army, it was a false alarm. This surge of panic led to 5 deaths, either due to heart attacks or road traffic incidents.

The anxieties of a future attack transformed California throughout the three years of war. For example, artillery guns were placed at the tips of piers and coastlines, such as at Redondo Beach Pier. On the cliffs of Palos Verdes, anti-aircraft guns were placed. Ranchos were transformed into Marine camps. In 1944, one of these camps was Camp Pendleton, with just

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[45] Leonard Lueras, *Surfing: The Ultimate Pleasure* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1984), p.109.
[46] 'The Perils of War: The Environmental Impact of the Harbor's Black Tears,' *Pearl Harbor* [online] <https://pearlharbor.org/blog/perils-war-environmental-impact-harbors-black-tears/> [accessed June 2025]
[47] Tom L. Ashwood, Curtis R. Olsen, 'Pearl Harbor Bombing Attack: A contamination legacy revealed in the sedimentary record,' *Marine Pollution Bulletin,* 19:2 (1988), pp.68-71.
[48] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.38.

under 87,000 personnel.[49] With the addition of new military branches, Holmes emphasizes that the growing industrial focus for aviation and aircraft manufacturing radically reshaped the economy, as well as the beachscapes.[50] Rural lands, including beaches, were transformed into military spaces to cater for the growing industrial needs. With the US Federal Government issuing $35 billion to California during 1940-1946, this money was spread across shipbuilders' costs, military expenses, and catering for the influx of industrial workers. This grant also tripled the average personal income, encouraging Americans to pursue this affluent American Dream.[51] The quiet coastal landscapes of surf clubs, agricultural groves and ranchos, soon became transformed into large industrial ports of war.

Throughout the three years of war, the San Francisco Bay Area emerged as the nation's leading military hub, supplying goods, manpower and shipments for the war that continued to rage across the Pacific Ocean and its territories. Being the mainland's frontline to the ocean's shores, the State divided itself for the wartime effort. Northern areas focused on forming army bases and Southern California was the home to the Marine Corps. Older Marine bases became formally augmented, such as Camp Pendleton, and newer spaces were transformed from traditional large ranchos and groves into the US Navy's Pacific headquarters. Whilst stationed near the shores, sailors would walk the beach boulevards and streets of Los Angeles and Long Beach, marshalled by Military Police. The renovated Hollywood Canteen on Cahuenga Boulevard offered a large recreational space for these newly recruited troops, with an estimated 3 million servicemen and women enjoying coffee and entertainment there during the war. With emphasis on the "Hollywood" of its name, celebrities such as Rita Hayworth, Bette Davis and Hedy Lamarr volunteered alongside hundreds of others in the general upkeep of the Canteen. Outside of entertainment realms, blood was being donated from local volunteers and shipped for troops wounded in the Battle of Okinawa. The mass donations of lifesaving blood arrived in less than 48-hours to the wounded, situating the war's proximity close to home. Thus, the war reshaped California's society significantly.

For the surf communities, the call to war would prevent the coves and surf clubs from ever fully returning to the inter-war prime of the 1930's "golden years." With many surfers being healthy, eligible, and young able-bodied men for the war effort, surf clubs and beaches transformed into empty power vacuums. Surf journalist John Grissim stated that California's

[49] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.38.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Kevin Starr, *California: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2005), p.237.

shorelines were left to 'beachcombers, draft dodgers, kids, gentle vagabonds, and civilian locals who worked in defense-related jobs.'[52] The organized club rituals and regular meetings were replaced by sporadic surfing by those left behind and youths too young to enlist.

In less than a month after Pearl Harbor, six more tankers were attacked along California and Oregon by Japanese forces. With this threat, performing the sport was seen as self-indulgent, compared to the severity of wartime, with only the reckless or immature taking to the waves. Surf spots also became sealed off by the Coast Guard, due to the vulnerability of the beaches to Japanese strikes. From Malibu, to Waikīkī, and to Bondi, the beaches were surrounded by impenetrable barbed wire. For one major surf break near Los Angeles, Flood Control, the influence of the Navy altered its entire current system by constructing a breakwater. Describing the pre-war prime of Flood Control, Grannis comments that it once was 'an excellent right [wave that breaks to allow righthand surf paths] that used to break where the Queen Mary is now […] in 1939, we rode a huge chubasco-driven swell' there.[53] By interrupting beach communities, both physically and psychologically, the military presence cast surfing as taboo and illegitimate, and even a degrading practice.

The war radically halted the development of surfing in California as a necessary and healthy outdoor sport, culture and community. Clubs were temporarily disbanded or closed for good. The surf breaks were left to emptiness, unless one was willing to risk their lives for a few perfect waves.

The impact was deeply felt across the newly established surf clubs; their sense of community was fractured with regular members lost to combat. During pre-war years, Warshaw states that the surfing population was only a few thousand at the most.[54] Out of this, dozens of surfers lost their lives, which was a significant loss of some of the old-school higher-skilled surfers and founding pioneers of the sport. The surf club boom never fully recovered. Oshier never returned to the PVSC, as after 'a couple of guys didn't come back from the war […] the enticement of camaraderie was gone.'[55] Instead, Oshier joined the newly formed San Onofre Surfing Club. Unlike the PVSC, the San Onofre Surf Club was founded purely to gain beach access, rather than to grow a space to build comradery. In order to access one of the most beautiful surf spots that had become controlled and limited by the Marine Corps, the

[52] John Grissim, *Pure Stoke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p.20.
[53] Malcolm Gault-Williams, 'SoCal After WWII,' *Legendary Surfers* [online], 16 April 2016 <http://www.legendarysurfers.com/2016/04/california-after-wwii.html> [accessed September 2024].
[54] Matt Warshaw, *The Encyclopaedia of Surfing* (Florida: Harvest Book, 2005), p.679.
[55] Gault-Williams, 'E J Oshier: Between the Cove and Nofre.'

Club proposed to the resident Marines that they were an exception to the rule, being a dedicated club of veteran surfers. The surfers promised to continue to ensure the Navy's demands of cleanliness, discipline and safety on the beach. A lease was signed in 1951, with only a small token to be paid annually, and this allowed the surf veterans to access the clean waves of Trestle Beach. Each member was handed a key to the iron gate. With the overall decline of fraternity spirit and the competitive nature to own private waters inclining, any sense of the early surf ethos began to disappear.

For some club members that survived, the wartime retrospect also led to a new perspective on one's dedication to the sport. This was particularly true for PVSC founder Doc, who had served as a dentist on the USS *Scott* during the war. In September 1944, Doc was told by visitors that *National Geographic* magazine had published an article about his surf photography, titled "Surf-Boarders Capture California." On a national scale, Doc's photographs began introducing this champion sport to a wider readership, where an expert will need 'his cunning to avoid a spill.'[56] Although still a limited sport to access, surfing was getting a national media platform for the first time. Doc's work showcased several surfers riding overhead waves, covering several glossy pages. Initially, this revelation boosted Doc's morale too. Plus, only two months after the events at Pearl Harbor, Doc had his first child, Norm Ball, and he looked forward to his leave, where he would spend time with his children finding war surplus goods on the beach and riding bicycles.

However, as the war progressed, Doc began to experience aggressive outbursts and low mental health periods onboard the warship. During his time as a medical practitioner, he witnessed traumatic injuries and the impact of enemy torpedoes nearby. On his return, Doc's mood swings increased. To combat his struggles, Doc turned to religion to reflect on his wartime experience, and he transformed into a devout Christian. Norm Ball reflects on his father's change, stating it occurred 'while treating a pastor for a toothache […] the pastor shared the gospel' and 'surfing became a lesser part of his life.'[57] In an interview with historian Matt Warshaw, Ball stated that his father needed 'a fresh start.'[58] Although not giving up on the sport entirely, Doc moved to a timber and logging town, choosing to surf instead in smaller coves and inviting occasional former Club members to visit. Doc's story

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[56] 'Surf-Boarders Capture California,' *National Geographic*, September 1944, p.354.
[57] Matt Warshaw, 'John "Doc" Ball: How to Fix a Troubled Soul,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 25 January 2014
<https://eos.surf/2014/01/25/john-doc-ball-how-to-fix-a-troubled-soul/> [accessed September 2024].
[58] Ibid.

was not isolated; the psychological impact of war left many surfers with a need to start afresh away from the ocean.

This change in surf club dynamics was not the only consequence to hit beach communities. The largest surf contest, one which many surf clubs trained to be part of, the Pacific Coast Surf Riding Championships, did not return to California's shores. Without active clubs and the misplacing of inherited trophies during the war, the prestigious and organized nature of surf competitions began to decline. Surfing's elite status deteriorated. Instead, the war actively produced more independent surfers that had little interest in competitions and regulated fitness. These surfers had different aspirations. Some of these individuals were teenagers who had already achieved a good level of surf experience on accessible and empty shores during the war, but were not formally part of any club alliance.

The younger surfers that did enlist in the war in its later years, who were unable to be members of surf clubs, did return to the sport. Teenage surfer Dale Velzy utilized the Pacific waters during wartime to develop his understanding of the sport. He would later become the founder of a novel and thriving clubhouse surf space: the surf shop.

Velzy was a different kind of surfer. Before the war began, the unruly teenager was forced to attend the Southern California Military Academy, Long Beach, to try to redeem his poor grades and poor attendance at high school. Surfing was more than an extra-curricular sport to the surfer, one in which he had natural abilities. Surfer Tom Rice, who slept under the long lifeguard dory with Velzy as children to catch the first glimpses of morning waves, acknowledges that 'Velzy was the best. Everybody was trying to emulate his form […] he was the hawk.'[59] However, Velzy was too young, rebellious and nonchalant about commitment, to be granted membership into prestigious surf clubs at the time.

He was forcibly sent to the Academy. Velzy could not stand the discipline of the army, especially when it was compared to his carefree youth hiding at the beach. Whilst being pointed at by the officer's swagger stick, he realized, 'I just followed the idiots in front of me.'[60] He planned his escape. Hitchhiking, Velzy found a way back to Venice Beach, to his surf friends relaxing under the pier. Found by the truant officers, police and his parents, Velzy had 'a good walloping.'[61] After several escape plans with Rice, Velzy was banished from the

[59] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.31.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., p.32.

ocean. After his uncle Clarence took him under his wing in Arizona, Velzy passed his days completing manual work across the hot and dusty farmlands. In 1943, when he was old enough to enlist as a Merchant Marine, Velzy jumped at the chance to be back in the water.

It was often young surfers, swimmers and divers, that were actively sought after to be enlisted into the US military. The skills surfers possessed were seen as highly beneficial to the novel nature of this oceanic war. At the age of 16, in 1943, Velzy was sent to San Catalina Island and given the role as chef in the military, a role that he was incapable of fulfilling. After several failed attempts at baking biscuits and bread, his training was revised and Velzy stayed on the Island as a highly-skilled seaman. With his knowledge of surf breaks and surviving ocean tidal changes, the young surfer assisted the Merchant Marines in training for vessel strikes. As Paul Holmes describes, Velzy had to prepare the men mentally and physically in the event that they had to nonchalantly jump into seas 60-foot below them.[62] Further, this simulation had the addition of water set on fire with oil and gasoline, which the men had to learn to brush aside. Once the bullhorn sounded, Velzy's role was to push the hesitant men, who were wearing heavy uniforms, off the boat, 'so they gave me a rolled-up mop and when they yelled jump, if the guys didn't go, I'd shove them with the mop.'[63] If one didn't pass this test, the men would be removed from the Merchant Marines and drafted.

Life as a Marine Merchant helped introduce recreational surfing to a larger audience outside of California's borders, as some Merchants took up the sport abroad and brought it home. The military thus allowed the techniques learnt to be imported back to the mainland and inland. After achieving his Merchant qualifications, Velzy was dispatched on predominantly Victory ships, a faster and longer armed vessel that could travel 15 knots across a large span of water. The main roles of the Merchants were to help ship trade and weapons in the trans-Pacific and avoid the estimated 30,000 mines that were floating across the seaway.[64] Yet, onboard, Velzy carried his own surfboard, a nine-foot plank that he and his father had remodelled. As a merchant without Navy discipline, Velzy spent his time taking the opportunity to find any surfable waves across the Pacific. Although, he did note that only the captains from San Pedro, California, had more acceptance towards his hobby. Despite leaving it on the bow, susceptible to the violent weather across the waters, his plank survived and Velzy surfed in undiscovered spots across New Guinea, India and the Philippines.

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[62] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.35.
[63] Ibid., p.36.
[64] Ibid., p.42.

One of the most influential of wartime surf spots was Waikīkī. The pristine and clean long lines of emerald Hawaiian waves had been a surfer's paradise in folklore across California since the early 20th century. Yet, the war had transformed this stretch of water into a military base, impenetrable to non-military personnel. With his Merchant Marine card, Velzy accessed this quiet beach throughout the final two years of war, and 'it was beautiful.'[65] With the surfboards of the Hawaiian surf clubs being stored by the army during the war, it gave visiting surf veterans the opportunity to try new boards. From koa wood canoes to the "Hot Curl" surfboards, Velzy observed unique design traits of the rails, decks and hollow builds. Velzy reminisced that 'guys in the service were coming and going all the time back then.'[66] Upon his arrival back in California, the Hawaiian models of surfboards and global water conditions encouraged a new respect for the sport. War veterans who had developed their surfing abilities abroad, took home to California new ideas about surfboard shapes and designs. These pioneering ideas to adapt global surfboards for home waters became a new dream of the once-rejected independent surfing youths. With a new post-war power vacuum across Southern California's public beaches, these spaces became the new generation of surfboard shapers, inspired by what they had observed on the Islands.

Thus, once the war ended in 1945, California had been redesigned, both psychologically and physically. As Kevin Starr adds, the troops that sailed out under the Golden Gate vowed to return and create a home in the State.[67] During the war, it is estimated that 1.6 million Americans moved to California, triggering a population boom for decades.[68] The events at Pearl Harbor had redesigned the future of California. The war had given the chance for many surfers to travel the world, to see and observe new waters. For veterans from California, their communities and lifestyles significantly changed during the 4-years of war. The sport built upon surf clubs' discipline, comradery and acceptance, had become lost by the surge in isolated and young surfers, wanting to redefine the sport's designs. The war had unintentionally, but significantly, altered wave-riding into a diverse and nomadic sport, isolated from its fraternity roots.

[65] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.41.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Kevin Starr, *California: A History*, p.237.
[68] Ibid.

3. Welcome to Manhattan Beach: The Home of Veteran "Beach Bums"

"It [the 1940s] was like the beginning of a whole subculture. Hearing about the other surfers in these little pockets up and down the coast, we almost became mythological to each other."[1]

Surfer Ricky Grigg, in *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* 1989.

Prior to the outbreak of war, a golden dream had been built around the construction of South Bay as the home of beach leisure for the middle-class American family; it was a planned and organized landscape that exhibited both a domesticated exoticism and an abundance of leisure. When war arrived onto South Bay's sands in December 1941, the region was no longer seen as a controllable leisure space. Instead, California was the frontline of war, with San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego being the main gateways in and out of conflict. These areas saw an increase in military activity and defence preparations, restricting or repurposing the sands for military use. As Paul Holmes summarized, 'nobody was out surfing […] [Local surfers] all had been swept into conflict.'[2] Throughout the war, the beach remained a private militarized zone. The barbed wire fences around the sands acted as both a physical and psychological barrier; the engagement of ocean leisure was a dangerous act of self-indulgence. As a result, by 1945, the organized and constructed social structures of Southern California's golden beachscapes had been neglected by investors, allowing the sands of South Bay to re-open to the public as a socially vacuous space.

Although the Second World War posed significant restrictions across South Bay's growing communities, it was not the sole hazard to affect its demographic and economic interests. Episodic storms and freak weather conditions also played a critical role in diminishing public engagement with these coastal spaces, during the 1940s. The untameable, wild waters that surged and crashed onto its sands could not continue South Bay's commitment to the American Dream. As Lawrence Culver acknowledged, the American Dream proposed 'the pursuit of happiness, and the freedom so many Americans associated with it.'[3] The anxiety produced from these natural disasters prohibited this ideology. As a result, investors turned to

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[1] Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1989), p.20.
[2] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.33.
[3] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p.238.

new areas of interest, to search for the next environmental gold California had to offer – or could offer after significant construction. California's interests turned to inland desert suburbs and resorts, such as Palm Springs. These communities were designed specifically for white, middle-class families. Meanwhile, in South Bay, pockets of working-class surfers gravitated towards the vacuous beachscapes, seeking the opportunity to ride the extraordinary waves produced by the storms. As surfer and lifeguard Ricky Grigg recalled, surfing the storms of the 1940s 'was like the beginning of a whole subculture. Hearing about the other surfers in these little pockets up and down the coast, we almost became mythological to each other.'[4] With a decline in the presence of State authorities along the shoreline, surfers utilized South Bay's beaches as their workshops, living spaces and clubhouses. The threat of war and extreme weather had triggered a demographic restructuring of the State, enabling a surf subculture of young, working-class surfers to develop along the vacant sands.

South Bay's Natural Disasters

Throughout January 1940, a series of natural disasters struck California's oceanside havens, with frequent storms wreaking havoc through flash washouts and flooding. Between July 1939 and January 1940, 10.32 inches of rainfall had fallen across the State, compared to the average rainfall total of 6.68 inches observed in the previous decade.[5] With a low barometric pressure throughout January, and the high winds caused by these storms, extremely elevated waves crashed into the local sandbanks, harbours and oceanside properties. This shifted the ground and moved debris into tidal areas. As a result, Redondo Beach saw 20ft of the Pacific Electric track destroyed, and two Santa Barbara beach villas washed away into the ocean. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the 'rain, snow, high tides, thunder, lightning and unusual lunar rainbow were elements in the Southland's hodgepodge of phenomena.'[6] Being amongst freak nature, with its uncontrollable habits and impacts, was seen as too dangerous for those who lived beside the ocean. The ocean was no longer seen as a safe nor stable environment, an identity which Californian officials had spent two decades forming.

[4] Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge*, p.20.
[5] 'Storm Brings Rain, Snow, and Lightning,' *Los Angeles Times,* 24 January 1940, p.1.
[6] Ibid.

A year prior to the US joining the global war, a particularly momentous surge in the storm occurred on the 9th January 1940, when Manhattan Beach lost approximately 90ft of its famous pier due to this brutal weather. The loss of the pier saw the further destruction of a gasoline station, lifeguard dory and gear for fishing, which were lost as debris to the high waters. For locals, tourists, and surfers alike, the ocean changed from a leisure space, into an environment of mythical unpredictability and brutality.

The hurricane-like surge from the tropical storms manifested into a large and almost biblical surf season during the seven-month period of July 1939 to January 1940, with the latter month witnessing the peak of destruction along the shores of Southern California. The tropical and humid summer of 1939 brought high rates of precipitation that deluged the locality with storms. The daring pursuits of surfers during this summer phenomenon became mythologized with legendary tales, as even the strongest of lifeguards and surfers came precariously close to not returning back to the shores.

No other surfer was more famed by the storms than 23-year-old George "Peanuts" Larson, born as George Saunders Zimmerman, who paddled out into the swell on 25th September 1939. To preserve this grand story, first-hand accounts were recorded to retell the day Peanuts entered the giant surf of Orange County. One version of events was told by Laguna Beach lifeguard Brennan "Hevs" Macallan, who rescued Peanuts from his daring wave. Hevs remembered the obscure weather of that day: 'Boy, there was a lot of moisture in the air. You could almost cut it with a knife.'[7] Although without binoculars, Hevs spotted a dot in the distance paddling out into the giant waves several miles from the safety of shore. The dot was Peanuts attempting to ride his largest wave. The surfer began to paddle as a giant wave crept up behind him, as onlookers on the sands watched with horror as he dropped into the water. After a moment, his surfboard connected with the water and the young man sped along the curling face of the wave. Hevs continues to recollect, 'Boy, that wave was huge […] nobody could believe it. He made it past the point. Then the whole thing walled up and crashed on him. Nobody'd ever seen anyone ride a wave that big. We saw his board wash in, but not Peanuts.'[8]

Hevs immediately paddled out with a pair of Churchill swim fins, ducking under the white water until he found Peanuts in a rip current. Tired from the constant waves falling onto him,

[7] Craig Lockwood, *Peanuts* (Newport Beach: The Croul Family Foundation, 2009), p.59.
[8] Ibid.

Peanuts wrapped his arms around the lifeguard, who persuaded Peanuts to use him as a bodyboard, mirroring 'a big pink surfmat.'[9] Despite his near-death experience, an extraordinary achievement had been made by the young man from San Clemente; he had surfed the largest wave recorded in contemporary Californian history.

A legend had been created that day about the mysterious surfer, which inspired surfers to conquer the most dangerous waters for their own claim to fame. What made this myth more thrilling was that Peanuts' life represented one of a typical young, working-class Californian man. Born to German immigrants during the First World War, with no public records about his birth and whereabouts until his late-teenage years, not many knew of Peanuts' past. He simply appeared in California with his parents, as they searched for stable industrial work to support their family. As a child, his name was soon swapped to "Peanuts," because he left a trail of peanut shells on the beach, a snack he enjoyed from his father's gas station. By riding a wave in the storm, Peanuts offered that an extraordinary wave was possible for the most ordinary of surfers.

For surfers, this mythological wave reshaped notions of big-wave surfing, and strengthened the bond between wave-rider and wave. It encouraged the boldest surfer to take on large stormy swells, to cement their story in American history – and myth. However, these super swells from the surge in storms were not a permanent fixture in waves that were predominantly average-swell height. Yet, these large swells created by the storms did impact more than just the few hundred local surfers along Southern California's coastline. City migrants and white-collar workers began to disconnect from and fear the Pacific Ocean. The topographical events revealed the ocean to be an unreliable and dangerous space, reversing the State's focus on promoting the beach as a patrolled and safe space for leisure.

In the greater region of Los Angeles, freak weather hit the shores and canyons for several more years, causing catastrophic destruction to both the populace and environment. These storms were regularly documented by the *Los Angeles Times*. One article, which was published after a three-day rainstorm in February 1941, featured a series of eye-witness accounts detailing the impact of the storms on their communities. During the three days of heavy rain, the final night observed four recorded deaths related to the storm, a landslide releasing 200 tons of earth, flooded homes and fatal automobile collisions.[10] A few months

[9] Craig Lockwood, *Peanuts*, p.61.
[10] 'Four Deaths Laid to Three-Day Rain as Rail and Highway Traffic Crippled,' *Los Angeles Times,* 21 February 1941, p.1.

later, Manhattan Beach once again saw its trees being ripped from the soil during a storm which pushed April's rainfall levels to 30.85 inches. The average rainfall in the area in April, prior to 1941, was 13.85 inches.[11]

The pressure of this large quantity of rainfall led to sewers no longer being at a safe capacity. In 1941, a sewage crisis occurred, with toxic waste overflowing out of outfall sewer systems into the ocean. This led to, as Dr Belt reports in December 1941, a 'gross contamination of the beach by bacteria shed by human beings from the gastrointestinal tract.'[12] One of the sewer systems observed as a hazard included the Hyperion Sewage Screening Plant, situated at Manhattan Beach. As environmental historian Elsa Devienne concluded, Californians learnt that the golden beaches of Los Angeles were dirty with pollution from untreated sewage and industrial effluents.[13] The revelation of sewage rejected the pristine ideology of Southern California's beachscapes, disproving that the State offered better health benefits through its outdoor facilities.

Through these environmental dangers, California's beaches were deemed as spaces that had the potential to cause illness, injury and death. Southern California's shores were no longer seen as suitable outdoor environments for middle-class families, the target populace for an affluent beachside community. Abandoning ocean leisure as a key advertisement for migration, Manhattan Beach's developers turned to inland housing, suburban complexes, and regulated sport courts and facilities, instead. Freak weather, environmental anxieties, and the want to develop inland suburban projects, reduced the desirability of the beachscape and State authority over California's shorelines. This change in society's perception triggered a power vacuum along South Bay's beaches, allowing pockets of surfers to collectivize to nurture their post-war identity.

Who can be a Surfer?

The churning swells were also life threatening to skilled surfers in the post-war decade. Surfers, such as Nicolás Gabaldón and surfboard manufacturer Bob Simmons, fell victim to the large swells that developed along South Bay's coastlines. In 1951, Gabaldón

[11] 'Rain Won't Last Long,' *Los Angeles Times,* 5 April 1941, p.1.
[12] Ray Zeman, 'Sweeping County Beach Quarantine Planned,' *Los Angeles Times,* 7 December 1941, p.A1.
[13] Elsa Devienne, *Sand Rush: The Revival of the Beach in Twentieth Century Los Angeles* (Oxford University Press, 2024), p.3.

wrote a poem titled "Lost Lives," detailing the impact of temperamental waves along California's shores. Written only six days before his drowning at Malibu Pier, the poem foreboded the 24-year-old's own death in the ocean. Whilst studying at Santa Monica's College, Gabaldón submitted his poem to the college's literary magazine. Through his illustrative words, Gabaldón reminded the surfer that, 'scores and scores have fallen prey to the salt of animosity, and many more will be victims of the capricious, vindictive sea […] Pounding, beating upon your cousin shore; Come you clapping, rapping with a mighty roar.'[14] Despite penning his understanding of the ocean's unpredictability and dangers, Gabaldón paddled out into a large swell on 6th June 1951. In an attempt to shoot the pier, a manoeuvre where one surfs through the pilings under a pier, Gabaldón drowned in the heavy white water. His body was recovered several days later. The loss of Gabaldón impacted both the Malibu and Santa Monica surf communities, undermining the myth of invincibility amongst surfers.

Gabaldón was the first documented African American surfer in California, born to an African American mother and Latino father. Born in Santa Monica in 1927, Gabaldón witnessed a society that participated in racial oppression and beach segregation. As a result, he spent his days at Inkwell Beach, the only major beach open to Black Americans. It was also an undesirable patch of Santa Monica's shoreline due to the sewer outlet, with bacterial contamination found within its waters after storms. In the late-1940s, de facto public beach segregation continued along the coast of South Bay, policed by self-appointed enforcers such as homeowners' associations. Yet, as Josh Sides commented, the Second World War was a 'critical turning point for blacks in America' and 'represented a window of opportunity to end or, at the very least, reduce racial inequality in America.'[15] The nation's war industries enabled defence manufacturers to look beyond 'traditionally white, male, and often skilled labor pool,' allowing a more ethnically diverse workforce.[16] As a result of black migration from the South seeking these opportunities, black populaces searched for leisure in the public spaces of Los Angeles. Instead of successful integration, as Sides continued, many white

[14] 'Grim Foreboding Stalks Through Lines of Poem by Tragedy-Fated Student,' *Santa Monica Evening Outlook,* 14 June 1951.
[15] Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles From the Great Depression to the Present* (University of California Press, 2003), p.2.
[16] Ibid.

homeowners responded by 'more aggressively defending racial segregations.'[17] Thus, de facto segregation and oppression towards Black Americans continued across South Bay.

Meanwhile, police and city surveillance moved from patrolling the beachscape, to inland housing and leisure areas, due to the decline in middle-class interest for the former popular amusement piers and public beaches. Some beaches, such as Venice Beach and Cabrillo Beach, reduced their segregation policies on both land and water, with the hiring of African American and Mexican American lifeguards. This is furthered by surf writer Jack López, who pens his experience as a Latin American. López spent his childhood days in the early 1950s, 'playing on the sands of Manhattan Beach, and having barbecues on in the afternoon.'[18] For López, the post-war restructuring of society in South Bay allowed him to be 'a pioneer in the sociological sense in that I had no distinct ethnic piece of geography for which my pride and honor depended […] I could be a surfer.'[19] In the post-war decade, despite the politics of a de facto segregation continuing across California, Mexican and Latin Americans increasingly participated in, and identified with, beachside leisure. Yet, during his childhood, López also learnt that 'certain assumptions will be made about you, depending upon where your ancestors hale from.'[20] Californians had to 'acknowledge the hierarchy […] America is not color blind.'[21]

For many non-white Californians, the beach space remained unwelcoming. As Lawrence Culver summarized, 'an African American family – or any non-Anglos – who arrived at a park, playground, or any recreational area and received a chilly reception would likely leave.'[22] Although the majority of California's beaches were public after the war, non-white Americans had to assess the tolerance levels of local populaces before visiting other beaches, to ensure their safety. In a study recorded in 1952, black sociologist Alphonso Pinkney found that out of 319 white Americans, 48% of the interviewees would attend a social club with Mexican American members.[23] In comparison, only 25% of the interviewees stated they would attend a social club if "Negroes" were members. Therefore, to avoid any confrontation, Gabaldón spent his days swimming at Inkwell Beach.

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[17] Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, p.8.
[18] Jack López, *Cholos and Surfers: A Latino Family Album* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1998), p.172.
[19] Ibid., p.60.
[20] Ibid., p.119.
[21] Ibid., p.118.
[22] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure,* p.74.
[23] Alphonso Pinkney, 'Prejudice towards Mexican and Negro Americans: A Comparison,' *Phylon,* 24:4 (4th Qtr., 1963), pp.535-539 (p.355).

Inkwell was patrolled by white lifeguards, with the majority being local, working-class surfers. Throughout the 1940s, Gabaldón and Wayne King regularly bodysurfed and swam in the ocean as youths. Gabaldón soon befriended Inkwell's lifeguards, Buzzy Trent, Peter Cole and Ricky Grigg. Noticing his intrigue towards their hollow rescue surfboards and way of life, the lifeguards allowed Gabaldón to borrow the rescue boards in the water. Inkwell lifeguard Peter Cole recalled, 'I remember those two [Gabaldón and King] bodysurfing a lot […] Buzzy said you gotta start surfing.'[24] If Trent 'did something that he liked, he wanted other people to join in and have the fun he was having. He [Gabaldón] really was a good surfer.'[25] Trent, a pioneer in big-wave riding, and Santa Monican, saw potential in Gabaldón's abilities when watching the college student learn to ride a surfboard. After some mentoring, Trent invited Gabaldón to join him in an isolated area of Malibu ranch, home to a small group of diverse surfers and better waves.

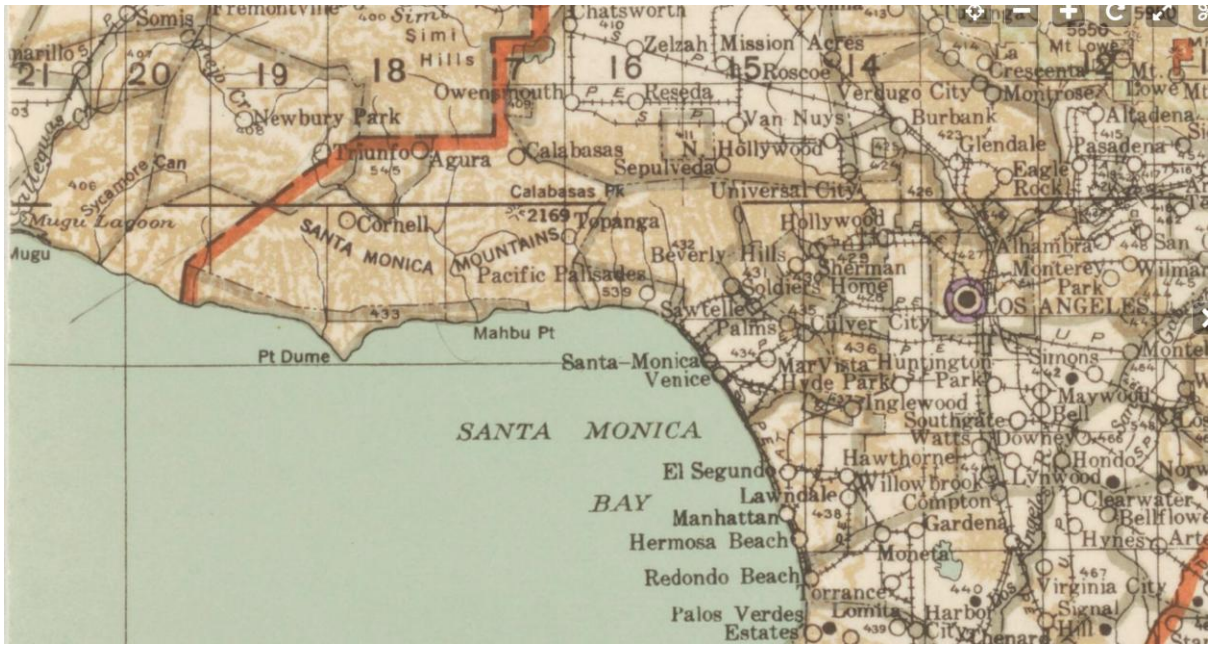


Figure 3.1. "Mahbu [*sic*] Pt." in the 'Maps of California,' a map, 1928-1930, retrieved from the *Library of Congress* [online], <www.loc.gov/item/2022589244/> [accessed April 2025].

In the 1930s, Malibu Point, an area of shoreline near Malibu's pier, caught the attention of surfers, with its clean, rolling waves and quiet shoreline. The Point, however, was private, belonging to the landowners of Rindge Ranch and Adamson House. To access this spot, and its pristine waves, surfers began to remove small sections of the thick wired fence and sneak

[24] *12 Miles North: Nick Gabaldon Story,* dir. by Richard Yelland (Curtis Birch, 2012) [Documentary].
[25] Ibid.

onto the property. Meanwhile, the "no trespassing" signs led to tourists being deterred from the spot, allowing the surfers to experiment on the bountiful waves. Surfer Vicki Flaxman commented, Malibu was 'our little slice of paradise,' away from the 'whole world.'[26] Flaxman was one of a handful of female surfers at Malibu, with others including Aggie Bane, Robin Grigg and Mary Ann Hawkins. Flaxman continued, 'we surfed together. We traveled together. We barbecued and partied together […] it was an everyday thing. Just put your board on the car and go to Malibu.'[27] After the war, on summer nights, the Malibu surfers would drink wine and play the guitar, beside a shack made from lumber and palm leaves.

When Gabaldón arrived at Malibu Point in the late-1940s, he was quickly welcomed into the group. As Dick Metz summarized, 'whether black, white or yellow, if they [surfers] came in and were in tune with that group, they'd fit right in.'[28] Tucked away from California's watchful eye, Malibu's surf community offered an inclusive area for those who wanted to surf well. Gabaldón joined in with both the social activities and wave-riding. One activity he enjoyed was tandem surfing, partnering often with Bane, the later wife of Quigg. Tandem surfing was often the gateway for women to join the surf community, as the heavy weight of redwood surfboards led to difficulty in carrying and manoeuvring. Flaxman recalled after tandem riding, 'I was hooked, that was it […] but I didn't start surfing on my own until 1950. Before that, I liked it but didn't know how to go about it.'[29] As a result, Quigg designed an early prototype of the "Malibu Chip" surfboard, an idea that derived from Simmons' experiments. The Chip, with its balsa core and thin rails, produced a lighter and more streamlined surfboard. Quigg carved the Chip on Malibu's sands, allowing female and younger surfers to participate in independent surfing. After the war, Malibu Point had adapted the surf image to include a diverse group of surfers, illustrating that surfing was more than simply a fraternal sport's club.

Travelling to and from Malibu was difficult for Gabaldón. De facto segregation and the removal of black populaces from beachside real estate and public transport connections, prevented Gabaldón from reaching the surf spot. To reach Malibu Point, Gabaldón paddled the journey on his surfboard, which equalled 12 miles from Inkwell to Malibu, and then back

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[26] Vicki Williams, 'Vicki Williams (Flaxman),' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], an interview by Ella Boyd, 2022
<https://www.eos.surf/interview/vicki-flaxman> [accessed May 2025].
[27] Ibid.
[28] *12 Miles North: Nick Gabaldon Story.*
[29] Vicki Williams, 'Vicki Williams (Flaxman).'

again. Cole recalled watching Gabaldón arrive back to Inkwell. He said to the surfer, "What, that's 12 miles, Nick. What are you doing? How do you have the energy to do anything?"[30] Gabaldón laughed, "Well, I take it easy."[31] Although California's beachscapes continued to practice segregation, Malibu offered a place for Gabaldón to find a community of likeminded surfers. This small pocket of surfers in Malibu offered a new perspective on who can surf, with a focus on welcoming those with a wave-riding skill. By 1950, a budding post-war surf counterculture was developing in Malibu; it offered a social rebellion against California's want of a homogenized society of middle-class whiteness.

Thus, the Malibu surf community was shocked by Gabaldón's sudden drowning in 1951, as they watched him ride his final wave, from the sands. Visiting from Inkwell, King stood with the surfers on the shore, and 'we saw him, the next thing you know we didn't see him […] you could see the kelp churning in the water.'[32] Immediately local surfers and lifeguards jumped into the water to save Gabaldón, but there was no sign of the surfer. Cole recalled, 'Buzzy spent a long time trying to find him.'[33] The drowning upset many of Malibu's regular surfers. Flaxman furthered, 'everyone was grieving because they liked him and it was a terrible accident. And it was scary.'[34] As a result of trying to shoot the pier, Gabaldón became another victim to California's treacherous and wild waves, in the post-war years.

The loss of surfers, lifeguards and fishermen to the Pacific Ocean throughout the 1940s and 1950s illustrated that the ocean was an uncontrollable and unsafe space. At the age of 35, surfboard shaper Simmons drowned after a wipeout at Windansea. On 26th September 1954, the swell was about 10ft high, according to surfer Bev Morgan, who paddled out with Simmons.[35] Setting off on the wave late, Simmons was met with an 'awful wall of water,' with 'several boards being tossed high in the soup.'[36] The loss of Simmons, an experienced big-wave rider, at one of his favourite surf spots, questioned the invincibility of surfers further. Entering the ocean was a risk for Californians. As a result of the many drownings, some beaches, such as San Francisco and Ocean Beach, placed warning signs beside the water to prevent swimmers and surfers from entering. Whilst living in San Francisco in 1949,

[30] *12 Miles North: Nick Gabaldon Story.*
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Vicki Williams, 'Vicki Williams (Flaxman).'
[35] 'Bob Simmons' Last Wave: A Brief Oral History,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 11 January 2017 <https://www.eos.surf/feature/bob-simmons-last-wave-a-brief-oral-history> [accessed May 2025].
[36] Ibid.

surfer Jack O'Neill stated that surfing 'was against the law! They'd lost a number of people, and they put, DANGER! NO SWIMMING, signs up.'[37] He continued, 'anyone [who] went down there and went in the ocean was nuts.'[38] This did not, however, stop a handful of surfers determined to enjoy their sport.

As a result of both the environmental and social transformations, a controlled and isolated space for middle-class Americans was required. With the post-war economy booming after the success of wartime industries, city funds were pumped into building a modern way of living for Californians; Golden California's focus shifted away from the Pacific Ocean towards an inland space for white homeowners. As John J. Bukowczyk summarized, 'California was not, for many, a hometown, but a destination;' Californians were in a 'state of perpetual motion' as they searched for 'mobility and opportunity, homogenization, whiteness, natural beauty, American identity and the American Dream.'[39] The American Dream, in the post-war decade, was focused on building the suburbs. Consequently, surfers began to experiment with an undemanding and laid-back culture on the sands, disregarding both the physical and cultural boundaries of State law and politics.

Suburban Dreaming

In 1941, with the global war industry booming, California's total employment rate increased by 40%, with the civilian population rising by 15%. California's oceanside towns were chosen as the main hubs of wartime manufacturing, supplying military hardware and materials, and training bases to assist in the war. John Aubrey Douglass states that the war 'set the stage for a proactive state government,' due to a mass of wealth being accumulated from this industry for the State.[40] The wealth produced from migration, wartime industries, and high employment, was placed into policy ideas that were reserved for future peacetime spending.

In 1943, harnessed with a surplus of wealth, California's Governor Earl Warren designed a local "New Deal" plan of action to use this financial growth to develop the State with further

[37] Drew Kampion, *Jack O'Neill: It's Always Summer on the Inside* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books LLC, 2011), p.55.
[38] Ibid, p.55.
[39] John J. Bukowczyk, 'California Dreamin', Whiteness, and the American Dream,' *Journal of American Ethnic History,* 35:2 (Winter 2016), pp.91-106 (p.94-95).
[40] John Aubrey Douglass, 'Earl Warren's New Deal: Economic Transition, Postwar Planning, and Higher Education in California,' *Journal of Policy History,* 12:4 (2000), pp.473-512 (p.473).

urbanization and suburbanization schemes. The impressive growth of California's economy was acknowledged in an article by the California State Chamber of Commerce, titled "Postwar Industrial Planning on the Pacific Coast (1943)." Written in the midst of war, the article stated that in 33 months, ending in February 1943, $2,500,000,000 had been spent on military 'industrial plant facilities' including 'shipways, aircraft plants, iron and steel plants, synthetic rubbers, aluminum and magnesium.'[41] As a result, California achieved a boom in its economy that would have taken 'a decade or two to accomplish' in only a couple of years.[42] With this wartime wealth, Warren planned to build more housing, social services, public works and higher education facilities, in order to create a stable and flourishing California for when the war ended. As Warren reflected, 'the war had caused us [Californians] to actually jump into our future.'[43]

In the early years of the global war, California's wealth from industrial growth can be showcased through the large-scale housing communities built during this time, designed for middle-class homeowners. The Manhattan Beach Gardens project was proposed by Harry Waxman in 1941, offering a novel perspective to city engineers for the future of suburban housing developments. With the project costing $4,000,000, the inland housing complex was designed for affluent buyers; with the average house price in the Gardens costing $8,000.[44] The project was quickly accepted by city engineers in March 1941, as it encouraged affluent migrants to the area. Using a vast vacant space between existing lots, the housing complex was built away from the beachscape, promising a safe space to its homeowners. Instead of ocean leisure, the 450 state-of-the-art homes were positioned next to the Manhattan Beach Athletic Club, allowing its homeowners to use the facilities and swimming pools available. The project's scale and rapid nature caught the attention of national newspapers. Despite New York being approximately 2,800 miles away from Manhattan Beach, the *New York Times* encouraged its populace to partake in this relocation opportunity to the Gardens.[45] Thus, at the start of the war, Manhattan Beach was being developed into an avant-garde, middle-class resort for migrants.

[41] Herbert F. Ormsby, 'Postwar Industrial Planning on the Pacific Coast,' *Journal of Marketing,* 8:2 (October 1943), pp.156-158 (p.156).
[42] Ibid.
[43] John Aubrey Douglass, 'Earl Warren's New Deal,' p.474.
[44] 'Manhattan Beach to Get New Homes,' *New York Times,* 30 March 1941, p.RE1.
[45] Ibid.

By the end of the war, however, environmental hazards, the diversity of beaches, and the completion of freeways, led to middle-class Californians no longer seeking an oceanside or city residence. A new model of community was being developed on vast and cheaper lands inland, inspired by the desert resort Palm Springs. These communities offered a glimpse of suburbia marked with modernism, privately tucked away from other preexisting metropolises or towns. Houses were low-pitched with flat rooflines and extensive glass panels. In Palm Springs, one could find a unique shopping district, a tennis club and golf course. The resort also had its own press, the *Palm Springs Villager,* which promoted this leisure way of life to its middle-class community.

In its first issue, an article titled "From One Villager to Another" calls for more "boosters," people who will promote this way of life.[46] It states, a 'real booster had vision, and realizes that his efforts today will reap benefits tomorrow for his neighbors, his family and himself.'[47] These efforts included an 'intelligent program' that would help lengthen the leisure seasons through 'events such as national tennis and golf matches, polo, [and] horse shows.'[48] The Palm Springs community was more than simply a vacation district; it was a Californian space that would birth the ideals of suburbia and the suburbanite. As the article concluded, 'there is a job to be done' in Palm Springs; a job to promote the American Dream.[49] By 1953, Palm Springs' population surpassed 10,000. In tandem, another milestone was reached in 1953; Palm Springs was home to 600 swimming pools.[50]

The middle-class and elites of society were selected for this experimental landscape, as their 'social status and security' made them more 'open to modern architecture,' as Lawrence Culver commented.[51] The exclusive nature of these luxurious desert resorts promoted that the 'private [space] was consistently privileged over public' spaces.[52] Although the desert resort was focused on luxurious living and vacation homes, it had sown the seed of a modern suburbia that focused on the domestic realm. In order to flaunt one's wealth and prosperity in the post-war world, white middle-class families sought a likeminded community that focused on privacy, domesticity and homelife.

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[46] William Fox, 'From One Villager to Another,' *The Villager,* 1, February 1947, p.4.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America,* p.187.
[51] Ibid., p.181.
[52] Ibid., p.233.

Suburbia offered both a physical and psychological change from South Bay's pre-war industrial era, as the suburban housing complexes brought a new vision of urban modernity. Gary Cross, in his examination of suburbia, explores that the domestic space of suburbia was a novel 'psychological fortress,' which almost acted as narcissism.[53] Suburbia was created to protect the nuclear family from losing their virtuous and materialistic ideals, which had been threatened by the war. With conservative ideals arriving in California from wartime white-collar migrants from the East, the return to essential values of religion, middle-class ideals and domesticity were seen as a deterrent from another war and future economic strife.

Furthermore, suburban communities reflected the height of post-war spending and consumerism, both physically and psychologically. White picket fences, barbecues and "Tupperware parties" – where women were part of the workforce, coming together to sell and purchase Tupperware in the home sphere – all created an image of a peaceful, domestic, consumerist lifestyle on a cultural stage. As Lynn Spigel comments in *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*, the American home became a form of 'theatre,' a stage for social conventions and rehearsed acts.[54] In her monograph, Spigel states how suburbanites were deluged with the expectations of a stable home, after the uncertainty of war merely five years prior.[55]

After the war, this fantasy was further promoted through Hollywood films, such as *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946).[56] The film illustrates that family values could insulate individuals from economic hardships and wartime peril. A child was born as a psychological blank slate. There was an emphasis on isolating the basic relationship of mother, father, and children, to ensure suburban values developed. With the government promoting suburbia through television and film, in a post-war age of affluence, suburbanites flourished with all their saved cash from wartime. This suburban dream was one very isolated from the public sphere, as mothers became housewives, children played in the yard and fathers had a white-collar job in the city. To reduce this isolation, neighbourhood parties were sold by companies through products, such as patio furniture and Tupperware, to relieve this growing focus on the domestic realm. Yet, as Spigel's work demonstrated, the spatial focus of the suburban home still led to many women and children being isolated from the public sphere, with a new focus

[53] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (Columbia University Press, 2000), p.97.
[54] Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse* (Duke University Press, 2001), p.39.
[55] Ibid.
[56] *It's a Wonderful Life,* dir. by Frank Capra (RKO Pictures, 1946) [Motion Picture].

on television and kitchen activities by consumers. There was a pressure to produce an 'imaginary unity,' otherwise one would be othered in society as "absent."[57]

Once the Second World War ended in 1945 and the barbed wire fences came down, young surfers returned to their familiar home playground, the beach. Public spaces, particularly natural areas that could not be topographically controlled or harnessed, mirrored the old American Dream of the wild frontier. As a result, Dale Velzy returned to Hermosa Beach at 19-years-old, dedicated to resurrecting his former childhood experiences. With the beach no longer a priority for the State, due to its desired inland suburban dreams, veteran surfers saw the beach as their own outdoor, "Wild West" hideout, once again. Away from the eyes of officials, Velzy and the remaining veteran surfers focused on producing a rebellious counterculture, to preserve their outlawish, childhood identities. Holmes stated that the post-war generation of surfers ventured 'into new sociological territory […] blessed with a great climate, abundant natural resources and a prosperous economy.'[58] Governor Warren's plans for a modernized California, through the economic triumphs of inland suburbia and wartime industries, had allowed surfers the liberty to expand surfing into its own unique culture. Far from the wants of suburbia and family expansion, as observed inland, Velzy was selected to be the surf counterculture's leader, at Manhattan Beach.

The Arrival of Countercultures

Born 23rd September 1927 near Hermosa Beach, Velzy began to surf when he was 'just a little squirt.'[59] Reflecting back on his childhood, Velzy would wait on the sands of Hermosa to see 'a board wash in on the beach. I'd run down and stand on it until the older surfer would come up and kick me off.'[60] This continued until eventually his father, who was a carpenter, aircraft maintainer, and lifeguard, carved a few planks for his son when he was 8 or 9 years old. His father was a 'wizard with wood,' a practical trait passed down from Velzy's paternal grandfather, who had made the casket for President Theodore Roosevelt.[61] As well as being practical, the Velzy clan were also observant. When surf was too big for pre-teen surfers, both Dale and his father would watch other surfboards cut through the water

[57] Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse,* p.41.
[58] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.54.
[59] Dale Velzy, 'Tales of the Hawk,' *Surfer's Journal,* ed. by Craig Stecyk, Fall 1994.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.21.

from the shoreline, to inspire any further changes to Dale's planks. Growing up with blue-collar parents during the Depression Era, the beach offered a unique refuge of free leisure. During the wintertime, Dale Velzy would scan the beach for any lost quarters accidentally dropped and buried by tourists during the previous summer. By collecting these coins, his sharp senses and resourcefulness earnt him the nickname "Hawkeye," from his father. His peers soon shortened it to "Hawk."[62]

By the late-1930s, Velzy was not the only teenage surfer in South Bay. There were several pockets of surfing youths along the shores of California, skipping school to catch waves and to learn tricks from older surf club members. These youths were more commonly known as "beach rats," and did not affiliate with surf clubs. Andrew Dubbins defines "beach rats" as the lesser-organized 'roguish crew of California lifeguards' during the war, who would be later called up for specialist roles in the Navy and Merchant Marines.[63] Velzy, and his friend Tom Rice, were prime examples of beach rats. In the 1940s, as Rice reflected, 'surfing was such a way of life that it ruined a lot of my folks' plans for me […] the ocean was our playground.'[64] With neither Velzy nor Rice going to school regularly, due to the temptations of good waves during the stormy seasons, both beach rats decided to enlist. With the Pacific Ocean's war raging on, enlistment offered a unique opportunity to access militarized beaches, travel the world, and earn a wage. With his parents' signatures, Velzy enlisted early into the Merchant Marines, at the age of 16.

By becoming a Merchant Marine, Velzy returned to Manhattan Beach with the financial stability to secure his lifestyle as a beach rat. The teenager was granted access to funds under the GI Bill of 1944, offering servicemen the ability to integrate back into society through offerings of mortgage payments and higher education schemes. Known as an act of readjustment, this scheme also offered a year of unemployment pay to servicemen, paying $20-$50 per week to those looking for work.[65] This was a loan guarantee, with the government offering money to veterans to purchase businesses and homes. The Bill was a significant investment to veterans, particularly as this offer included free health care.

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[62] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.21.
[63] Andrew Dubbins, 'The Beach Rats,' *Alta* [online], 1 July 2022 <https://www.altaonline.com/dispatches/a40395942/the-beach-rats/> [accessed June 2024].
[64] Robb Fulcher, 'Legends 'Dirty Boogie' onto Walk of Fame,' *EasyReaderNews* [online], 14 April 2011 <https://easyreadernews.com/hermosa-surf-legends/> [accessed August 2024].
[65] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.55.

With these benefits, the government's spending reached $14.5 million throughout the program, before the Bill expired in 1956.[66] With these payments offering mortgages, a housing crisis occurred in California due to the mass and rapid development of the State's desirability from wartime migrants, who had enjoyed their temporary stay. Upon return, with the GI Bill's promise to veterans, permanent housing was soon offered on military barracks, Quonset huts and quick-built facilities. With the demographic growth, demands for education, shopping and transport grew. Governor Warren states in his assessment of the 1940s, no other period of American history created such 'sweeping changes to our economy and social life.'[67]

Although many veterans aimed to improve their social status through purchasing property in California's novel suburbs or through enrolling in higher education facilities to receive a stable income in modern post-war USA, some chose to use these GI Bill payments as a stable income to support a nomadic, even outlaw, lifestyle. The President of the University of Chicago, Robert Hutchins, predicted that the scheme might turn his elite, prestigious societies into 'hobo jungles.'[68] With a surge in working-class veteran students, vacant military Quonset huts were rented to attendees of the University. By 1947, half of all college students were former veterans seeking further education.[69] These "jungles" however, appeared in public spaces, rather than through the academic sphere. As surfer Greg Noll recollected, 'surfing in those days was different from what you see today. Surfers were grubby guys who spent most of their time in the water. Some worked as lifeguards. Some didn't work at all.'[70] After spending considerable amounts of time on international waters, surfers returned and chose to form simplistic, nomadic, beachside "hobo jungles" across abandoned stretches of beaches.

Sociologist Erving Goffman published a detailed list of the social deviants that directly challenged middle-class American values, in 1963. He divides his list into two forms of deviants, the first being 'ethnic and racial minorities' and the other being 'the lower class who quite noticeably bear the mark of their status in their speech, appearance, manner, and who, relative to the public institutions of our society, find they are second class citizens.'[71] Within this second category, he observed the 'beach dwellers' who he described as 'aging young

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[66] 'Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944),' *National Archives* [online], 3 May 2022 <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/servicemens-readjustment-act> [accessed May 2024].
[67] John Aubrey Douglass, 'Earl Warren's New Deal,' p.474.
[68] 'The History of the GI Bill,' *APM Reports* [online], 3 September 2015 <https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2015/09/03/the-history-of-the-gi-bill> [accessed May 2024].
[69] Ibid.
[70] Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.16.
[71] Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Touchstone, 1986), p.145-146.

people who are not yet ready to become contaminated by work and who voluntarily devote themselves to various forms of riding the waves.'[72] As a result, these surfing deviants were 'temporarily tolerated in this gestural rebellion, providing it is restricted within the ecological barrier of their community.'[73] Consequently, surfers were observed as "bums," Americans who rejected the ideals of enrolling in higher education, securing a white-collar job and purchasing a suburban home.

Christopher T. Daskalos, a surf sociologist, criticized this early view on Southern California's surfers during their budding years. He commented that the term 'deviants' is 'overplayed in the culture and stems from an earlier, socially insensitive definition of the sport.'[74] Surfers had their own values and regulations, and although different to the suburban ideals, it was a 'hard code' of 'established order.'[75] The surf code was based on interpersonal skills, status recognition, and local pride, which was shared amongst the pockets of surfers.[76] If a surfer did not adhere to this code, they were ostracized. Similar to the suburban communities, surfers excluded the "other": the non-surfers. Although a peculiarity for the suburbanite and inland American, surfers were more than merely lazy "surf bums;" surfers were diverse in their dedication to the sport, and diverse in their views on society. Surfers found a connection with others that did not fit into the American Dream, the other cultural "deviants."

For surfing veterans receiving the GI Bill payments, this State's new focus on a suburban lifestyle provided an opportunity to re-create a beach community of leisure and "hobo jungles" away from the public eye. Meanwhile, with public spaces being linked to the threat of war, pollution and freak storms, the private sphere of the house was reserved for the middle-class and elite. Thus, suburbia included leisure, socializing and the home, all within its own walls. The public spheres, such as beaches and parks, became reserved for the lower-classes and those rejected from the suburban dream. Unlike the pre-war communities of beach elitism, with surf clubs, surf competitions and expansive beachside manors alongside quiet coastlines, the expansion of cities and populaces reshaped notions of wealth distribution. The post-war need to protect ideals from the dangers of the "outside world" created a spatial link between leisure and values through community divides. Cross

[72] Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity,* p.145-146.
[73] Ibid., p.145.
[74] Christopher T. Daskalos, 'Locals Only! The Impact of Modernity on a Local Surfing Context,' *Sociological Perspective,* 50:1 (2007), pp.155-174 (p.156).
[75] Ibid., p.162; p.166.
[76] Ibid., p.163.

acknowledged that these landscapes began to be divided amongst 'consumption communities' of cultural rituals and material goods, rather than economic divides.[77]

Not everyone agreed with the suburban way of life, which in turn began to form the early notions of countercultures. Countercultures represented smaller divisions of sub-cultures that propagated new ideas, Wild West ideals, and unkempt appearances. These groups of individuals were seen as polluting the middle-class ideals. For those who could not fit into the suburban dream, they formulated their own lifestyle.

With a lessened community focus on the public space, unemployed surfers began to take shelter on the sands of California. With limited housing and a weekly federal income from the GI Bill, pockets of veteran surfers used South Bay's beaches as their residence. Surfing veterans on the beaches began to build fresh rituals. Their common passion of surfing defined their individual identity and communal worth. As Cross continues, the counterculture movement displayed an 'extraordinary faith in the power of personal objects and physical expressions,' in order to 'maximize physical satisfaction and intensify pleasure.'[78] Surfing was not the only counterculture to appear in the immediate post-war years that focused on experimenting with leisure in the public domain.

California's budding car counterculture mapped the way as an example for surf veterans to evolve their own sport into a lifestyle. The counterculture blueprint, designed by car enthusiasts, helped to navigate what a lifestyle based upon leisure could develop into, transforming pockets of likeminded friends into a new movement, opposing the norms of society.

In seismic proportions, the automobile was one of the first American and masculine objects that initiated a similar formula to the material counterculture of surfing. The evolution of automobiles transformed the machine from an elite luxury item of the 1920s, into a wartime miracle of tanks and trucks. The Ford Motor Company became an international label that propagated the power of American automobiles, offering a range of cars, from the affordable Model-T car made on the assembly line to the elite Lincolns and Continental range. During the 1940s, wartime had brought the American jeep and truck to the forefront of power, showcasing globally the advancement of automobiles for wartime and heavy-labour duties. In the post-war decade, the automobile was a symbol of rebellion and masculinity. R. C. Lutz

[77] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century,* p.21.
[78] Ibid., p.162; p.2.

argues that the car was a direct product and result of the nation's imagination, a symbol of the American Dream and highlighted the success of the Promised Land.[79]

Continuing this fantastical imagery in the post-war domain, the car became a public symbol of the masculine dreamer, creating a counterculture for those who saw the automobile as an identity marker. This was particularly observed across the newly constructed Pasadena Freeway, which spanned from Los Angeles along the coast. The mobility to travel across multiple locations in one's car reflected a juxtaposition from the suburban focus on the domestic and home. As Lutz continued, the car was an inevitably male design to seek pleasure in a contained unit.[80] The car was also an exhibition of narcissism, where males could display their worth through their vehicle's image and material wealth. Groups of car enthusiasts, called hot-rodders and dragsters, transformed this act of automobile showmanship into a counterculture of rebellion.

These groups performed illegal drag races along the open roads in gangs, creating groups based upon similar appearances, ownership of goods, and outright deviance. The public sphere – which was no longer regulated under the watchful eyes of authority – became a desired space for rebelling countercultures. As Cross summarized, in the post-war era, there was a growing want for manufactured objects, as these items offered personal freedom.[81] With this revision, although with different virtues in spatial and capitalist desires, California's countercultures and suburbia were alike in their consumption of cultural membership. Both cultures relied on the ownership of objects to prove their alliance to a certain way of life.

When Velzy returned from his duty as a Merchant Marine, he too identified as a 'motorhead,' which helped pave his own understanding of cultural consumption.[82] Trading in his 1940 Mercury coupe, Velzy chose to get a "kustom kulture" car, where mechanics would customize a car to be lower, faster and louder. Velzy turned to the leaders of "kustom kulture," Sam and George Barris, for a new Mercury that allowed him to stick his surfboards out of the back window. Paving the way for a surf vehicle, Velzy inspired surfers to opt for a similar style of car. These cars were 'big, roomy, essentially non-sexy vehicles' that had a

[79] R C Lutz, 'On the Road to Nowhere? California's Car Culture,' *California History,* 79:1 (Spring, 2000), pp.50-55 (p.50).
[80] Ibid., p.51.
[81] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century,* p.2.
[82] Dale Velzy, 'Tales of the Hawk.'

missing backseat or rear window, to allow surfboards to fit inside.[83] As a result, many surfers turned to purchasing wood-panelled wagons, known as "woodies," which had enough space and shelter for surfers travelling around scouting waves. On the outside, woodies were painted with statement icons and favourite colours. For example, surfer Greg Noll decorated his 1948 wagon with swastikas, 'just to piss people off' and intimidate suburbanites away from the area.[84] The counterculture movement of automobiles initiated the novel concept of personalizing everyday goods to showcase the identity of the consumer, whether in a practical or rebellious fashion. In the post-war years of the 1940s, with a surplus of spending money from the war, Californians could afford to purchase a state-of-the-art, personalized item.

Custom Culture

Following from the automobile example, Velzy applied "kustom kulture" into surfboard manufacturing practices. Under Manhattan Beach pier, Velzy experimented in transforming traditional balsa surfboards into one-of-a-kind customized products. Utilizing the funding received from the government, Velzy – and other surfers from the Second World War – found a home in the communal space between Hermosa Beach's and Manhattan Beach's piers. He set up a workhorse on the sand nearby to a clapboard shed that was under the pier, and spent his days carving planks into surfboards or mending dings on the boards that had been the result of a rough surf. In the shed, as Velzy recalls, 'we had a hot plate in the board locker and a fridge, we had our sleeping bags there, and we were in and out of the water all day long.'[85] It was here that he began to experiment with new styles of surfboards, including lighter "composite" surfboards for younger surfers.

During one surf, Velzy met Simmons, a former student at Cal Tech, mathematician and machinist in the war. Noticing Velzy's passion for carving balsa surfboards, Simmons informed Velzy about a new popular substance called "fibreglass," a plastic composite material that helped with a surfboard's extension into a more stable curved shape. The concept of fibreglass and its benefits had been refined by Germany in the Second World War and used for airplane components in 1942. Simmons, who had begun surfing as a form of

[83] Matt Warshaw, 'Cars and Surfing,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/encyclopedia/cars-and-surfing> [accessed August 2024].
[84] Ibid.
[85] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.48.

physical therapy due to a childhood injury, took to surfboard crafting through an analytical and methodical approach. Using hydrodynamic theories learnt from practices by the US Navy, he began a new generation of surfboards in California. He determined that all surfboards, including solid balsa wood, should be coated in a layer of fibreglass to protect the wood from getting waterlogged or splintered. By 1948, all surfboards designed by Simmons featured this glassy layer. Protecting the wood and giving it a hydrodynamic layer, he produced a series of glassed tanned surfboards called "Potato Chips."

Simmons used his knowledge of wartime technologies to create a multiple material, composite surfboard. Constructed from Styrofoam, plywood, balsa, fibreglass, and resin, these surfboards were lighter in design than solid wood, and could cut straight through the water. This method, however, was incredibly time consuming, as it involved intricate layers being precisely attached. Drew Kampion further criticized that these surfboards were seen as unstable due to their light weight causing fast speeds, which riders were not accustomed to.[86] Would the new generation of post-war surfers prefer the traditional laid-back riding of long balsa surfboards on knee-high waves, or the lighter and quicker finned surfboards that sliced through the water at unpredictable speeds? Unfortunately, Simmons, and his spectacular inventive brain, was soon gone, after tragically dying whilst surfing. Continuing from his work, Simmons' prodigies, such as Quigg, Matt Kivlin, and Velzy, continued to experiment with fibreglass composite surfboards, improving their quality, speed and dimensions.

The physical shape and dimensions of surfboards were not the only aspect of surfing that changed in the post-war vacuum created by the loss of older surf clubs. The new culture that formed between piers became the foundation of a modern surfing ethos, eons away from the highly disciplined and strict approach advocated by Doc Ball and the Palos Verdes Surf Club. Holmes commented that the post-war generation of surfers believed in living for the moment, far from the ideals of securing a good job and creating a nuclear family.[87] Instead, surfing became decidedly part of the counterculture movement of "Beach Bums," where young men and a handful of women would spend all their lives consuming surfing as a leisure activity, way of life and identity maker. With Velzy and other veterans earning $50 a week from the GI Bill, surfers could pursue their sport as an everyday lifestyle choice. As surfer Bev Morgan recalls, 'Velzy would come down to the Manhattan Pier, have a cigarette, go out, surf two waves, come in, smoke another cigarette with a cup of coffee, go back out, ride two more

[86] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard* (Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2007), p.40.
[87] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.54.

waves, come in, have a cigarette.'[88] Without the incentive to work, Velzy dedicated his time to surfing and relaxing on the beach. A part-time leisure activity was now a full-time lifestyle.

One particular ritual these surfers would participate in was drinking "Sanka-po-ho," which was a concoction of one gallon of port, one gallon of burgundy, and one gallon of 7-up in a large container. They would, as Rice reflects back upon with nostalgia, 'bury it in the sand and get this plastic tubing so we could suck it up while we were lying on the beach.'[89] Spending their days and nights on the shore, the laid-back veterans attracted wandering youths with their carefree and nomadic lifestyle. A new generation of children and youths began to take up the sport of surfing at Manhattan Beach, earning themselves the fond nickname of "water rats" as they tried to copy the veteran surfers, who were now all over the age of 20.[90] At ten years old, Greg Noll remembers watching the veteran surfers and recalls the change of surf culture overnight. Noll states, 'Things became real different. They were a rowdy bunch of guys. It wasn't a gradual change; it was like someone had thrown a switch and all of a sudden, guys didn't give a shit about society.'[91]

Manhattan's pier became a rebellious zone post-war, one that was still very much in the eye of the public due to its prominent location. However, the events occurring in this space were predominantly ignored by local authorities. In the late-1940s, California's public beaches and parks became unregulated havens for countercultures to drift through. Describing life on Manhattan Beach, Rice joked that in '[19]49 it [Manhattan Beach] had the dubious distinction of having more alcohol consumed per capita than any place in the United States.'[92] The space, itself, did not matter to the surfers of Manhattan. If wave conditions dropped at this location, 'the beach party would hit the road' in a woody car. Rice would put 'Sanka-po-ho in the back and run the tubes along the ribs inside the station wagon' to dangle in front of the passengers' faces.'[93] This lifestyle followed the surfers as they drifted between different beaches. With little regard to public image and surfers' health, this new and growing counterculture was oppositional to that of the pre-war regulated surf clubs. Surfing became more of a rebellion without restraint, than a group of professional athletes focused on disciplined comradery.

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[88] Bev Morgan, 'More than my Share: Bev Morgan Stories and Photos,' *Surfer's Journal,* February 2007.
[89] Paul Holmes, *Dave Velzy is Hawk*, p.49.
[90] Ibid., p.55.
[91] Ibid., p.55.
[92] Ibid. p.56.
[93] Ibid.

The use of alcohol was a common factor in leisure counterculture movements across California during the late-1940s. Alongside the hot-rodders and surf counterculture, a new Los Angeles motorcycle gang, the Booze Fighters, developed, that opposed sobriety and traditional morals of the virtuous American citizen. In retaliation, they took siege of California. Velzy was also a member of this gang and had planned to attend this siege, but had a mechanical breakdown *en route.* On 4th of July in 1947, Independence Day for the US, the Booze Fighters took control of California's quiet town of Hollister. Out of the 4,000 members, 46 of the Fighters were arrested. The 'swarming of the Mounted Hoodlums,' as the *Los Angeles Times* writes, occurred in a 'country where almost anything is rather more than likely to happen.'[94]

Local police were called, but little could be done as the motorcyclists hurled bottles and rioted across the quiet town. The impact and distaste towards the rise of new countercultures was noted by Mrs S. Richards in the *Los Angeles Times.* She complained, 'This is our own particular brand of atrocities, a bona fide, Yankeeland product, born and bred right under our very noses.'[95] With countercultures flourishing in retaliation to post-war societal expectations and lack of authoritative regulations, California became the home to multiple gangs. As noted by Velzy's participation in all three countercultures of cars, motorbikes and surfing, this case-study illustrates that these countercultures were also not mutually exclusive. With suburbia being a growing and economically thriving part of California's communities and domestic markets, it is unsurprising that California birthed so many countercultures in retaliation.

Manhattan Beach, after the war, was an unauthorised landscape of social rebellion, a hub for the growing countercultures of youths. For surfing "Beach Bums," they devoted their days, homes and wages to live carefree in the wild beachscape. This can be observed through the line of sleeping bags that were scattered along the sands in the immediate years after the war. With his family home being only six houses away from the pier, 10-year-old surfer Greg Noll would take his sleeping bag to the pier, joining the 5 to 10 surfers who regularly slept on Manhattan Beach. Setting up camp, he knew 'nobody would mess with their stuff.'[96] This was their home. As a result of their camping and public undressing for bathing, the City Council offered them a facility and shed at the pier, to store their belongings. As Bev Morgan recalls, the City Council 'ended up giving us the money and building to start the surfing club.

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[94] 'Swarming of the Mounted Hoodlums,' *Los Angeles Times,* 6 July 1948.
[95] S. Richards, 'Final Echoes of Motorcycle Rumpus,' *Los Angeles Times,* 27 July 1948.
[96] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.56.

So that was great. And that went on for years.'[97] With this agreement, the surfers focused on pioneering new ideas to further their lifestyle, with little bother from authorities. The end of the 1940s saw a momentous change in the identity of surfing, as the rowdy surf counterculture began to collectivize under the pier.

A predominant factor as to why Manhattan Beach was so important in birthing the modern surf counterculture in the 1940s, was Velzy's own shaping shed under the pier. The shaping shed was an early prototype that later resembled the first surf shop, which was uncoincidentally also opened by Velzy. With wooden slats and hooks for his straw hat, the shed became a space for innovative surfboard creations. Furthermore, it became the space where surfers could acquire custom surfboards and learn how to shape from a Master of surfboard crafting. Each surfboard would take days to be crafted. The shaping shack was humble, with it simply being a space to hold an array of shaping tools and a workhorse for surfboards to be designed. Surfboards were not measured to the exact, rather, Velzy would utilize his "hawk" vision to carve the surfboard to almost perfect symmetry. The sand was littered with wood, discouraging non-surfers to walk near this section of beach. Many surfers travelled to the pier to have their own bespoke Velzy surfboard, including a young O'Neill – later famed for his development of the wetsuit industry. O'Neill remembers, 'Those guys would loan me a board from time to time, and then I got a board from Dale Velzy, who had a shop under the Manhattan Beach pier, where he was shaping boards. He made me a balsa board, and I drove it home in my Oldsmobile 88 convertible.'[98] A custom board was a staple for surfers as an identity marker, to be paraded with pride whilst surfing or tied to the roof of a customized car.

Further, Manhattan Beach's surfers began to customize surfboards with cartoon characters and iconography to signify their personalities. Noll nostalgically remembers, 'I had Sylvester Pussy Cat, another guy had Woody Woodpecker or whatever. Velzy was going out with a really good-looking gal, and she'd gave him a pair of lace panties […] so everyone's got these cartoon characters on their boards and here's Velzy with these lace panties on his.'[99] Paul Holmes stated that the customizing of surfboards was the beginning of collectivizing surf gangs into a cohesive group, inventing a completely individualistic culture, impervious

[97] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.53.
[98] Drew Kampion, *Jack O'Neill: It's Always Summer on the Inside* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011), p.58.
[99] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.58.

to outsiders.[100] Symbols on surfboards illustrated the acknowledgement of each other's personality in the group dynamic, and showed respect for those within the surf circle.

Although mirroring that of post-war consumption, the war remained a prevalent part in the veteran surfers' identity during the 1940s. Through language, the words of wartime never strayed far from the Manhattan Beach surfers' minds. Language began to evolve on Manhattan Beach, with words and terms spreading between travelling surfers to different surf colonies around the globe. The majority of those came from wartime Navy slang, transformed into surfing concepts. Surf terms began to come into common vernacular across the shores, such as "stoked" (The US Navy term for "elated"), "bitchen" (something really good), and "gremmies" (meaning young surfers, but deriving from the World War Two use of the term "gremlins" during the hazing of young aircraftsmen). Surfers would frequently employ these words as they sat on Manhattan beach.

Manhattan Beach surfers also began to wear similar clothes, creating a collective uniform. Surf clothing, in the 1940s, consisted mainly of recycled items from the Army Surplus store. Getting a pair of white Navy trousers and chopping them at the knee, which was started by Manhattan Beach surfer Bob Hogan, spread like wildfire across surf groups. Whether through clothing or language, surfers emphasised that they were not associated with the suburbs, merely miles away from the shore. This was acknowledged by Velzy, whilst surfing with local surfers Hogan, Noll, Morgan, and Bing Copeland, in 1951. Morgan recalled Velzy pointing towards a hill to the morning traffic and stating, 'Look at those suckers, chained to their routine. They don't know what we've got. They don't know this even exists.'[101] Surfing was sacred and exclusive; a counterculture born in a secret world under Manhattan Beach's pier.

Thus, California's post-war society had begun to segregate into a sizeable number of cultural pockets once the war ended in 1945. The war had changed the spatial values of the private and public spaces, with the domestic space depicted as safe and regulated, and the public space being untameable and reserved for unregulated rebels. This change in spatial dynamics, due to both wartime economic boosts and natural disasters, led to countercultures to develop across these public landmarks. From parking lots to beach piers, these spaces were wartime power vacuums filled by young rebels to escape modern ideas of conservatism and

[100] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.58.
[101] Bev Morgan, 'More than my Share: Bev Morgan Stories and Photos.'

domesticity. People became defined more by their beliefs on leisure and morals, than social class, with the increase of region-wide affluence. With the war producing regular payments from the GI Bill, veterans chose their future through their own wants, rather than through what they could afford.

For Velzy, his post-war wants translated into creating a surf community under Manhattan Beach's pier, which had been his home since childhood. His active involvement in a range of budding countercultures produced the idea that surfing could be part of the rebellious movement. To make a counterculture, materials were needed as identity markers, as the customization of objects was a key definition of a social group. This translated into his work, as he began to carve customized balsa surfboards for a new post-war generation. As a result, Manhattan Beach initiated a new era of post-war surf consumption, creating a mindset that surfing could become a symbol of rebellious fraternity. The notion of a surf counterculture had begun, and surfers needed tokens of membership to prove their loyalty.

4. The Hawk Soars into Business: The First Surf Shop, 1950

At 117 Manhattan Beach Boulevard, Dale Velzy rented a prosaically small, garage-sized concrete building, merely a dozen metres from Manhattan Beach Pier, in 1950. Borrowing money from Tom Rice's family, Velzy paid a deposit to own this former shoe repair shop, for $45 a month. This 30ft by 30ft space hosted a room, with bunk beds, and a toilet. There is only one known photo of Velzy's workspace, taken by Hermosa Beach pharmacist, Don Guild, as he picked up two balsa and fibreglass surfboards in 1952. The photo illustrates the exterior of the building, positioned on the upward slope of the boulevard. The uneven glass panels of the building's windows and doorframe are crudely angled to fit the hill. Regardless of its outer design, Velzy sought this space as a promising outlet that would be uniquely dedicated to one single-item, the surfboard, and all of its many manufacturing stages.



Figure 4.1. Don Guild, 'Dale Velzy in front of Velzy Surfboards,' a photograph, 1952, courtesy of The Manhattan Beach Historical Society <https://manhattanbeachhistorical.org/photographs/> [accessed November 2021].

Inside the space, the scent of freshly carved balsa wood resembled a typical carpenter's workstation, as Velzy spent his day treading through the piles of discarded woodchips. Sand from the beach added to this cushioning concoction on the concrete floor, fresh from surfers arriving without any footwear. In the centre, a single workhorse was positioned, usually accompanied by a half-complete blank of a balsa surfboard waiting to be completed. Outside, the barren sandy lot offered the necessary outdoor space for Velzy to glue the wooden blanks together, secure the fin, and paint the thick fibreglass resin onto its surface to complete the surfboard. The resin was then sun-cured in the lot; the Californian sun hardening the outer waterproof layer during the day. When night appeared, the lot doubled to 'host a beer bash' and barbeques for the Manhattan Beach surfers.[1] Purposely keeping this space a humble workshop and local waterhole for the few Californians that could ride waves, Velzy comments, 'I really didn't want people to notice that much.'[2]

It was this unassuming space that became the first surf shop and a prototype for future surf commercial hubs across the world. Velzy pioneered many other "firsts" in this primitive space; such as the first corporate sponsorship of a surfer and the first surfboard printed with a company logo. This space, and the man behind it, together encouraged and mentored a new generation of pioneers to contribute and continue this new commercial industry. In a eulogy for the shaper, *SURFER* magazine summarizes, 'there would be no surf business without Dale Velzy, and hence no surf life as we know it.'[3]

Although credited as the sole founder, the surf shop was not a planned point of origination plucked from the young shaper's mind; it was a product of culmination, deriving from California's external forces. With the GI Bill offering financial incentives for veterans to invest in employment opportunities and property, and wartime technologies advancing the capabilities of local materials and machinery, the surf shop's foundations coincided with the Golden State's economic boom. With the assistance of these economic incentives, Velzy was able to finance a commercial workshop, a space that would fit into the rapidly growing Californian leisure markets of the 1950s.

[1] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.61.
[2] Ibid.
[3] 'Saying So Long to A Legend: Dale Velzy,' *Surfer* [online], 22 July 2010 <https://www.surfer.com/features/legend-velzy/> [accessed September 2024].

The Hawk's in Business

After leaving the Merchant Marines at the end of the war, Velzy began to experiment with surfboard carving, utilizing his rich knowledge of shipbuilding and carpentry to effectively craft "Malibu Chip" surfboards. Using a saw that was passed down to him from his carpenter father in the early 1940s, Velzy experimented with hand tools to investigate ways to improve surfboard dimensions. Resting local balsawood on a workhorse under the pier, Velzy cut through the wood with the saw going vertically; the repeated action causing woodchips to scatter into the air in fine particles. The next step was to use an adze, a common item used for shipbuilding, to remove larger wood pieces to curve the nose of the surfboard. By having the nose raised out of the breaking wave, the surfer would have better balance and control over the direction of the surfboard. Velzy then utilized his carpenter grandfather's drawknife to slope the rails – edges of the surfboard – to give the surfboard its round and streamlined shape. The final step of woodwork included a heavy mechanical plane, which would smooth the surfboard's surfaces. Once sanded, the surfboard was ready to be sealed with resin, which allowed the surfboard to be watertight. Repeating this elaborate procedure of carpentry on the sands of Manhattan Beach, however, led to a series of complaints from local authorities. The sands were littered with woodchips, sawdust and chunks of balsa. In 1950, after being chased from the shores by police, Velzy temporarily returned to his mother's garage, before finding his own commercial workshop.

After he was forcibly removed from the Manhattan Beach Pier by public authorities for his littering of woodchips on the sands, Velzy rented an enclosed workshop opposite the pier. Thus, the Manhattan Beach surf shop was predominantly an accidental commercial concept instigated by the State, rather than a business plan instigated by Velzy's own ambitions. When Velzy paid the first month of rent to own a surfboard workshop, he did not expect to be the founder of a surf business blueprint for future shapers. He was simply an artisan, one of only a few professional shapers belonging to Californian shores in the 1940s, unwilling to give up his craft for a stable career or further education. Velzy sought a space where he had the freedom to perfect his craft of surfboard shaping; a space where he could leave piles of balsa woodchips on the floor.

A mutual thread in the Velzy biography, as reiterated by Paul Holmes, is that the young shaper created the first surf shop prototype 'unwittingly.'[4] As noted through the unpolished

[4] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.59.

nature of his workshop, as *SURFER* furthers, 'Velzy was no businessman, but he knew how to live.'[5] Velzy's workshop was a space of experimentation, as he spent his days reworking old boards with local woods and adjusting the shape of surfboard outlines, called "Planshapes." In summary, Velzy had a 'genetic instinct to build.'[6]

Reflecting back on the concept of a surfboard business, Dick Metz, a close friend of Velzy, laughs that 'it didn't even enter my mind that there would be a career, it was just something you did in between.'[7] There were limited vocations that catered for surfers' demands, leaving the pockets of surfers along the coast to find part-time and temporary jobs that allowed flexibility for surfing and travel. Whilst laying on the beach, the Laguna surfers compiled three decisive job requirements: 'no coat and tie, no shoes' and 'I know for sure we don't want to ever work on the other side of the coast highway.'[8] This left 200ft of land for employment opportunities at Laguna. Disregarding his M.A. degree in Economic Geography, Metz and the other surfers decided that there were only four jobs suitable for surfers, 'you could be a fisherman, you could be a bartender, you could make surfboards, and you could be a lifeguard.'[9] Unlike pre-war surf club members, surfers began to deviate from seeing the sport as a hobby; the act of wave-riding was becoming a permanent, full-time lifestyle.

With a 22-year-old Velzy already committed to surfing and part-time lifeguarding in 1950, his workshop was a self-run project catered to supplying locals and club members with a few surfboards a week. Velzy offers an explanation as to why he did not want to expand his market in the late-1940s, stating 'I was a busy boy.'[10] Crafting surfboards to sell for $55 each, these marginal profits allowed Velzy to experiment with "Hot Curl" and "Chip" surfboard designs in his spare time. From carving redwood and balsa surfboards, to repairing older varnished surfboard dings, Velzy's space offered a variety of services. If varnished boards had the tiniest hairline fracture, there was a risk of a major leak. Fixing these older surfboards required tedious and skilled work. Further, Velzy experimented with the new wartime material of fibreglass resin; this gloopy material offering stronger protection to boards, with the consequence of having a difficult application process. Shapers at this time had to adapt to each other's discoveries, to constantly evolve their understandings of how to make a

[5] 'Saying So Long to A Legend: Dale Velzy.'
[6] Ibid.
[7] *BoardRoom: Legends of Surfboard Shaping,* dir. by Markus Davids (Studio FiveSix, 2012) [Documentary].
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.61.

surfboard better. Surfboard manufacturing was a collective experiment. This is observed with the workshop having no sign to state it was a commercial business or "shop." As Mary Lou Loper, in her 1960's *Los Angeles Times* article introducing Velzy to the public, concludes, these budding new shops were run by 'surfing people who went into business rather than business people.'[11] His specialist and rare services offered in his workshop focused on meeting surfers' needs, through word of mouth.

If Velzy did not intend to create a commercial business, what did initiate the first surf shop to be formed in California? Partly this was owed to State regulation. The Manhattan Beach workshop transformed into a shop when it was enforced by state law, labelling surfboards as taxable goods. In 1949, when Velzy opened for the day, a man from the tax office, dressed in a suit and tie, entered the doorway. As Velzy recalls, the man asked him, "What are you making here?" as he observed the store's workhorse.[12] In reply, the young shaper responded by showing the man his new surfboards lined up along the wall. The man continued, "Are you selling them?" and Velzy confirmed that he was shaping surfboards for the Manhattan Beach Surf Club and local friends.[13] With this information, the man informed Velzy that, to allow his workshop to remain open, he required a business license and a California state resale number in order to continue shaping and selling his boards. As requested, Velzy travelled to the State Board of Equalization and stood at the desk to explain his craft. When asked about the nature of his carpentry, he repeated that 'I make surfboards.'[14] Confused, the Board employee asked what this item was. Once explained, Velzy was issued with a resale number, allowing his surfboard workshop to become the first to have a business license.

Through its registered status as a formal business in California's financial books, Velzy's workshop was the first surf shop, with the defining term being a dedicated space for surfing goods that has a license allowing commercial business. Acquiring the paperwork, the sport was enabled to expand into its own independent market, with other shapers inspired by this commercial transition. Fallen 'under Velzy's spell,' a young local surfer, Greg Noll, was fascinated by Velzy's operations in the opening year, as he saw a new and 'extraordinary place where a few raw materials came in the door and surfboards went out.'[15] The shop

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[11] Mary Lou Loper, 'They Go Down to The Sea on Surf Boards,' *Los Angeles Times,* 29 May 1960, p.2.
[12] Dale Velzy, 'The Hawk Soars: Quotes from the Book of Dale,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], ed. by Matt Warshaw, 29 January 2017
<https://eos.surf/2017/01/29/the-hawk-soars-quotes-from-the-book-of-dale/> [accessed May 2024].
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard* (Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2007), p.18.

proved that surfing could continue to develop away from the beach, through inland workshops, expanding the surfer's territory. Surfing was illustrated as more than the human connection with the wave in the ocean, with the shop forming an inland anchor for surfers to meet, converse and pioneer designs. Mirroring the words of French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, a 'movement always happens behind the thinker's back, or in the moment when he blinks.'[16] In a blink of an eye, Velzy had earned the title as a surfing entrepreneur. Bestowed with carpentry knowledge and personal charm, Velzy's actions enabled the surfboard shaping industry to gain rapid success in Manhattan Beach. His prototype shop weaved a distinct Californian thread in the world's surf story.

The story of Velzy and the surf shop was uniquely Californian, as it was the State's authorities, legislation and affluent economy that encouraged the surfboard industry to begin. Holmes argues that California should be credited for the commercial development of surfing, as Velzy's shop is 'the story of a special place and a time during which a combination of climate, geography, population, wealth and technology gave rise to a new phenomenon.'[17] With access to stockpiles of local wood, the GI Bill, an affluent populace affording leisure items, and the need for cultural consumption, California was the ideal society to birth a commercial market in the 1950s. Neither the location nor time frame of the first surf shop is a coincidence. The surf shop was a reflection of California's post-war society and the State's commitment to leisure markets, as it rebranded itself as an affluent suburbia. To follow Holmes' statement, the stage of the first surf shop was vital to Velzy's success.[18]

Why not Hawai'i?

The surf shop emerged, therefore, as a Californian design built by the socio-economic environment in which it was situated. Meanwhile, Hawaiian surfers did not seek the same transition for their ancient practice, due to the political challenges across the Islands during this decade. Instead, in tandem to the surf shop's development, a more necessary surf space was developing across Hawai'i in the 20th century, its focus being on ocean ownership. Since the early 1900s, there had been a resurging focus on rebuilding "*ka po'ina nalu*," the surf zone. This distinct ocean-space was a key borderland and active politico-cultural stage during

[16] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II* (Colombia University Press, 2007), p.1.
[17] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk*, p.9.
[18] Ibid.

heightened racial divisions. It was a space to combat and reverse the racially motivated social hierarchies of the islands that had increased since colonialism. In response, Native Hawaiians reclaimed their waters from the *haole*, white elite, as the first step to land ownership. In order to become a collective, the first surf club began, called the Hui Nalu Club, near the Moana boathouse. The club emphasized the act of *hui nalu,* surfing together.

One of the young founders of this club, Duke Kahanamoku was part of Hawai'i's cultural revival. Born in 1890, he remembers at 8-years-old learning to surf at Waikīkī, a difficult task when 'we had nobody to teach us how to ride these waves or swim.'[19] It took youngsters four to five years of smaller wave experience before Kahanamoku declared they were 'big enough,' as 'we'd make it a great thing to take care of these kids.'[20] This was one of several practices revived, with the Kahanamoku brothers catching black crabs with coconut leaves and playing the ukulele. As the new century began, this small group of surfers were collectively relabelled as the "beachboys."

The surf zone offered a reflection to more traditional ideals, as it contested to rid *haole* hegemony through public demonstrations. In his ethnological study of *Kānaka Maoli,* Native Hawaiians, Isaiah Helekunihi Walker states that the surf zone was to remind other Natives of the link between Hawaiians' past and their present and how this was historically meaningful to end colonialism.[21] Surfing reflected an articulation of the past, with the resurfacing of pre-colonial skills that the *haole* were still amateurs in achieving. Riding *nalu,* the surf, was one of the few traditional rituals to survive the destructive nature of colonialism, and was seen as the antidote.

This movement was especially seen on the shores of Hawai'i's most populated surf location, Waikīkī; where hostile racial segregation had worsened between *haole* and Native surf clubs. The Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe Club opened in 1911, founded for tourists to have beach access, boat rides and surfboard storage. Importantly, it was a space preserved for mostly *haole* residents to surf. Observing their abilities, the Canoe club hired the beachboys to give lessons and demonstrations for the public. As Louis Kahanamoku reflects on his time as a beachboy, although he enjoyed the work, 'make one mistake, and you're out.'[22] Laughing, Kahanamoku commented about their cultural achievements, as decades later 'they get a rock

[19] Duke Kahanamoku, 'The Duke,' *SURFER,* ed. by John Severson, 6:1, March 1965.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Isaiah Helekunihi Walker, *Waves of Resistance* (University of Hawaii Press, 2011), p.3.
[22] Louis Kahanamoku, 'Waikiki, 1900-1985: Oral History Project,' *Social Science Research Institute,* ed. by Warren Nishimoto, 1 (1985).

band, call 'em Beach Boys.'[23] Thus, Native surfers were dedicated to reviving an ethnic pride through resurfacing past surf rituals, rather than modernizing the sport to mimic the desires of the *haole* commercial tourist enterprises.

One of the traditions that preoccupied this cultural battle, was the return to self-shaping surfboards. This intricate ritual allowed Native surfers to complete an integral rite of passage, ensuring surfers were mature enough to handle the large *nalu*. Before the arrival of missionaries in early 19th century Hawai'i, a young adult had to chop down their chosen tree to create a wave-riding device, following a series of rituals. This rite of passage was built upon a *kapu* system, which enforced that wave-riding had to be environmentally sustainable, with stringent rules and limited natural resources disturbed. It had to be completed by the individual to warrant the opportunity to surf on the water.

First, when a tree was selected for the surfboard, a *kūmū* fish, was placed near the roots of the tree, which was soon followed by a prayer. Once the wood was cut, it would be shaped by its new owner with a carving tool made of bone, *adze.* The basic outline would be refined with coral and then shaded with nuts, roots, and banana buds. It was also necessary to carve one's name deeply into the wood, defining ownership of this creation. Kukui and coconut oil was then smeared onto the board and wrapped with a *tapa* cloth to preserve the newly carved wood. Furthermore, the surfer had specific traditions as to where they could surf and the wood selected, determined by their status in society. *Wiliwili* trees were used for *olo* surfboards, reserved for royalty. *Koa* wood was used for the shorter *alaia* surfboards, reserved for the common Hawaiian. This *kapu* system was imperative to defining the independent journey of surfboard creations in Hawai'i; one which did not align with the mass-production of surfboards in a commercial shop.

Mainland surfers in the US diverged away from this spiritual Polynesian ethos of traditional surfboard shaping, as the sport followed other leisure practices into becoming a budding branch of a new California-centric movement of consumerism.

In comparison, the traditionalist Native Hawaiians' aim to reclaim their waters from a colonialist past did not align with the two budding Californian cultures of Beach Bums and middle-class consumerism. As stated in an interview with Duke Kahanamoku, he, and other Hawaiian surfers, would tell the Beach Bum surfers to leave the beach, and they 'would stay

[23] Louis Kahanamoku, 'Waikiki, 1900-1985: Oral History Project.'

away until such time as they can behave like gentlemen.'[24] If the Beach Bums remained rowdy, unkempt and aggressive, they were banned from the shores. Duke Kahanamoku promoted that a real surfer in Hawai'i would 'try to help one another and not try to hog the doggone waves,' they had to be 'clean-cut youngsters.'[25] Although Hawaiian surf regulations mirrored California's surf clubs of the 1930s, it differed from the new surf culture developing at Manhattan Beach; a surfer was a gentleman in Hawai'i, whilst a surfer was seen as merely a rowdy Beach Bum in California. Thus, California's surf culture was diverging significantly away from its Hawaiian roots.

A Golden State of Leisure

In the US, by 1950, the popularity of leisure commercialism was spreading from West Coast to East Coast, through a range of dedicated outlets. Reaping the rewards of victory from the Second World War, Americans enjoyed the fruits of an affluent society, after spending almost a decade accumulating wages and benefits under the New Deal's federal grants, followed by restricted spending during the wartime. After the war, the economy was booming, particularly in the location that had supplied mass wartime production: California. In 1950, the Gross National Product had risen by $100 billion since 1940, enabling prosperity for white middle-class families. With an increase in wages, savings and the flexibility of credit, families began to focus on frivolous spending on free time outside of work and school. In 1958, 65% of the 70,000,000 wage earners in the US had over three weeks' vacation leave available. [26]

Alongside this additional time, the average family began to spend $215 a year on recreational costs, the equivalent to $2,386 in 2025.[27] The $215 spent on leisure per family contributed to 5% of the national income in 1958.[28] This liberty of spending reshaped the American public's demands, as they spent on *wants* rather than *needs.* Gary Cross confirms that consumerism had 'won' in the US by the 1950s, as it had a firm grasp on its society and the American psyche.[29] Spending was a national cultural practice and unlike other "isms," it did not restrict

[24] Duke Kahanamoku, 'The Duke.'
[25] Ibid.
[26] Mary Ann Callan, 'Leisure: Boon or Bane? Experts' Views Divided,' *Los Angeles Times,* 16 March 1958, p.D1.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (Columbia University Press, 2000), p.1.
[29] Ibid., p.1.

itself to a religion, political group or a leader. Its diverse nature and appeal of cultural membership led to consumption being an unchallenged and irreversible desire.

Mass consumerism defined the success of national liberty through its capitalist practices. In his *Los Angeles Times* article, John E. Gibson informed the public that the University of California concluded that 'when a person chooses a hobby, he exercises *free choice*.'[30] The nation, community and individual's success was linked to accessing and showcasing material rewards through goods. These goods defined a person's aesthetic, personality, pastimes and self-value. Buying goods was part of a never-ending game of fulfilling desires, rather than spending one's wage only on necessary living costs. This firmly left the Great Depression in the past, signalling a disconnect from pre-war society as Americans designed a modern ideal that would secure peace and economic security. In a hypothetical community in Los Angeles, Mary Ann Callan believed that if you 'go into any 100 homes and you'll probably find people actively interested in gardening in 42; needle-work in 32; stamp collecting in 6; in clubs and organizations, 50.'[31] For those who accessed this affluent economy, a new extraordinary faith towards personal objects, leisure and social rituals developed, as Americans progressed into a new age of wealth and futuristic technologies.

The frontier of modern leisure proved a quintessentially Californian story. Cross interjects that a new layer was added into social differentiation, away from the traditional socio-economic classes; Americans chose, instead, to be loyal to individuals sharing their "authentic personality," through club memberships and badges.[32] For Southern California, with its mild climate and varied topographies, sports became the centre of its cultural sphere in the 1950s. John Anderson refers to California as a "sportscape," as the images of sports were redefined as a guide of morality. Through sports' mass consumption, entrepreneurs focused on adjusting technologies, material goods, and regulations to modernize and match those that played. With additional leisure time being granted through a decline in working hours, a sport had the opportunity to become a way of life, and a profitable enterprise for those who bought into it. Through this new dedication, distinct philosophies developed for different sports, as participators found similar people to design a culture through a shared appeal and experience.

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[30] John E. Gibson, 'What Your Hobby Tells About You,' *Los Angeles Times,* 06 February 1955, p.J8.
[31] Mary Ann Callan, 'Leisure: Boon or Bane? Experts' Views Divided,' p.D1.
[32] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century,* p.2.

In 1948, the encouragement of wearing certain coloured sportswear was enthusiastically propagated in the *Los Angeles Times,* as California turned its focus to masculine apparel and appearances. It adds that 'fashion is not confined to the female of the species in California' so 'do not be surprised if your best beau starts out for his Sunday round of golf in bright pink.'[33] Whether a campus society or a golf round, clothing and logos, such as a locally-made padded Jack Dorsen's jackets, became a valuable tool of personal differentiation. Thus, California became a founding hub of leisure being more than a moment's amusement; it was a visual entity and way of life to be worn with pride. As Terrence Witkowski affirms, Southern California was the epicentre for this cultural beacon, with the government advertising self-perfection through consumption in this Golden State.[34] In a similar fashion, purchasing wave-riding items, especially the latest surfboards, emulated one's loyalty and certification to the surf world. With California the epicentre of leisure, surfing was merely seen as a branch that enabled the State's commitment to freedom through cultural self-expression.

Surfing followed the same path as other Californian leisure industries in its celebration of material membership. Cross examines that it was inevitable for the developing youth subcultures in the Golden State to succumb to this new wave of consumerism, as they had an inability to break away from their faith to personal objects.[35] Objects illustrated simply to society what culture(s) one was affiliated to. To differentiate oneself from a main society, the new age of subcultures in Southern California still proved their loyalty to group membership through attachments to physical items. Items also identified one's status in the group. For example, a surfer with a 1930s paddleboard would be seen as less skilled than a surfer with a glassed balsa surfboard hand-carved by Velzy.

Relying on attachments to customized surfboards, motorbikes and cars, those who were part of minority subcultural groups in Southern California were in reality attached to personal objects just as much as the national middle-class majority with traditional consumerist values, such as golfers. With the need to buy, customize, and belong, it was inevitable for these groups to need a commercial outlet to ensure a reliable space to obtain matching identity markers. However, these countercultural businesses were never on a large scale. It is important to differentiate that these subculture-focused outlets did not initially focus on a business model for profits. Rather than being created for capitalist success, the commercial

[33] 'West Points Way to Nation in Styling Men's Clothing,' *Los Angeles Times,* 20 June 1947, p.A5.
[34] Terrence Witkowski, 'World War II Poster Campaigns: Preaching Frugality to American Consumers,' *Journal of Advertising,* 32:1 (Spring 2003), pp.69-82 (p.69).
[35] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America,* p.167.

spheres of subcultures focused on reaping the social benefits of these self-reliant spaces as cultural clubhouses. Thus, the surf shop helped surfers belong and come together, as well as buy boards that could identify them and their status within the group. This introduced a new cultural market of surf shops in Southern California, that fitted in nicely with the home of leisure consumption.

Although now operating in a commercial market, Velzy ensured his new business remained distinctly humble and loyal to the surf subculture's carefree, disobedient and working-class foundations that he had spent the previous five years creating under the Manhattan Beach Pier with veteran surfers. Since George Freeth stepped onto the sands of Redondo Beach to showcase wave-riding, the earliest prototype of the surf shop model had been developing through different methods before the opening of Velzy's Manhattan Beach store. Manufacturing surfboards had been a concept since the early founding years of California's surf scene, evolving through individual pioneering carpenters along the Southern coasts, since the Second World War. Notably, shaping occurred not in commercial spaces, but in workshops belonging to the domestic realm, such as private gardens, sheds and empty beaches. Walking on a sidewalk, glossy surfboards were seen lined up along lawn fences, drying in the warm sun of the day, surrounded by wood chips and tools. These small and cramped spaces had their hazards, however. Greg Noll, who carved boards under the clotheslines of his parents' backyard, was 'quickly banished' from his yard after 'they witnessed the catastrophic aftermath' from the uncontrollable littering of resin and wood.[36] In comparison, Velzy's shop on the boulevard offered a less inconvenient and self-contained alternative that combined a workshop with an additional showroom.

The showroom idea proposed that shapers could invest in a profitable public surfboard display, especially when brandishing their products with an identifiable logo to attract new local clients. A proud and bright two-toned logo was printed on all of Velzy's boards, a tradition founded by the shaper. For his first logo, Velzy chose a simplistic circular design, with a faded blue pattern and a monotone surfer riding a board above his name. Matt Warshaw suggests that these early handmade logos were similar to an automobile's brand name, with it being positioned strategically near the tail of the surfboard like the model's name on a car boot.[37] To place it on the board, the logo was traced and screened onto rice paper, then placed under the transparent resin of the balsa board to be protected from the

[36] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard*, p.19.
[37] Matt Warshaw, *The History of Surfing* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011), p.174.

elements. Velzy had, in a similar manner to carving names on Hawaiian surfboards to identify the owner, printed his name as part of the surfboard. Thus, the surfboard was permanently connected to the shaper. This collective ownership between shaper and owner was part of all designs, a legacy that would continue across all future surf shops.

For some, these new logos were tweaked to add some unconventional character to the surfboard to represent the local surfing populace, with Bing Copeland's logo featuring a surfer with a "BA," 'bare ass.'[38] Created by his friend Stu Linder, Copeland chose the BA design to mimic Greg Noll's red and black logo of a surfer, adjusted to represent the wild surfers at Trestles, San Onofre. The surfers in this isolated spot would 'drop their shorts and bend over as the train to San Diego would whizz past giving the passengers their first impression of surfers.'[39] The logo of the surf shop was a reflection of both the shaper's values and the client's identity, with local imagery often also at the heart of the design. California had opened its door to a new consumerist chapter in the surf revolution, with logos identifying a loyalty to surf culture and idealizing original shapers.

Similar to the logo's delicate and unique design, Velzy's Manhattan Beach shop's architecture stood out, and was notably different to other sport outlets. A key factor for a successful surf shop model was that it had to remain simple in aesthetic, remaining loyal to the carefree nature of the surfers it hoped to attract. Warshaw succinctly defines Velzy's first shop as a 'stripped-down operation,' because 'there were no shiny new boards lined up on racks. No display cases. No beachwear. No stickers or surf wax. No countertop, telephone or cash register; not even a storefront sign.'[40] With the floor covered in droplets of resin, sawdust in the air, and tools laying around the floor, the shop was a hazardous experience, one which Velzy wanted to remain hidden from authorities. By keeping his operation to a couple of surfboards at a time, with a maximum of 10 boards in the busier seasons, Velzy remained inconspicuous to anyone passing by. It was an exclusive space for the select few that knew of him prior to visiting, allowing only locals to come to this outlet. It was also a strategic decision, as balsawood, the preferred wood by Velzy for lighter and more manoeuvrable boards, was costly and rare. With low demand, there was little need to compete for wood

[38] Bing Copeland, 'BA Logo Story: The Evolution of Surfboard Graphic Design,' *Bing Surf* [online], November 2020 <https://bingsurf.com/blogs/news/ba-logo-story-the-beginning-of-bing-and-rick-surfboards> [accessed August 2024].
[39] Ibid.
[40] Matt Warshaw, *The History of Surfing,* p.112.

supply, allowing Velzy to craft his creations at his own pace. By removing the need to uphold a certain polished aesthetic, Velzy focused on his craft and preserving costs for supplies. Further, by keeping operations simple, Velzy hoped he could keep his head down and not attract any health and safety enforcers visiting his unkempt workshop.

Avoiding local authority was at the forefront of Velzy's life, with rules and regulations seen as a force that upheaved his life. With his forced enlistment in the Military Academy as a teenager and his forced closure of his Manhattan Beach Pier shed, Velzy was frequently removed from the comfort and homely space of the beach. In 1950, this sense of forced movement almost occurred again, with the national draft of young men, fit for action, to fight in the Korean War. Once again, Velzy's life was part of a wider Californian story. In August 1950, when he visited his mother, he had a notice from the Selective Service System to warn of his possible selection. On his birthday, one month later, Velzy walked to the Los Angeles Induction Center to explain how he had served as a Merchant Marine, shouting "I'm exempt."[41] He was told that this was a different war, and he can be exempt if he got married. As Velzy recollects, 'Okay, I'll go home and marry my girlfriend, Joan, which I did, the very next day […] [I] showed them my marriage license and they said, no, that wasn't good enough.'[42] With that, Velzy was sent to training in Fort Bliss, Texas, working on anti-aircraft gunnery and railroad-mounted guns. The surfboard workshop was left behind.

During his training, Velzy fell from the back of a truck, which led to the surfer being hospital-bound for a couple of months and away from action. When he finally left Fort Bliss, he joked, "They gave me a medal for medical discharge and sent me home."[43] With his injury allowing him to avoid another enlistment, Velzy had a new drive to focus his energy on his shop. Since he had been gone, changes had happened to other prolific shapers in the area. With surfboard shapers Bob Simmons going to San Diego and Joe Quigg going to Hawai'i to pioneer new ideas, Velzy's shop became the only surf hotspot of the area. Once again, geographical location impacted Velzy, allowing his business to grow without any competition for the foreseeable future.

The most frequent demographic of surfers to visit his shop in his opening year were young teenagers, which he fondly nicknamed mischievous "gremlins," arriving *en masse* to his shop daily. A few years prior, Velzy had also attracted this new generation of surfer's attention at

[41] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.75.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p.76.

his workshop in his early years under the pier. For Noll, he remembered first observing Velzy whilst handing out bait on the pier, at 8-years-old. He would lean over the rails of the pier to peak into the waves to spot the 'hard core guys surfing redwoods.'[44] Wanting to have a go at the sport, Noll bought a salvaged $15 surfboard that was going to be sacrificed to rough surf at the cove, the dinged board weighing over 70 pounds.[45] Observing the surfboards being carved at Manhattan Beach, first by Simmons and then Velzy, Noll upgraded to a Simmon's "Malibu Chip" surfboard, handmade by Velzy. These were light balsa surfboards made predominantly for children and women that could not manage the weight of traditional solid redwood surfboards. More and more teenagers surfed the Chip, following the veterans as they navigated the waves. Once Velzy 'graduated to a little shop,' Noll followed him and sat on the sawhorse and observed.[46] Yet, Velzy's impatience for these youths ensured he would never mentor these young surfers beyond their own quiet observational skills.

Whilst carving on his own in the shop, the gremlins practiced with trial and error beside him. As Noll emphasized, 'Velzy was never the kind of guy to give people shaping lessons' as 'he was too cool to give people instructions.'[47] Instead, Noll watched the shaper every day. With many youths seeking to learn from his demonstrations, Velzy referred to his apprentices by numbers, with the top four being: Hap Jacobs as "Gremmie 1," Copeland as "Gremmie 2," Rick Stoner as "Gremmie 3," and Noll as "Gremmie 4." Each one had their assigned roles. Once succeeding in ding repairs, Noll worked his way up in the gremlin hierarchy and earned the job of removing any old finish from the do-it-yourself Pacific Home System boards of the 1930s. He would tear away the redwood rails to prepare for Velzy to carve them into a more compact balsa, fibreglass boards. Working alongside Noll, Velzy reminisced fondly about the mischievous youth, 'Greg was the ornery of the bunch […] his mom made me take care of him because he wouldn't come home,' so 'he was the first gremmie.'[48] Under his wing, Velzy began to encourage and inspire a new generation of shapers within his shop.

Once the gremlins had acquired all the knowledge from the master of shaping, Velzy would remove them from observing and working in the shop. Under his watchful eye, once the gremlin whittled their first surfboard without error, they had inherently become Velzy's competition. Noll remembered the day when Velzy removed him from the shop. During one

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[44] *BoardRoom: Legends of Surfboard Shaping.*
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.77.
[48] Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard,* p.18.

lunchbreak, Velzy went to get lunch and ended up 'getting shit-faced,' leaving a young Noll alone in the shop.[49] The gremlin did some knifework on a surfboard waiting for completion, eventually shaping it until it was finished. When the boss returned, Noll asked, "What do you think, Hawk?"[50] To which, Velzy told him to never work in his shop again. For Noll, 'I was like a pet dog around the shop, but after that he quit feeding me.'[51] Noll was pushed aside.

In 1954, "Gremmie 1," Jacobs, proved he was a valuable glassing partner for Velzy, creating the notion that surf shops can have joint ownership between a shaper and a glasser, rather than inherently becoming a competitor. Jacobs, whose father owned a property on the Strand between Hermosa and Manhattan Beach, started as an apprentice carpenter to help pay rent towards the family's property. Learning from his familial skillsets, Jacobs followed his ancestral occupation and became a talented carpenter. Soon after securing a job in woodcraft, Jacobs' employees at UCLA were shocked when the young surfer came to work and requested to quit, as he wanted to commit to building surfboards with Velzy and driftwood furniture. As Jacobs reflects, his employers exclaimed, "You can't do that, that's stupid. This is security."[52] As a response to the absurdity of his career change, as Jacobs joked, my employers 'wanted to have me analyzed."[53]

It was during this period of dedicating more time to shaping surfboards, Velzy asked Jacobs to become partners, with Velzy shaping and Jacobs glassing the boards. In the early 1950s, Velzy had temporarily borrowed glassers for demanding seasons, as the skill of glassing was still a relatively new and innovative concept that very few could master at the time. In his Manhattan Beach shop, Bill Bahr, Velzy's closest friend and partner, was one of the first professional glassers to help the shaper. Wearing just his trunks, Bahr would sand and glass the boards, with the gremlins watching, not yet knowing about the irritants of this process on skin. Eventually, Bahr learned to put tape around the waistband of his boardshorts as a way of keeping the fibreglass from going in. Soon after the shop had re-opened after Velzy's military training, a tragedy struck. Bahr was shot six times in a domestic incident. The tragedy not only disrupted business, but reshaped the shop's dynamics. In October 1951, Velzy decided he needed to remove himself from the area for a time, to recover from the loss, finding sanctuary in Hawai'i to develop his Hot Curl boards, which were still prevalent and the

[49] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.77.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Hap Jacobs, 'Shooting the Bull with Hap Jacobs,' in *Surfer's Journal,* ed. by Steve Pezman, April 2010.
[53] Ibid.

preferred surfboard in Waikīkī. The Manhattan Beach community was altered. Staying at home, the gremlins were hit hard by grief, for many this was the first death they had experienced. The youngest, Copeland, was only fourteen-years-old at the time.

Upon Velzy's return, he adjusted his management to include more partnerships with the surfing youths, with Jacobs becoming the leading shaper out of the group. He became the new glasser for the shop. This material painted onto the balsa and redwood frame added the necessary waterproof layer, durability and strength to make the surfboards functional in rougher surf. The substance was thick, and could not be applied with an electric tool; a large paint brush was required to manually smooth the substance over the wood. Not knowing much about the skill of glassing, Jacobs was regularly reminded by Velzy, "You sure are slow," as the shaper continued to send more and more boards to an overwhelmed Jacobs.[54] Admiring his mentor, Jacobs states, "he [Velzy] had a lot of good ideas about board design, and overall, we were producing really good boards, and they were well thought of.'[55] Six months after the partnership began, the collaboration of the two led to a revised business name and a new sticker to be brandished on the boards, "Surfboards by Velzy/Jacobs." Their new logo appeared on a new red two-seater pick-up truck that would go to and from suppliers for the day's work.

Unlike the sustainable system of *kapu*, balsa wood supply in California was highly-competitive and highly sought after from many carpentry-based industries, with large quantities needed at the surf shop for each surfboard. To beat the rush of competitors, Velzy, Jacobs, and friend George Kapu, would travel to timber facility General Vaneer in San Onofre, to get bundles of wood early in the morning. Instead of picking up the pre-arranged bundles, Velzy and Jacobs would handpick each plank of wood, starting at a different bundle each and passing the chosen wood to Kapu to stack in the truck. Velzy was looking for pieces 'with some curve in them,' that were three and a quarter inches thick and five inches wide.[56] Four or five of these planks would be needed to shape a surfboard, as this was found to give the boards a natural rocker, a curve along the rails of the board. Mr. Grant, who owned the wood business, would spot the surfers separating the wood and chase them away stating that "You can't just take the wood you want!"[57] Eventually he gave up arguing with the persistent

[54] Hap Jacobs, 'Shooting the Bull with Hap Jacobs.'
[55] Ibid.
[56] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.64.
[57] Hap Jacobs, 'Shooting the Bull with Hap Jacobs.'

surfers, as they passed him a handful of money and drove back to the shop with the best balsa wood for the day's surfboards.

Velzy tested out his designs on different waters along Southern California, establishing that different surf breaks required different surfboard adaptations. He frequently visited Malibu and realized that surfboards required different rockers along the nose and tail of the board, than the standard planshape. The conditions of Malibu did not represent his local beach break. These planshapes were revolutionary and remained constantly adjusted by shapers throughout this decade. When in Malibu, Velzy would borrow locally-made surfboards, such as Joe Quigg's, and ride a few waves, to test out the quality of Quigg's designs. He playfully adds, whilst there 'we'd go up there and steal their lunches if we could, though. Those guys always had better lunches than we did.'[58] After many visits in 1954, Velzy and Jacobs opened up a new shop at 4821 Pacific Avenue, Venice Beach.

The new shop was a prime spot close to Malibu, expanding the business to a new clientele. Despite the looming oil derricks surrounding the business, shaking the shop when drilling occurred, this property offered better business functions. The property had its own telephone number, allowing customers to phone to order a surfboard. With this new market of demand allowing surfers from afar to order and collect, new employees were added to the list, including Hawaiian Allan Gomes, who designed a jig saw that could have a fin jammed in and carved in seconds. The tools designed by Gomes and his son, incorporating their Hawaiian knowledge into the Venice Beach store, proved revolutionary. Despite Abel Gomes speaking 'heavy pidgin' English, Velzy described him as a 'smart mother.'[59] Their saw and shaping machines removed the tedious challenge of hand-carving from Velzy and Jacobs' to-do list. Furthermore, this development allowed Velzy time to focus on his quest to make an all-American surfboard; one that could ride all local waters, similar to the Hot Curl surfboard of Hawai'i.

The All-American Surfboard

It was here, in 1955, the "Velzy Pig" was crafted, bringing Velzy and Jacobs to the forefront of the surf world. As Holmes contends, the Pig was the 'giant leap in surfboard

[58] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.64.
[59] Ibid., p.99.

design and performance – the innovation that would change the entire sport forever and make Velzy one of the greatest names in surfboards.'[60] Made entirely from balsa wood, the first Californian surfboard to not feature redwood, surfers had the capability to manoeuvre the surf in ways that had never been seen before. Henry Ford and Paul Strauch states that this was a 'great change,' with the light board and single fin rooted so far back on the tail, allowing one to flip the surfboard around.[61] The sensitive nature of the board enabled a surfer to produce tricks, such as the "hang ten," when a surfer would hang all ten toes at the end of the board's nose on a wave. The movements now attainable by a rider on this board, enabled a new style of surfing called "hotdogging," where riders performed a delicate dance of tiptoeing up and down the surfboard from tail to nose. Adding more exciting skills to the surfers' range in the water, this popular design and experiment made Velzy a household name across California. Velzy had succeeded in his decade of experiments; he had created the all-American surfboard.

The Pig was a triumph. It was also a design born from trial and error. Velzy was in his workshop completing blanks from set templates when he exclaimed that 'I can't stand these planshapes anymore.'[62] He grabbed a balsa surfboard and began to mirror the Hot Curl's rounded rails along the surfboard's edge. Knowing that this board shape had not been suitable for California's waters as it was in Hawai'i, he trialled the tail of the surfboard to remain wide and round, with a slightly more pointed nose. He swapped several versions of older planshapes, using the nose for the tail and the tail for the nose, until he found the right fit. The Velzy Pig was born, its name chosen by the shaper as it embodied the outline of a pig, if pictured herding it from behind into a pen. Its results were worth the risk. The wider tail, with the single fin, made the surfboard more sensitive to movement. Surfers could turn tighter and almost all waves became rideable on this one single surfboard, rather than needing a collection of boards for different beach conditions. As Velzy recollects, 'We knew we were onto something […] the hype was really up. People would say they'd never seen surfing that good before.'[63] Similar to the concept of the surf shop, the Pig questioned the use of

[60] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.100.
[61] Henry Ford and Paul Strauch, 'The Velzy Pig Surfboard,' *Surfing Heritage and Cultural Centre* [online] (2012)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eaCLR1EtBs> [accessed December 2022].
[62] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.101.
[63] Ibid., p.101.

traditional surfboards. Although other shapers worked up and down the coast, the Pig became the most popular American surfboard at the time, with 30 boards a week sold.[64]

To dedicate his attention towards developing a higher quality Pig surfboard, Velzy designed a basic planshape to manufacture surfboards of set specifications for the general public. In a similar fashion to the crude layout of his shop, Velzy had also earned a crude reputation as a fraudulent businessman. As Jacobs refers to with fondness, this was "The Velzy Touch;" a sales technique in which the shaper was unwilling to compromise to client's wishes by giving them a standard surfboard.[65] As a free-spirited artist, Velzy was not keen to indulge in customer service and custom-made specifications. The space was simply for him to experiment and develop his ideas, with customers providing the financial flexibility to achieve this. As Jacobs explains, when he was on the phone to a customer, he would ask Velzy when the client's surfboard would be ready. Yelling from the shaping space, Velzy would tell Jacobs to inform them to come and collect their product on Saturday, 'and I am still on the phone with this guy, knowing that Dale hasn't even shaped it yet.'[66] When Saturday came, a dozen surfers would arrive to find only half-a-dozen surfboards waiting outside the shop. Fights would ensue, leaving Velzy watching with amusement as he raised the prices and promised the boards the following week. Being a reliable business was a lesser ambition to Velzy, with his attention focused primarily on surfboard experimentations for self-satisfaction. He did the bare minimum, financially, to keep his workshop open to fund his ideas.

On the other hand, if there was a surplus of surfboards when the customer arrived, ready to collect their $75 custom surfboard, Velzy would find an unspecified finished board amongst the collection close enough to the measurements. Armed with his elastic measuring tape, 'he'd get the customer on the end with the hook' and 'he'd be on the other' and explain that the measurements were similar and perfectly adjusted for the client.[67] His elastic tape readings were done with a flick of a wrist, similar to a magician's sleight of hand. Reading out a similar number to the request, Velzy would announce that the similarity was not a coincidence, as it 'must have been meant to be.'[68] This myth of deceit adds to Velzy's complex cowboy character. Holmes acknowledges that Velzy knew the 'anxious gaze' of the

[64] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.100.
[65] Hap Jacobs, 'Shooting the Bull with Hap Jacobs.'
[66] Ibid.
[67] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.100.
[68] Ibid., p.103.

client would not absorb the number on the elastic tape measure, allowing the shaper to take the customer's hand, shake it, and reel in the tape back into his pocket, 'all in one deft motion.'[69] Importantly, Velzy's audacity was an act of mere amusement, rather than an act of malicious intent to profit. Reflecting back 50 years, these infamous tales of sales continued to humour Jacobs, as Velzy 'just wanted to make sure all the boards were sold before lunchtime.'[70] If the surfers could not catch a wave on these ill-appointed boards, it was due to their lack of experience, rather than the choices of Velzy. Receiving little retribution due to his charisma and quick-thinking, the shaper remained one of the greatest salesmen, with surfers simply grateful to have the Pig in their grips.

With its rapid popularity, the Pig's sales became unsustainable to maintain. With more surfers and surfboard shapers needing all-balsa surfboards, supply levels from General Veneer's stockpiles decreased. New surf shops developed closer to the stock along the Pacific Coast Highway, merely miles away from supplies. When collecting stock, Velzy no longer could choose the wood selections, instead getting a bundle of mixed quality woods. With Pigs relying on an all-balsa wood design, Velzy made do with poorer quality balsa that would weigh a heftier 40 pounds, which lowered a surfer's performance. In an attempt to save the quality, Velzy and Allan Gomes, made an attempt to hollow out the wood on the inside, and replace the gap with lighter wood glued in. These surfboards were referred to as "dogmeat."[71] However, the glued gaps between the wood led to condensation issues, produced from California's heat and the ocean's salt water. As a result, the surfboard would become concave where the heels would press. For those who received these faulty surfboards with little warning of their "dogmeat" state, Velzy began to be witnessed as a conman by a few disgruntled surfers.[72] However, the "dogmeat" surfboard attempt was soon dismantled, soon forgotten by his loyal customers. In 1958, Velzy and Jacobs opened another new shop in San Clemente, beside the main gateway of the Pacific Coast Highway. It was the most accessible inland surf space for the large surf populace of San Onofre as well as balsa stockpiles.

Velzy's innovative brain created profitable and golden ideas for modern surfboard designs that attracted global attention; but it was his personality that elevated his status as more than just a good shaper. Meeting the shaper in one of his shops was a memorable experience for the customer and cemented his legacy into present memory. Warshaw shares that he is

[69] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.103.
[70] Ibid., p.104.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., p.105.

grateful to Velzy daily, 'not so much because of what he did for board design,' but because 'he was one-third cowboy and didn't give a rat's ass if that wasn't surf.'[73] He had a quiet confidence in his own convictions and wants, not succumbing to any societal pressures to fit a set mould, as he led the surf shop prototype. As *SURFER* notes, the gruff-smiling Velzy 'had the heart of a cowboy,' with 'the ethic to work hard and live well.'[74] With multiple businesses and profits rolling in from his strategic locational points, Velzy enjoyed the luxurious life that had developed from his ideas. A flask of whisky and a roll of hundreds of dollars remained permanently attached to his trousers' pockets as he carved his surfboards.[75] When not working, he would smoke a giant Cuban cigar as he travelled in his Mercedes-Benz 300SL sportscar, making the shaper identifiable by his flash belongings as he showcased his commitment to luxury on the Pacific Coast Highway. Duke Boyd admires that Velzy had a 'genuinely engaging personality, the Hawk could sell surfboards […] like a politician promising free beer.'[76] Velzy was the 'iconic core surfer,' with his wild outlaw upbringing mixing with his contemporary presentation as a Cadillac salesperson, inspiring many to take up this profitable venture.[77]

During the mid-1950s, Velzy hired more employees, including an 11-year-old Donald Takayama, born to a Hawaiian mother and Japanese father. During his visit to Honolulu, Hawai'i, Velzy saw the young surfer on an expertly carved surfboard. When asked who carved the surfboard, Takayama stated, "I did."[78] On the spot, Velzy offered him a job in California. When he arrived in San Clemente, Velzy exclaimed to the other shapers, "Ah, shit, he's here!" Without a Social Security number, due to his young age, Velzy paid Takayama under the table to make surfboards, $7.50 per board.[79] During the summers, Takayama would live in the shop, 'up in the loft,' and then return to Hawai'i for the rest of the year.[80] For Takayama, the surf shop and California was his temporary home. He recalled, local surfers 'were really cool to me.'[81] During summer months, Velzy employed migrant workers from Mexico and Hawai'i, as additional support to shape surfboards and clean the shops.

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[73] Matt Warshaw, 'The Hawk Soars: Quotes from the Book of Dale,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], ed. by Matt Warshaw, 29 January 2017 <https://www.eos.surf/feature/the-hawk-soars-quotes-from-the-book-of-dale> [accessed May 2024].
[74] 'Saying So Long to A Legend: Dale Velzy.'
[75] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.161.
[76] Duke Boyd, *Legends of Surfing* (Denver: MVP Books, 2009), p.119.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Scott Hulet, 'First Person: Donald Takayama,' *Surfer's Journal,* December 2008.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

However, by 1958, financial and legal issues occurred across Velzy and Jacobs' enterprise. The San Clemente store, with its location being on the main highway, was very much in the public eye. It had to follow property laws set by local council. When trying to advertise the new business with a large, eye-catching sign, Velzy hired a sign painter for $500. The painter fell off his ladder in a drunken state when trying to attach it. Hiring more men, the large painted sign was bolted to the roof, and attracted great attention. Soon after, a city official came over to Velzy and warned, 'You don't have a permit for that sign; it's too big and too high.'[82] The $500 sign was binned, a significant marketing loss to Velzy. Unsure of regulations and requirements for proper legal practices, these early surf shops were simply not run by businessmen; but rather surfers who unwittingly became part of a business enterprise. Concerned by Velzy's leadership, Jacobs began to disconnect from his partnership. In his summary for why he decided to leave Velzy/Jacobs Surfboards, he stated 'Velzy was not the best of businessmen […] he wasn't good with math or figuring how things worked in business.'[83] Leaving on good terms with the shaper to begin his own shop, Jacobs recollects that 'it had been fun when we'd been working together, but then Dale wasn't around anymore.'[84] As the partnership had no legal ties or signed documentation, it ended as quietly as it had begun. By 1960, the logo printed on his surfboards returned to read "Surfboards by Velzy," underlining the end of the partnership.

Juggling to manage finances for multiple stores and employees, as Holmes notes, led to revenue from sales 'not arriving in the bank account at the rate it should have to maintain a positive cash flow.'[85] Debt began to accumulate further under Velzy by 1960. With Velzy juggling multiple stores, an oversight for employee management occurred. In one incident, workers would return from surfing and burn five-gallons of resin to warm their hands in the winter months. This loss of money and materials would prove catastrophic. Meanwhile, Velzy would state, 'I really didn't give a damn. I didn't know how to run a business – I never went to school.'[86] With mortgages, rent, tax, and payroll, Velzy soon became bankrupt, regardless of the high numbers of surfboards sold. As Hobie Alter, one of Velzy's most pressing competitors, remembers, 'he was always underselling or giving boards to riders. We couldn't figure it out because it was hard, there wasn't a lot of money in it […] he had a group

[82] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.123.
[83] Ibid., p.156.
[84] Ibid., p.157.
[85] Ibid., p.161.
[86] Ibid., p.162.

hanging around him that we always thought might have been selling one board for Dale and another for themselves.'[87] As the businesses expanded, so did the need to manage the overwhelming task of proper management and financial security. Not being able to pay his taxes, the state and federal government homed in on his business empire. They seized his commercial properties and all of its contents, including surfboards waiting for simple repairs; all going to auction to pay for the costs. For young surfer Allan Seymour, whose board was seized, a calm Velzy promised, 'Don't worry about it, Seymour, someday I'll make a good one.'[88] The golden era of Velzy's surf enterprise had ended.

In one decade, Velzy's surf shop enterprise had begun and ended, both points controlled by government legislation. Nonetheless, Velzy rewrote the surf story, transitioning California as the home of the surf shop. Velzy's designs brought a distinct Californian thread into the surf story, with his Pig surfboards allowing surfing to become an accessible and more diverse sport. Velzy had ushered in many key surfing movements during his decade of reign, with introductions such as "hotdogging" and business logos. Although Velzy's removal was a tragic loss for surfboard shaping, his primitive workshop and showroom prototype had been firmly rooted into surfer's wants. The legacy of Velzy's early notions of a humble shop remained the preferred aesthetic, with his gremlins continuing this blueprint through their own shop architecture. His pioneering thoughts remained a guide for the surf shop movement. By the end of the decade, it was evident that for surfing to become a commercial success, a more conventional and meticulous form of business leadership was needed. In this new decade, competitors and apprentices of Velzy took over this gaping power vacuum, as a new wave of shapers took on the necessary task to rebuild a more productive surf shop system.

[87] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.162.
[88] Ibid., p.163.

5. Dale Velzy versus Hobie Alter: The Orange County Surf Shop

Futuristic architecture boomed across Southern California in the 1950s, pioneering a new form of modern aesthetic for the suburban metropolis. In his book, *Thirdspace* (1996), Edward Soja states that 'Orange County is a paradigmatic example of the new patterns of industrialization and urbanization,' which offered 'the promised American dream.'[1] The new architectural prototype questioned the idea that commercial buildings were merely spaces of function; instead, it offered the notion that buildings could be an escapist experience for ideological nurturing.

Since 1949, the Googie architectural movement paved its way along California's highways, choosing the roadside as its base. Geometrically eye-catching buildings appeared, cultivated from the emblematic engineering feats and shapes observed in the State's experimentation with jets and custom cars. Architects of this movement suggested that public spaces should disregard previous limitations of the standard civic building blueprints, by adding parabolic arches, diamond points and parallelograms. Brianna Blackaby explains that the Googie movement's exuberant styles promoted to its everyday audience that the metropolis was progressing through constant motion, to prepare California for their nuclear energy future.[2] In the post-war society, the State did not want to be defined as stuck in its rural past. This notion of not being static is most noted in the shape of a boomerang, which was the prominent geometry that wrapped around the sides of exterior walls. With the emphasis on designs being no longer static, the imagery of the Googie concept captured the ever-developing progress of the Space and Atomic Ages. As Alan Hess observes, it was the use of these outlandish, distinctive features to attract people driving by, and the offer of parking facilities on-site, that embodied crucial changes to architectural merchandising.[3]

In this decade, commercial vernacular – "vernacular" defining the aesthetic of small commercial outlets rather than a historical building of civic function – began to adjust to an altered identity to fit a fantastical image. Before small businesses had the opportunity to advertise on the television, the architecture of a building was a key factor to attract consumers. The architecture of a building sold the nature and value of the business and its produce. John Chase explains that a space had to go to 'great lengths to appear to be what is it

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[1] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.246; p.274.
[2] Brianna Blackaby, 'Googie: Architecture of Bubblegum,' *MSB Architects* [online], 24 September 2021 <https://www.msbarchitects.com/blog/googie-architecture-or-bubblegum> [accessed March 2023].
[3] Alan Hess, 'The Origins of McDonald's Golden Arches,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* 45:1 (March 1986), pp.60-67 (p.60).

not,' in order to fulfil a societal fantasy.[4] Whilst a civic building demonstrates a clear and direct correlation to its purpose, without pageantry or pretence, the commercial vernacular in Southern California was altered to market images that fed and met society's wants. This image of fictional history has been an integral factor of Californian design, with its previous architectures hosting features such as Spanish tiles, colonial exteriors and Eastern city columns, all outside the reflected historical timeframe. As Chase continues, the architect utilized the State's fascination with fantastical imagery to allow the consumer to escape the mundane, and this 'effectively isolates [them] from the world.'[5] Through this commercial experience, visitors are 'seduced to linger' and become immersed in the culture that is sold within.[6] This idea of a commercial space being an experience became most apparent in the rise of the Googie paradigm.

The Googie movement was quintessentially a Californian design, with its original model being the Googie's Coffee Shop in West Hollywood, designed by John Lautner in 1949. The elements of glass designs, domed roofs, and brightly-coloured exposed shapes lined the exterior of the coffee shop. The power of this modern aesthetic forced drivers of passing cars to stop in their tracks out of curiosity. Although it generated disdain from conservative onlookers, this movement honed in on the value of roadside architecture and illustrated how a commercial space could become a magnet, attracting the public eye through its bold contours. This magnet was observed and harnessed by a few surf shops, an identity that proved to be fruitful in modernizing the surf industry into the suburban market, as it distanced itself away from the rugged and chaotic garages that defined its past. The prominent leader of the industry's innovative Googie adaptation was a young middle-class surfboard shaper, Hobart "Hobie" Alter.

Purchasing a vacant lot along the Pacific Highway for $1500, Hobie designed his Dana Point shop's architecture to reflect his own personal admiration for engineering. Upon its completion in 1954, "Hobie Surfboards" consisted of several spacious rooms in an L-shaped structure, with a garage at the back featuring an open window to allow fresh air to enter. A large hollow triangular structure poked out abnormally from the building's left corner, facing streetside for passers-by on the highway. Upon this definition, the building inherently fulfilled the Googie movement's sense of geometrics. With its paved driveway stretching

[4] John Chase, 'Unvernacular Vernacular: Contemporary American Consumerist Architecture,' *Design Quarterly,* 132 (1986), pp.1-32 (p.5).
[5] Ibid., p.8.
[6] Ibid.

around the property, it welcomed visitors from the highway to pull into the lot to venture into the isolated shop for an excursion away from the road. It was built for the everyday person to have an immersive cultural experience. For many highway visitors, this would be their first introduction to the budding and lesser-known Orange County surf community, which had remained underdeveloped compared to that of its northern surf colonies. By 1960, as Leonard Lueras applauds, the serious and business-orientated owners of Orange County's surf shops manifested a growing demand for a 'surfy trend,' allowing a 'magical ingredient in the Southern California lifestyle' to blossom, rivalling Disneyland.[7] Thus, Hobie's shop warmly attracted the public eye, identifying the surf shop as both a state-of-the-art and long-term enterprise of Southern California.



Figure 5.1: A model of the first Hobie surf shop, a sculpture, on display at "Hobie Surf Shop," a photograph by Katherine Hunt, Dana Point, October 2022.

[7] Leonard Lueras, *Surfing: The Ultimate Pleasure* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1984), p.133.

With this definition of architecture, Hobie's shop design was at odds with that of Dale Velzy's outlets. The contradictive architecture and commercial aesthetic that separated Velzy's garage space at Manhattan Beach, and Hobie's post-modern Googie-style shop, reflected the very different attitudes and personalities of the two leading surfboard shapers. As designers of their own commercial spaces, their surfing ambitions were well-reflected in the lines of their shop blueprints. For Velzy, success was found in retaining the nostalgia of his surfing youthhood, whilst Hobie sought to advance the sport through new chemical prototypes and modernist ideals in an age of engineering advancement. In more than one way, Hobie and Velzy were yin and yang, progressing the surf industry along different trajectories throughout the same decade. In his analogy, Matt Warshaw explains that both of the two leading surf giants had juxtaposing personalities, metaphorically labelling that 'Velzy is a surfer-cowboy-biker-hustler, a total firework show. Hobie is Henry Fonda.'[8] Similar to Fonda, Hobie reflected authentic honesty and integrity towards his consumers, a significant deviation from the unsavoury ethics used by Velzy's salesmanship. Sober and organized, it was Hobie's regimented commitment to selling the sport to a wider audience that enabled him to spend his spare nights experimenting with the chemical structures of polyurethane to progress the surfboard design. His commitment to change and progress propelled him beyond his competitors, with most shapers focused on minor adjustments to the balsa design. By the late-1950s, the trialling of an inclusive suburban surf space enabled Hobie to thrive in the affluent Orange County environment, which encouraged a new demographic to enter the surf sphere.

To understand why Hobie saw value in adapting the surf shop image to the Space and Atomic Ages, it is necessary to investigate his childhood roots, which were a world away from Velzy's blue-collar wartime upbringing.

Surfing Businessman, Hobart "Hobie" Alter

Hobie was born and raised in Ontario, east of Los Angeles; a town set amongst the citrus groves of inland California. The town propagated the economic success of its agricultural sector to visitors, with a large water fountain purposefully turned on beside the railway tracks to showcase the town's successful irrigation systems. This, however, was a façade; with the fountain immediately turned off when the passing train left the town's

[8] Matt Warshaw, 'History of Surfing: Velzy vs. Hobie,' *SURFER* [online], ed. by Davis Jones, 22 June 2017 <https://www.surfer.com/features/history-of-surfing-hobie-Hobie-dale-velzy/> [accessed February 2023].

station, to preserve water in the town's fragile drought climate. Ontario was built as a "model town," with state-of-the-art public facilities, schools and parks, functioning to illustrate the possibilities of rural success as its small community developed in the early 20th century. The town's 8-mile avenue was lined with rows of broad trees, pepper trees and green lawns, which were kept tidy and neat by the community. On the outskirts of the town was an abundance of orange groves, providing employment for locals. This focus on spatial aesthetic and community spirit, illustrated an integral part of Hobie's youthhood. As Joe Dunn defines, Ontario was 'indeed bountiful.'[9]

Both Hobie's paternal grandfather and father worked at the orange groves. In addition to this tradition, his father found temporary employment as an assemblyman for California and played the violin for silent movie soundtracks. By the late 1920s, the Alter family had become an established name in this small community, with his father earning an exclusive membership of the all-male Kiwanis Club, a club to raise money for the neighbourhood. His name and role in this affluent club is recognized in two gratuitous articles by the *Los Angeles Times*.[10] On 31st October, 1933, the day of Halloween, Hobart Laidlaw Alter was born, with "Hobie" being his preferred name. Dunn compares Hobie's childhood, raised alongside his two younger sisters, as resembling a "Norman Rockwell-esque" painting; an artist famed for his candid suburban family depictions.[11] Reflecting back on his Ontario childhood with neighbourhood friends, Hobie remembers watching Mickey Mouse cartoons on a television, and creating outdoor games before curfew. The 'sidewalks were great for rolling skating. We could race around the block […] we'd take the skates and cut them up and put them onto a piece of two-by-four and put a box on it. You nail a handle on the front of the box to make a skate scooter.'[12] From an early age, Ontario offered green spaces and an abundance of parks, promoting an early childhood love for the outdoors. His hobbies were not limited to just a few, with Hobie also raising racing pigeons in his backyard and nurturing squabs for flight practice. As his sister remembers, 'he was hoping it [his squab] would fly, but it was too young to fly, so he left it there on the sidewalk and the squab walked home.'[13] This landscape of early suburbia proved significant for Hobie, as he continued pioneering ideas to connect himself further with the potential of the outdoors. This unusual exposure to suburbia and

[9] Joe Dunn, *Lifestyle Retail: The Hobie Surf Shop Story* (Altadena: Raymond Press, 2018), p.15.
[10] 'New Head of Kiwanis Club,' *Los Angeles Times,* 31 December 1927, p.6.
[11] Joe Dunn, *Lifestyle Retail: The Hobie Surf Shop Story,* p.15.
[12] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves* (Newport Beach: Croul Publications, 2013), p.3.
[13] Ibid., p.5.

middle-class ideals offers a glimpse as to why Hobie's later business model differed significantly to that of his beach-born competitors.

During the summer, Ontario's temperatures became unbearable for the family. To escape, the Alters visited their holiday home at Laguna Beach, a property built and designed by his maternal grandfather. Situated on the coast of California, Laguna Beach provided the perfect summer holiday destination, with activities such as surf fishing and pony rides along the shores. Since the 1930s, Paul Holmes states Laguna was famed for attracting Hollywood stars, as it originated as an 'artists' colony' with its annual festivals and picturesque film locations.[14] Hobie had struck a pot of gold, as his family's property was located in-between two of Laguna's best surf spots, Brooks Street and Thalia Street. By age seven, Hobie was bodysurfing amongst the waves with other tourists. It would be another decade before Hobie began to observe local surfers, inspiring him to try this new sport.

During his school year of 1947, Hobie had a chance meeting at Ontario's Chaffey High School with a surfing teenager from Laguna, Dick Metz, who was studying there temporarily for extra credit. Metz had been raised in Laguna since birth, spending his childhood at his family's diner, carved out of an old rail cart. Its aesthetic fitted the artistic nature of Laguna and its clientele. As his father's business developed into a full-service restaurant with dazzling entertainment, Metz learnt the basic rules on how to run a business, during his teenagerhood. Despite this knowledge seeping into his consciousness, Dunn comments that Metz still had the 'temptation to cross the street to surf' and wanted to be with the other older surfers.[15] Although working towards better grades to receive a college scholarship due to his track abilities, Metz's main commitment was surfing. This passion is unsurprising, with Metz's childhood babysitter being famous big-wave surfer, George "Peanuts" Larson. Yet, it was at Chaffey's High School, far inland from Laguna, that Hobie and Metz first crossed paths. Although Metz refers to this meeting as a fleeting "hiya," the two met again during the following summer holiday, their familiarity allowing Hobie to ask for advice.[16] Metz, who was a lifeguard at Laguna, recalls that 'he came down and we were surfing, Hobie said, "I want to surf."'[17] To surf with them, Hobie needed to find a surfboard and learn how to ride it.

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[14] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.5.
[15] Joe Dunn, *Lifestyle Retail: The Hobie Surf Shop Story,* p.21.
[16] Ibid,, p.16.
[17] Laylan Connelly, 'Hobie Surfboards turns 70: Do you know how the iconic innovator started in 1950?' *Orange County Register* [online], 28 December 2020, <https://www.ocregister.com/2020/12/28/hobie-surfboards-turns-70-do-you-know-how-the-iconic-innovator-started-in-1950/> [accessed March 2023].

Unlike the Laguna Beach residents, Hobie could only surf at the beach during summer holidays. Without being raised in a surf community and knowing where to find local surfboard shapers, Hobie's father failed to find and purchase a new surfboard from a store for his son. In Southern California, with only a few shapers, it was a difficult task. In 1949, his father found an old 12ft paddleboard, a board once used by lifeguards in the 1930s. Hobie's sister Carolyn recalls that their father never expected Hobie to follow in his footsteps, 'My dad said it was his role to just be there for him when he needed.'[18] This supportive paternal relationship had been built from Hobie's mature nature, as his family admired how he rejected 'roughneck kids' that 'smoked on the street corner,' to focus on more productive projects.[19] Staying away from beach gangs or rowdy surfers, Hobie was particular with how he spent his time and with whom, and his family were happy to oblige in his surfing passion. Alongside two other novice surfers on similar paddleboards, Hobie practiced his surf techniques by copying pictures of surfers on postcards from Hawaii.[20] Unfortunately, his attempts to ride this thicker paddleboard on the harsh reefs of Brooks Street caused too much damage to its wood. No longer popular, this type of paddleboard had earned the more derogative label as the "kook box," due to its finless and simplistic design. Without the knowledge on how to make a modern balsa surfboard, Hobie had to make do.

The notion of surfboard shaping began when Hobie met Walter Hoffman, an expert surfer from North Laguna. Noticing his kook box, Hoffman offered the similar-aged Hobie his state-of-the-art surfboard to trial; a Bob Simmons "sandwich board" which was made from a 'polystyrene core, balsa rails, [and a] plywood deck.'[21] In this early prototype of the late-1940s, the new use of polystyrene foam as the core material allowed the surfboard to achieve lighter buoyancy. Blocks of foam became a minor material during the surfboard's production process, with balsa and plywood providing the surfboard's main shape and deck material. This sandwich board was designed by Matt Kivlin, and manufactured by him and Simmons. It was particularly popular amongst youths and female surfers, who found manoeuvring the weight of solid wood and the responsibility of emptying the water from heavy paddleboards, a difficult task. The main problem with the sandwich surfboards, as Dave Sweet reflects, was the polystyrene blocks used; which 'was horrible stuff' and would 'delaminate,' especially if

[18] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.7.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p.9.
[21] Ibid., p.11.

left out in the heat for too long.[22] Nonetheless, Kivlin and Simmons' early initiatives of using foam in surfboard designs was ground-breaking for better future foam prototypes. A more successful and hydrodynamic polyurethane foam design would be founded later by Sweet and Hobie in the following decade, with a remaining gratitude to their predecessor sandwich surfboard shapers.

Thus, riding Hoffman's board, whilst Hoffman struggled on the kook box in this temporary exchange, Hobie realized how much easier it was on this sandwich surfboard. Although Hoffman offered to have a surfboard created by a shaper, Hobie saw it as a challenge to make his own custom sandwich board. Hoffman gave his board to Hobie so he could record the exact measurements, and his father took him to find supplies. In 1950, Hobie carved his first surfboard out of balsa, with a hand-carved rough logo at the bottom. The logo was his name carved crudely in capital letters encased by a jagged surfboard outline. Following the Simmons design with simple carpentry tools, Hobie carved more surfboards using balsa wood supplied from the local General Veneer company. Impressed, Hoffman offered Hobie his final shaping lesson: glassing. Under Hoffman, Hobie learnt the basics of surfboard manufacturing. Every summer, he returned with his family to their Laguna summer home and continued to develop his surfboard project. Between 1950 and 1953, Hobie produced 80 sandwich surfboards for local surfers, his inspiration moving away from Simmons' surfboards and towards the latest Joe Quigg design, which had an easier rocker to ride. These boards were shaped in his family's holiday home garage, scattering the lawn with balsa woodchips, and placed on racks to dry beside the house.

One particular request that propelled Hobie's name as a diverse and skilled shaper in the region, was to create a Makaha surfboard, a world away from the standard Californian surfboard templates. Inspired by the O'ahu surf scene, Hoffman's brother sent Hobie the specifications to recreate the popular North Shore Hawaiian surfboard. It was discovered by local surfers to be the best board for offshore paddling, which suited the wide expanse of water in San Onofre, at the surf spot south of Dana Point. Selling 20-30 Makaha surfboards, Hobie began to earn a local reputation as a fantastic craftsman, and the young shaper felt he had found his calling.[23] With a growing number of requests, Hobie struggled to keep his family's garage clean, despite his best efforts to use newspaper and t-shirts to catch any fibreglass drips and wood chips in the garage. Whilst visiting, Metz recalls Hobie's father's

[22] Dave Sweet, 'The Foam Man: Dave Sweet's Story,' *The Surfers Journal,* ed. by Steve Pezman, June 2006.
[23] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves*, p.15.

frustration when he noted wood shavings got entangled in the 'upholstery of his new car.'[24] This growing friction, and with several of his surfboards being stolen from the outdoor drying racks, pushed Hobie to realize it was time to move out of his family's holiday home and find a commercial space.

Whilst other shapers repeatedly acknowledged that they were not businessmen, Hobie attended classes under Elwood Chapman at Chaffey College to learn more about how to create a successful surfboard business. Chapman, who later published the academic business guide, *Your Attitude is Showing* (1992), taught Hobie a range of sales techniques, ranging from customer care to business plans. To succeed in the new commercial industry of surfboard shaping, Hobie wanted to be a great businessman. Despite academia not being his strongest point, Hobie received an "A" grade on his proposed business plan for his own surf shop.[25] In his plan, he sketched the outside of the shop, with the triangular Googie architecture already a vision on the page, with an eye-catching sign stood in the parking lot. Chapman marked his assignment, successfully predicted that he believed 'an opportunity may come where you can produce a speciality item that you can distribute through a wholesaler.'[26] Following his mentor's advice, Hobie decided to commit to his 20-page plan, and finalized the blueprints for his shop.

Dana Point, Orange County

In 1953, Hobie decided that his shop's location should be at Dana Point on the Pacific Coast Highway. His business's success can be attributed to this location. As the shaper observed: 'I was very visible right there on Coast Highway […] I would always stop to talk with customers, whether they bought a board or not.'[27] Hobie Surfboards opened for business at 34195 Coast Highway. Choosing to build a commercial business on a highway was considered a significant marketing strategy by spatial theorists, with Chester H. Liebs emphasizing the importance of roadside and highway advertisement. Since the rise of the automobile, and the ability for a mode of transport to change direction, stop and start, the roadside environment was tailored to attract. Since the First World War, as Liebs explores, businesses broke the mundane stretches of long highways with roadside services and quaint

[24] Laylan Connelly, 'Hobie Surfboards turns 70.'
[25] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves*, p.16.
[26] Ibid., p.16.
[27] Ibid., p.23.

entrepreneurship.[28] To avoid the congestion of a main road, the highway offered commercial properties wider corridors and larger parking lots for drivers to rest. This can be seen through fast food outlets and diners, which broke the miles of roadside walls and barren countryside.

Hobie Surfboards' L-shaped building offered large windows to flood the Californian sunlight into this shop, allowing multiple viewing points for passing traffic. In addition, the product identifier, "Surfboards," was carved on a large surfboard-shaped sign upon the triangle, hanging over the car park filled with "woody" cars, defining at a glance its belonging to youth culture. Architecturally, it resembled a futuristic business, paying homage to the decade's contemporary architecture. With this design, Hobie offered his highway space as a quintessentially Californian experience. His shop promised an escapist world of surf culture, regardless of whether the visitor bought a product. With Hobie's charisma and positive attitude, he would talk with his customers for hours about Orange County's beach delights.

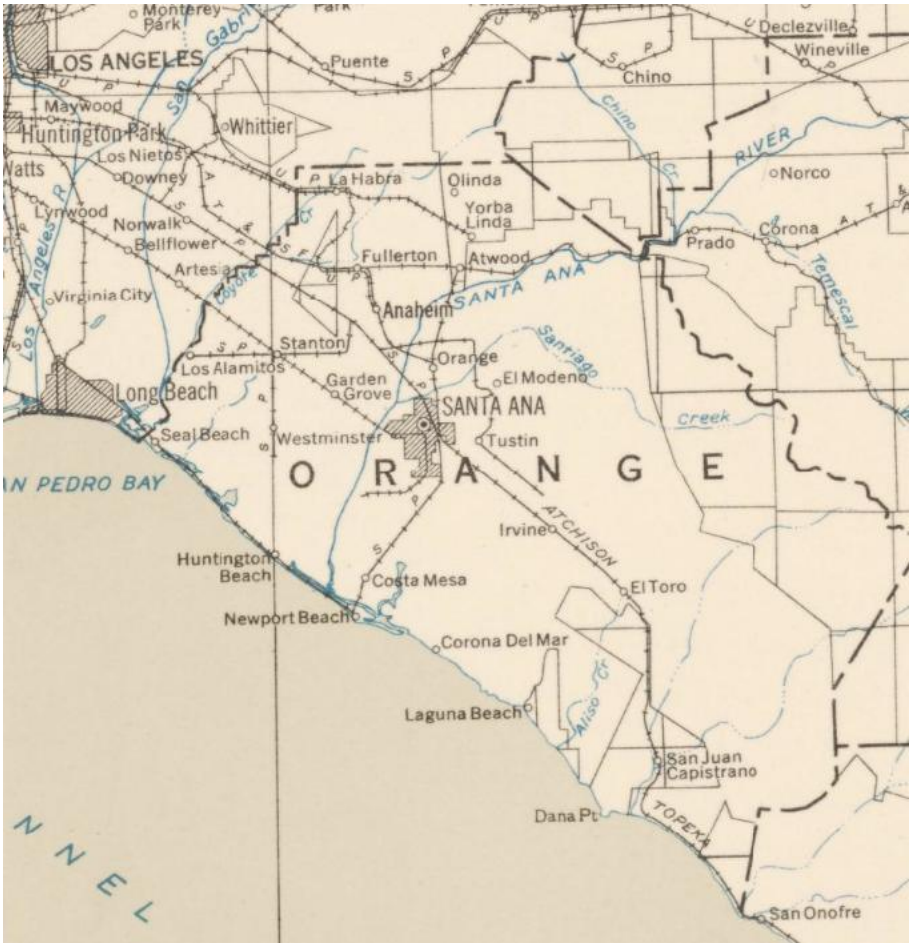


Figure 5.2: "Orange County," in the 'Maps of California,' a map, 1930, Drawer 11, Folder 9, Item 2, retrieved from the *Library of Congress* [online], <https://www.loc.gov/resource/gmdtitlecolmaps.ca-011/?sp=7&r=0.407,1.08,0.151,0.098,0> [Accessed May 2025]

[28] Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile* (The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), p.16.

Despite being beside a popular highway, Dana Point was still in its early years of development, with Hobie Surfboards being a rare commercial outlet in this mostly desolate spot. Metz hyperbolizes that Dana Point, 'at the time had just a few buildings and about 10 people living in the not-yet town.'[29] Although the resident numbers were higher than Metz predicted, the town was significantly smaller than its Laguna neighbour, despite developing since the late-1920s. The town consisted of a community of houses built by Sidney H. Woodruff, as another Orange County "model town." Those that invested in the Woodruff housing complex included movie producers and entrepreneurs, allowing a unique middle-class resort-style neighbourhood with complex electric and water systems. Despite this want of affluent residents, the majority of Dana Point resembled a rural town, with horses and manure mixed amongst seaweed.[30] The coast, however, offered an exceptional surf spot known as Killer Dana, a small surf break known for its infamously dangerous thick wave walls that crashed onto rocks. It was not untypical at this location for injuries to occur. Hobie Surfboards provided this location with its first local surfboard repair system and the latest surfboard models for better big-wave riding. Having a surf shop nearby enabled local surfers to enhance their wave-riding skills for competitions, without the need to travel to Los Angeles and beyond.

Only the bravest of surfers would surf at Killer Dana, including Peanuts, Phil Edwards, and the Patterson brothers. Riding one of his biggest waves here, Peanuts refers to the quiet, wild and untameable beauty of Killer Dana as 'one of the world's natural and beautifully magnificent surfing locations.'[31] Although Dana Point's potential was untapped in 1954, over the next decade Dana Point continued to develop through investors, becoming an affluent harbour town for the wealthy. Predicting the potential of this location, Hobie Surfboards developed in tandem with the town.

Soon after the shop's grand opening, Hobie Surfboards was more than just a business, it became a 'novelty and a curiosity.'[32] It created a cult of die-hard local surfers who would regularly frequent, with Laguna surfers flocking to Dana Point to visit this exciting surf clubhouse. Holmes adds, foremost, the surf shop was 'the social and cultural hub for surfers,

[29] Laylan Connelly, 'Hobie Surfboards turns 70.'
[30] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.21.
[31] Chris Ahrens, "The Breaking of Killer Dana," *Surfing,* August 1994.
[32] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.22.

a place to meet and hang out.'[33] Surfers would arrive at the shop to talk about grand adventures, swell information, and latest Hawaiian fashions. It became an information hub for local Orange County surfers. Creating this casual environment, Hobie refused to wear a suit and hard-soled shoes at work, opting for casual sandals and loose clothing. As Lueras comments, his likeable personality and the shop's popularity enabled the birth of the "Dana Point Mafia;" this included the Hoffman brothers, Hobie, and Phil Edwards, as they had the 'commercial surfing world sewn tightly' into their pockets.[34] They controlled Orange Country's surf developments by being part of the creative processes at Hobie Surfboards. No longer in the Dark Ages of surfing, Orange County was now a pin on the surf map; but it was still isolated enough from Malibu and Manhattan Beach shapers to remain competitor free. Hobie Surfboards offered to advance surfers in the area to new heights, creating a colony of wave riders loyal to his name.

Butch Van Artsdalen was one of Hobie's most satisfied and loyal customers. Van Artsdalen, as Warshaw comments, was famed for being a 'gifted and self-destructive' surfer.[35] Despite being 'a drinker and a brawler,' he was still highly-respected amongst surfers in San Diego, ranked as one of the world's top surfers by *SURFER* magazine in 1964.[36] His talent earnt him the nickname of "Mr. Pipeline," as he was one of only a few at this time to ride the large and dangerous O'ahu surf break, Pipeline. Regardless of Van Artsdalen's focus on the Hawaiian surf scene, he continued to respect his ties to his Southern Californian community. In a *Surf Guide* interview with Van Artsdalen in 1963, the 22-year-old surfer commented that when he first started surfing in La Jolla 'I kept borrowing boards for some time.'[37] However, when he discovered the Dana Point shaper, 'I started riding Hobie boards – I have ever since.'[38] Although not interested in being part of the business sphere himself, he saw the value in Hobie's work. For 'companies like Hobie, Jacobs, and Con, the honest ones, they're the kind that will last and contribute to progress within the sport.'[39] With his business mind, Hobie attracted loyal customers with his crafting knowledge and genuine customer care, showcasing the surf shop as a trusted and progressive environment.

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[33] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.22.
[34] Leonard Lueras, *Surfing: The Ultimate Pleasure,* p.133.
[35] Matt Warshaw, 'Butch Van Artsdalen,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://eos.surf/entries/van-artsdalen-butch/> [accessed March 2023].
[36] Ibid.
[37] 'Butch Van Artsdalen: Mr. Pipeline,' *Surf Guide,* August 1963.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Another reason for the shop's success was due to the shaper's attention to detail, which can be noted through the shop's objects and its organization. For example, elaborate slots were placed in the floor to hold a more stable shaping stand, rather than a free-standing workhorse that could move. In the showroom, the shop had its own telephone number, allowing customers to ring the shaper with any questions and orders. In the garage was a rotating glue-jig, which significantly cut-down the time, space and energy needed to glue blank surfboards. It rotated with four spaces, 'with screw clamps down through each section,' allowing Hobie to 'glue up to four blanks.'[40] With this additional free time, Hobie experimented with surfboards to ease the pressures of shipping and the longevity of items. He invested in numerous ideas to revolutionize the modern surfboard; he was the first surf shop owner to produce the removeable fin.[41] With the fin detached, shipping surfboards became easier. If a fin was damaged, replacements could now be easily reattached. Instead of a crowded workshop, the shop resembled a professional room, with rows of finished surfboards standing in display by the large window. Steve Pezman describes Hobie as a pillar of the surf movement, as 'he was enamoured with inventing things. He'd get interested in something, see how it could be improved and go make a better version.'[42] Although beginning with only small adjustments, the convenience of these changes revolutionized modern surfboards.

Hobie received early success through his sandwich surfboards until Velzy launched his all-American "Pig" surfboard, which Hobie erroneously underestimated as only for 'younger surfers.'[43] Southern Californians wanted this exclusive, light and easy-to-manoeuvre surfboard from The Hawk. Hobie looked to respond with his own new business ventures. Noting his loss of customers in the region, the Dana Point shaper turned back to Chapman for business advice. Upon his advice, Hobie realized that he needed to hire employees to handle the general care of the space, so he could create a unique and competitive surfboard to sell.

To do this, Hobie hired a passionate and local teenager to help with general care around the shop. Jim Lomas, at 13-years-old, spent his workdays sweeping and tidying Hobie Surfboards. With Dana Point still being predominantly rural at this time, Lomas preferred this

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[40] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.25.
[41] Laylan Connelly, 'Hobie Alter, Inventor of Modern Surfboard and Small Sailboats, Dies,' *The Orange County Register* [online], 1 April 2014 <https://www.ocregister.com/2014/04/01/hobie-Hobie-inventor-of-modern-surfboard-and-small-sailboats-dies/> [accessed March 2023].
[42] Mike Anton, 'Hobie Alter Dies at 80; Shaped Southern California Surf Culture,' *Los Angeles Times* [online], 30 March 2014 <https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-hobie-Hobie-20140331-story.html> [accessed March 2023].
[43] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.20.

role compared to that of muddy agricultural labour. The shop's next employee was the talented 16-year-old surfer, Phil Edwards, who would later be famed for starring in the popular surf film, *Endless Sumer,* 1966. It was decided that Edwards would be paid by piece, rather than hourly, allowing the teenager to surf and attend school whenever he wanted to. Without a driving license, Edwards was also grateful for this flexible work schedule, as he relied on hitchhiking from Oceanside, which was located 28 miles south. [44] The surf shop opened the door for the teenagers to be part of the inner shaping circle, and they met an abundance of famous surfers. This flexible and open-communication business plan kept Hobie, Edwards and Lomas happy, with the latter working alongside Hobie for more than two decades.

Further challenges occurred just a year after Hobie Surfboards opened its doors, in 1955. Velzy had begun his third business venture and he bought a new shop positioned on the Pacific Coast Highway at San Clemente, a few miles south of Dana Point. Although bringing more fame to the quiet Orange County region, it also brought fierce competition. Holmes describes this move as competitive, as 'Hobie was eating his [Velzy's] lunch.'[45] In Velzy's words, 'Orange County was growing like a weed,' and he wanted to have a part of it.[46] Velzy's third shop was the closest to the surf hub of San Onofre. To succeed in gaining consumers in Southern California, Velzy conducted a series of marketing campaigns, strategies naively dismissed by Hobie.

The first marketing campaign by Velzy was to create a new surfboard model every year, with a distinct name, to convince surfers to upgrade their surfboards. For example, in 1956, he released "The Bump" surfboard, with a distinct mark along the rail. Holmes argues that these were more than simple marketing techniques; as these minor tweaks on the surfboards were replicated by future shapers, these changes led to increased surfing performance.[47] For the second campaign, Velzy worked on creating sponsorships with professional surfers, to promote his surfboards during competitions. Velzy began to sell surfboards at a discounted rate to professional surfers, ensuring the best of his boards were only for his competing team riders. As a result, Hobie Surfboards lost valuable customers, who turned to nearby Velzy instead.

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[44] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.25.
[45] Ibid., p.30.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.110.

Meanwhile, Hobie remained loyal to giving only full-paying customers the best of his surfboards. By not focusing on sponsorships, the Dana Point shaper remained faithful to good business practices and earnt an honest reputation of equality. Compared to other shapers, Edwards admired how Hobie took a 'serious approach,' as he was 'much more professional.'[48] His seriousness can be noted by a story from long-term Hobie Surfboard employee Terry Martin. After making an error on a surfboard, Hobie showed Martin the surfboard, asking if he had been the one to shape it. Martin confirmed it was his, and noticed that it had dark green scratch marks. Hobie turned to Martin and asked, "So are you going to buy it?"[49] After a pause, the shaper said, "Ahh, mmm, yes I guess I am."[50] Hobie had made his point; if a surfboard was damaged it was the shaper's responsibility to buy it. Handing out surfboards for free and creating less than perfect surfboards were deemed financially ruinous, by Hobie.

The third marketing campaign was one jointly shared and utilized by Velzy and Hobie, taking the surf shop to beyond simply selling surfboards. In the late-1950s, the arrival of customized t-shirts soon dazzled surf shop owners. Before the power of television and magazine advertising, Velzy and his business partner, Hap Jacobs, decided to print their shop logo, with its location underneath, onto clothing, expanding their logo merchandise market beyond their team riders. Jacobs reflects back on initiating the idea of clothing merchandise, 'We were real proud when we saw people walking around with our logo on their shirts.'[51] In a similar fashion, Hobie bought a supply of t-shirts with his own logo and name printed on the fabric. Ben Marcus comments that the "Hobie Dana Point" t-shirts were 'hot with surfers and ho-dads [non-surfers]' alike, as sales increased over the next two decades.[52] The t-shirts proved to be a success for surf shops. Matt Warshaw states that by 1962, almost all surf shops had a row of white cotton shirts with their logo printed on the front, selling for $1.99 plus tax.[53] It was an item worn with pride. As Hunter H. Fine further reflects, despite landlocked tourists not recognizing surf brands, with enough wearers around them, a business was inherently seen as the most successful and respected surf shop.[54] For those wearing a logo, one's

[48] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves*, p.26.
[49] Ibid., p.71.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.110.
[52] Ben Marcus, *The Surfboard: Art, Style, Stoke* (Denver: MVP Books, 2007), p.126.
[53] Matt Warshaw, 'Surf Fashion, Lightly Salted,' *Enclyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://eos.surf/history/section/fashion/> [accessed March 2023].
[54] Hunter H. Fine, *Surfing, Street Skateboarding, Performance, and Space* (Lexington Books, 2018), p.188.

existence was linked to their marketed brand.[55] Wearing their chosen t-shirts, surfers showcased their loyalty to their favourite surf shop and provided mass advertisement through fashion consumption.

By 1958, Hobie still knew he had to work harder to overcome Velzy's kingpin competition. To earn a reputation as a good surfer, Hobie travelled to Hawai'i. He competed in several surf competitions across Hawai'i, where he was awarded third place in the Makaha International Surf Competition of 1958. Competing against hundreds of professional surfers, coming third was no small victory for the young shaper. To combat the rise in demand after successful marketing, Hobie also hired talented local surfers as employees, choosing Reynolds "Rennie" Yater, an expert in glassing and glue-ups; and Charlie Kuhn, a firefighter from Laguna Beach. When woodworker Don Walton joined Hobie Surfboards, he recalled, 'Hobie was good at finding people that had skills in a particular area and they'd help him, give him ideas and he'd put them all together. He had a good name […] he was a really lovely person.'[56] Hobie selected skilled employees who worked part-time, allowing them to engage in multiple jobs through a flexible and personal arrangement.

Despite employing skilled employees, Hobie still needed to resolve the issue of limited balsa wood being supplied across California. As Holmes adds, it was 'back-breaking work to get balsa trees out of the jungle […] chop them down with an axe, haul them to the nearest river by ox team, tie them together into rafts' to the saw mill, and finally ship the wood to the US.[57] In 1958, balsa wood was at its highest demand, and General Veneer's supply was being hotly grabbed and taken by other shapers. The laborious task to chop down and axe balsa forests in international jungles, to import to the US, led to wood from suppliers being difficult to obtain and increasingly unsustainable. Hobie decided that to succeed, he needed a more sustainable and efficient surfboard material, which would revolutionize the surfboard industry: polyurethane.

[55] Hunter H. Fine, *Surfing, Street Skateboarding, Performance, and Space.*
[56] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves*, p.61.
[57] Ibid., p.33.

The Future is Foam

Holmes refers to the shift to polyurethane as 'something extraordinary,' as it was by chance that this material was noticed on one Friday evening at the shop.[58] An employee for Reichold Chemicals arrived at the shop with a delivery of resin, when he showed Hobie a chunk of foam that had been broken off an item. It immediately grasped the shaper's attention, as he deciphered this airy and cake-like material. The man explained to Hobie that this material was not like polystyrene, as it did not absorb water and allowed resin to bond with it. Gaining access to the compounds of these two chemicals, Hobie experimented with this chemical combination in paper Dixie cups to produce a matching texture.[59] His determination succeeded, as he became the first Orange County shaper to design a successful surfboard out of polyurethane. His plan was to create two halves of polyurethane blanks that would join together, rather than one whole blank. The halves would be glued to a strong balsa stringer in the centre, to distribute and hold the surfer's weight. From his shop on the Pacific Coast Highway, the Southern Californian foam surfboard industry began.

Assisting this chemical experiment with Hobie was Gordon "Grubby" Clark, a reclusive surfer from Orange County. With a degree in maths and physics, Clark worked for Hobie Surfboards as a laminator. With his scientific brain, Clark offered to take up the foam business, whilst Hobie continued as a salesman and businessman. From his earliest investigations, Clark immediately warned Hobie that 'you shouldn't be doing it out in front […] you shouldn't be giving it away like that.'[60] Surrounded by competition from other shops, Hobie agreed that it was necessary to own a factory. A radical notion occurred, that the surf shop no longer needed to double as a workshop, but could simply act as a commercial display of products. In the inland landscape of Laguna Canyon, the factory was developed, with Hobie and Clark arriving at 3am to practice their foam production before the heat of the day began. The outside of the workshop was barren, except for an encasing metal chained fence and some weeds growing between the stones of the car park. There was no sign, except for "727," to show its lot number. Inside, the workshop was stripped, except for paper buckets to hold the mixture, the large foam moulds and electric bulbs for better lighting.[61] It was soon realized that an extractor fan was necessary, with the chemical fumes causing a

[58] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.34.
[59] Ibid., p.35.
[60] Ibid., p.38.
[61] Ibid., p.40.

series of ill-effects that would 'knock you out.'[62] In around 5 months, their attempts at creating a foam-based surfboard paid off. In the summer of 1958, they had the perfect surfboard, only 20 pounds in weight, and structurally sound for water. Back at the highway shop, the space transformed into a foam surfboard showroom, with brightly coloured surfboards lining up on stands.

In an interview with *Surfing* magazine in 1972, Clark explained the foaming procedure in detail. To produce the right texture, it relied on a chemical reaction, poured in a bucket under a mixer. This liquid was then tipped into a mould, where it foamed for half an hour. Clark described this process, 'Oh it's a messy job […] besides a great deal of equipment, there's a tremendous amount of knowledge necessary, and a lot of trial and error. It takes a long time to develop.'[63] With this new material, and the purchasing of moulds for the foam, it enabled the industry to attain mass production, creating surfboards at a significantly faster rate. Furthermore, with the material being mostly air, this lighter surfboard allowed more people to try the sport, without the additional weight of the surfboard, and without the higher costs. Reflecting on the impact of this, Clark stated, it was 'a total upheaval' and 'it would eliminate the smaller surfboard manufacturers.'[64] Three years later, Clark would leave his job at Hobie Surfboards to begin his own specialist business, transferring his knowledge in order to provide 90% of the United States' surfboard foam blanks in this new decade.[65]

Unbeknownst to Hobie and Clark, near Los Angeles, Malibu surfer Dave Sweet had also been experimenting with foam for several years prior. Beginning his experiments in 1945, Sweet explains, 'I built a Styrofoam board. Extruded Styrofoam' which 'was a dense material' from Dow Chemical in Michigan.[66] Continuing with his experiments for another decade, Sweet tested multiple materials imported from East Coast chemical companies, using 'miniature fibreglass clamshell molds [*sic*]' in his basement.[67] Differing from Hobie, Sweet decided to create full-sized and whole moulds, rather than half-moulds. Going into partnership with Techniform, and purchasing a large mould for $12,000, 'we kept pouring, pouring and pouring.'[68] Without success, in 1954, Techniform finished their partnership, giving the mould to Sweet to keep. Two years later, Sweet had created a successful polyurethane surfboard.

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[62] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.40.
[63] Gordon Clark, 'Foaming: An Interview with Gordon Clark,' *Surfing,* April 1972.
[64] Ibid.
[65] William Finnegan, 'Blank Monday,' *The New Yorker,* 21 August 2006, p.36.
[66] Dave Sweet, 'The Foam Man: Dave Sweet's Story.'
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

However, unlike Hobie and Clark, he did not have a shop. Instead, similar to Velzy, his surfboards were sold on the beach, using a tripod on the sand with a sample foam surfboard to get the word out. Illustrating the value of a commercial space, Hobie and Clark – with their shop in Dana Point – began the foam industry with already strong networks across the community, allowing their already thriving business enterprise to become the leaders of the foam industry.

During this time of experimentation, Velzy frequented Hobie Surfboards, unaware of the polyurethane being produced in a nearby factory. However, Velzy was aware of the foam surfboard movement. As Sweet admits in an interview with *Surfer Journal,* in 1957 'Dale, he's a great salesman, had people thinking foam boards are nothing. "They're terrible," he'd say.'[69] Velzy believed that foam surfboards would not succeed in the industry, compared to the sales of traditional balsa surfboards.

Hobie remarked that Velzy commonly entered his store, taunting him about the limited balsa wood supply in San Onofre. Velzy would comment, 'it's hard to keep up with all the glue-ups I need, and I just bought a shitload of balsa.'[70] These taunts fell flat on Hobie's ears, as his business was far from needing balsa wood. Instead, Hobie offered Velzy his glue-press and impact wrenches, no longer needed for his foam surfboards, selling it to his competitor for $750.[71] To Velzy, this seemed like the demise of Hobie Surfboards, as Hobie was losing his once most valuable piece of equipment. To Hobie, he knew that the glue-press would be deemed an old and unprofitable piece of equipment in the upcoming decade. Two years later, this glue-press would see its last production, as the IRS removed all of Velzy's shop equipment, tools and surfboards to go to auction for tax payments. The kingpin of the surfboard industry was no longer a business owner, and all of his shop doors were locked with chains. With Hobie's business following legal practices and achieving steady profits from the foam boom, there was little break in the supply chain with the loss of Velzy's shop. Local surfers turned fully to Hobie Surfboards and other new shops along the highway, that adopted more conventional business practices than the irresponsible founding father.

Despite their differing views on the industry, reflecting back on his predecessor and competitor, Hobie reminisces that Velzy was 'so friendly, but such a pain in the ass.'[72] For

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[69] Dave Sweet, 'The Foam Man: Dave Sweet's Story.'
[70] Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.43.
[71] Ibid., p.43.
[72] Hobie Alter, 'Hobie Alter Interview,' *SURFER* [online], ed. by Matt Warshaw, 1 April 2014 <https://www.surfer.com/blogs/eos/interview-hobie-Hobie/> [accessed February 2023].

Hobie, it was not only about the quality of the surfboards that allowed a business to thrive, but the business practices that led to commercial success. Hobie disliked how the shaper would be 'giving boards away, he's got his workers living in the shop, selling boards out of the back door,' allowing the reckless and conning salesman to become a champion of a quick sale.[73] The business was a game for Velzy; however, it was an unsustainable game that was unregulated without proper legal practices and methods. Regardless of Hobie entering this game, Velzy remained unbothered by his younger businessman competitor and failed to notice the value of foam surfboards. Instead, upon seeing the owner in Dana Point, Velzy would 'slap you on the back and [state] "Ah, you got me!"' if Hobie successfully began to rival his sales.[74] The relaxed interactions between the two surf shop owners did not last long, with the removal of Velzy from the industry by the taxman.

Was Velzy's loss a shock to other shapers along the Californian coast? Undoubtedly no, as Hobie concludes; he corrects this assumption with 'oh God no, not at all. We couldn't believe he lasted as long as he did.'[75] With his business in Dana Point, Hobie became the leading surf industry of Orange County, leading the industry with foam surfboards.

The product changes to Hobie Surfboards nonetheless polarized some loyal clientele due to the new foam focus and more novice surfboard designs. These surfboards especially appealed to beginner surfers, tourists, and youths. The novice nature of these surfboards also led to concerns about Hobie's commitment to competition surfboards. The Pig surfboards offered tricks and skills on bigger waves, such as the "hang ten," as it was not as buoyant. However, with Hobie's earnest reputation, the majority of his loyal customers, such as Van Artsdalen, continued to support the local surfboard provider, especially those that were more open-minded. Certainly, the foam surfboard had some advantages, as it was easier to ride and turn. Concerned by some customer criticism meanwhile, Hobie decided there was only one way to remind his customers that he was loyal to the grassroot nature of surfing. He hired Joe Quigg, the famous Malibu shaper that had a significant hold over surfers' hearts and minds since his early "Malibu Chip" design. The Chip was one of the earliest surfboards that both Velzy and Hobie had copied to begin their shaping journeys. Quigg was unashamed to work on this novice surfboard. Interrupting *Longboard* magazine's interviewer, Gary Lynch, in 1990, Quigg defended his decision, stating, 'hold on just a second […] you kind of pooh-poohed

[73] Hobie Alter, 'Hobie Alter Interview.'
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

Hobie for making all of those chunky-looking surfboards. But, hey, the beginners at Doheny loved them. They wanted a board they could learn up. So I'm with Hobie there.'[76] With Doheny Beach beside Killer Dana, with slow and long waves, it was the perfect spot for beginners to learn to surf. The foam surfboards became the easiest tool to learn on. These surfboards were also colourful, with the speckled "Easter Egg" pattern of colourful swirls catching the attention of surfers. Foam surfboards were also shipped to Waikīkī and were colour-coded pink, symbolising rental boards, as their buoyant nature suited beginner surfers in the big waves. As predicted earlier by his business mentor, Chapman, in his college business plan, Hobie had finally discovered his 'speciality item.'[77]

By the end of the decade, Hobie had redefined the purpose, design and marketing of the modern surf shop. Unlike Velzy, Hobie Surfboards had survived its first decade, with strong financial and cultural success. As the *Los Angeles Times* concludes, 'Hobie Alter had a clear vision of his future […] he succeeded.'[78] In May 1962, Hobie relocated his factory closer to his shop, at Doheny Beach, adding temperature controls to help the moulding process. This daring leap to polyurethane and mass production factories had been fruitful, as Hobie expanded his shops around Southern California and Hawai'i, without needing new workshop spaces. He left these businesses under the leadership of mostly Laguna Beach friends, including Metz.

In 1962, Metz was tasked with managing a new Hobie Surfboards, located at 1475 Kapiolani Boulevard, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Inside the shop, Hobie had left Metz with a countertop and an outdoor sign, promising to send surfboards from the mainland. A few days later, 'eighteen new surfboards arrived by air freight with labels as to the shaper, size, and a price.'[79] As he placed them outside, local Hawaiians were 'stuffing $80 or $90 in my pockets and walking off with the boards. In an hour they were all gone.'[80] In his work on surf retail, Joe Dunn comments, 'it wasn't long before Hobie['s] boards dominated the Hawaiian market.'[81] Hobie Surfboards succeeded in its location, despite opposing the traditional Hawaiian practices of hand-carving surfboards with natural tools and materials. As Scott Laderman summarizes, some Hawaiians continued their traditional and "purist" stance, disagreeing with the mass-

[76] Joe Quigg, 'In Trim: Joe Quigg,' *Longboard,* 1994.
[77] Paul Holmes, *Hobie: Master of Water, Wind, and Waves,* p.16.
[78] Mike Anton, 'Hobie Alter Dies at 80; Shaped Southern California Surf Culture.'
[79] Joe Dunn, *Lifestyle Retail: The Hobie Surf Shop Story,* p.27.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., p.28.

production of surfboards and the petrochemical materials in them; whilst others invested in these surfboards to increase one's performance and professionalization in competitions.[82] Thus, in 1962, the surf shop blueprint had been exported to global lands, allowing the market to expand beyond the boundaries of Southern California.

Hobie had successfully put Orange County and Southern California on the global surf map. As Lueras concludes, there was now an 'aloof cult' of surfers producing their own 'sense of surfer style.'[83] By 1960, Hobie and the "Dana Point Mafia" were leading the surf movement. The reason for Hobie's successful transition of the surf shop into a modern industry, however, should not be isolated from other factors that were redefining California. The *Los Angeles Times* emphasizes this point, stating 'Hobie's timing couldn't have been better,' with the nation being introduced to the 'fun-loving California subculture' through the art of films at the start of the 1960s. Lueras explains that once Hollywood found out about its surfing communities, 'this once semi-exclusive cult was jettisoned into a state of mass consciousness,' in what would be both a bane and blessing for surfers.[84] This new decade brought a new clientele of novices to the surf shop, with Hobie as its leading figure in Southern California. The novice surfboard, by chance, was produced merely months before Hollywood grasped at the sport for its own use. Coinciding with each other, Hobie's success in selling novice surfboards was part of a wider Californian story, as youths volunteered to try this romantic and novel summer activity, as propagated by a surge in popular culture. As a result of this influx in popularity, with Hollywood paving the way for customers, Orange County saw its 50 surf shops in 1963 reach 75 by 1967.[85] Once again, the surf shop had to adapt to cater for this new movement of affluent teenagers. A decision was to be made by surf shops, attract this new crowd, or stay loyal as a clubhouse to its original customers. The 1960s became a polarizing decade for the industry.

[82] Scott Laderman, *Empire in Waves* (University of California Press, 2014), p.146-147.
[83] Leonard Lueras, *Surfing: The Ultimate Pleasure,* p.130.
[84] Ibid., p.119.
[85] Matt Warshaw, *The History of Surfing* (Chronicle Books, 2011), p.216.

6. "The Surf Boom's Last and Best Manifestation:" How Surf Films Nurtured, Destroyed and Rebuilt Surf Spaces

The rise of the foam surfboard, and its ability to offer the thrill of surfing to people of all skill levels, transformed surfing from a male-dominated sport of machoism, into an activity for all to engage with. Unlike the delicate and time-consuming manufacturing of customized balsawood surfboards, there was less of a commitment and cost if learning wave-riding on a factory prototype. This offered surfing as a seasonal hobby for affluent inlanders and tourists to dabble with in the late 1950s. Through this novel opportunity for people to trial seasonal surfing, Hollywood turned its attention to transforming this quiet fledgling sport into a magnet that attracted tourists to California's beaches. With the majority of Americans knowing little about a surf culture developing on its coasts, Hollywood saw an opportunity to create a fun and youthful Californian beach story for the silver screen. The soft golden hues of the shoreline offered the perfect backdrop for an escapist and romantic experience for its viewers. In tandem with Hobie Surfboards' inclusive experimentation on polyurethane surfboards, cinematographers utilized this growth in surfers to script California as the home of beachside tourism.

With the distinct visual beauty of surfing, it is unsurprising that the sport was tapped into as an enticing new filmic artform by Hollywood, as 'the embryonic surf scene of the late-50s was ripe raw material,' according to Paul Holmes.[1] Surfing offered to fulfil the public's growing curiosity about the world; it was a distinct spectacle of the exotic – despite being performed by Americans on their own coastline. This combination of being delightfully "exotic," with a reflection of national "self," enabled surf films to have a distinct escapist but character-defining quality, which all Americans could imagine being a part of. The golden decade of surf films began in 1958, and it permanently transformed spaces of surf through a series of monumental cultural changes.

When analyzing the overall effect of surf films on the beachscapes of California, the general consensus given by historians is that the cultural impact should be firmly divided into two categories. David Rensin offers a clear differentiation, critically labelling one category as the 'Hollywood bastardisation of surfing;' and the other, a grassroot 'counterprogramming' of homemade surf films to act as a cultural buffer to limit the impact of the former.[2] Matt

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[1] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.154.
[2] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), p.154.

Warshaw calls the filmic age of 'counterprogramming' as 'the surf boom's last and best manifestation.'[3] The grassroot surf documentaries of the 1950s and 1960s, produced *by* surfers *for* surfers, preserved some of the earliest footage of the male-dominated, working-class surf counterculture. These documentary films offered a candid glimpse into the everyday lives of bare-footed surfers. Such homemade footage featured local Californian surfers and has remained a nostalgic product of this era. It has left an unprecedented legacy on the surfer identity to this day. Meanwhile, during the same timeframe, Hollywood remodelled the image of surfing for a more profitable storyline, offering female surf protagonists and glossy suburban scenes, to engender a more romantic and middle-class image of the sport. Both visual art types have contributed to the public's understanding of the surfer, with both claiming that their protagonists' traits are an "authentic" glimpse into the wave-riding world.

Thus, during the golden age of filmography, between 1958 and 1966, both the homemade documentary and Hollywood star-studded film competed in a tug-of-war to formally paint the public's perception of surfing, as the directors negotiated how best to capture and translate California's new phenomenon of wave-riding. This chapter offers a comparative study of the overlapping categories, and their resulting cultural legacy. Whilst the films popularized the sport, as a result of both types of films' publicization of California's beaches, surf communities ultimately lost their ability to control the spaces they had designed and nurtured for a decade, including the surf shop. The filmic evolution and competition of the early 1960s also served as a pivotal time for surfers and surf shop owners to try and answer two questions: who should the target consumer be? Should surf shops join in with the promotion of California's tourism, or remain loyal as spaces for local surfers only?

Homemade Surf Documentaries

The first surf films began almost 60 years prior to Hollywood's first take on the visually spectacular sport. As early as 1906, Waikīkī's beachboys were captured riding their long surfboards and outriggers on knee-high waves through moving silent images by the Thomas Edison Company. These snippets of film awakened the viewer to such an activity, on the dawn of a tourism resurgence across Hawai'i. Despite the footage being grainy and in

[3] Warshaw, 'Rough Cut: Surfing on Film,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://eos.surf/2022/10/24/rough-cut-surfing-on-film-by-matt-warshaw-1998/> [accessed June 2023].

greyscale, it captivated international creators; with the Pathé brothers recording a 111-minute film 5 years later, titled *Surfing, Le Sport National del Illes Hawaii* (1911). These features reflected little more than travelogues, as John Engle dissects.[4] He furthers, this footage followed on from a popular 19th century subgenre of seascape paintings, with the strokes of paint trying to perfect the crashing nature of water.[5] Thus, the wild nature of the ocean had already captivated the human mind for decades. In a similar fashion to paintings, filmmakers decided a documentary-style approach was best fitting for surf footage, as audiences were simply satisfied in observing the exotic action of the crashing waves and 'scantily dressed humans.'[6] Without a need for commentary and storylines, the visual art was the only necessary requirement, as the audience wanted to know 'virtually nothing of the subject.'[7] The ocean was its own artform, and the act of riding waves silently was enough entertainment in itself. The exotic act positioned itself in a faraway land of Hawaiian culture.

Further documenting of surfing occurred after the Second World War, as American surf films became an experiment by the average surfer, as they preserved their hobby through homemade footage. Surfers began experimenting with their own cameras along the coasts of Southern California, as an artistic tool to capture their favourite activity. These films reflected how they interpreted and saw their lifestyle. As Crissy Van Meter describes, surfing has always been instinctively a spectator sport, based on visual perception, as it is 'hard to look away when a human is gliding down the face of a massive wave.'[8] With its profound power to make an individual stop and stare, surfers wanted to capture the magic they created, and the process also allowed them to be a spectator of their own rides.

Unscripted documentary-style short films began to grow in popularity in the early 1950s, and they now have a substantial amount of archival value. Period footage offers an authentic glimpse into the lifestyle of budding surf communities in the post-war era, capturing memories to privately keep. Engle refers to this shift as a transition away from being a film for the curious general public, to a communal project that shared the beloved feelings amongst fellow surfers.[9] After filming on the shorelines, the snippets of footage were then crudely edited together in the producer's home, materializing a visual archive of surfing and

[4] John Engle, *Surfing in the Movies* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2015), p.26.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Crissy Van Meter, 'The Brief History of Surf Film,' *The Inertia* [online] <https://www.theinertia.com/surf/a-brief-history-of-the-surf-film/> [accessed July 2023].
[9] John Engle, *Surfing in the Movies,* p.26.

local beachscapes. These films offer a raw glimpse into the contemporary surf colonies, with the purpose to be shown to family, local surfers and friends around a small screen when the surf was going through seasonal flat spells. With this era seeing rapid technological advancements, these films soon transitioned onto 16mm film, offering beachscapes in shimmering golden and blue tones.

These homemade films were propelled further through the creative mind of San Clemente teenager Bruce Brown. Brown popularized the transition from filmed surf to surf film. In 1958, his self-filmed and self-edited series of full-length surf films began a sudden chain reaction that spread across the filmic sphere like wildfire, illustrating the potential of surfing as a new cinematic artform. His impact on the community was unbeknownst to Brown at the time; as Rensin acknowledges, it was impossible for these creative 'boys of summer' to sense the 'enormous cultural sea change rolling in.'[10]

Filmed along the barren highways and blue waters of Southern California and Hawai'i during the summer of 1958, *Slippery When Wet* (1958)*,* was one of the first surf films to successfully circulate around Southern California's halls and school auditoriums with great vigour and excitement. This was Brown's debut film, and it was already displaying elements of unique nuances. His documentary-style film showed a talent for recording candid human behaviour through his customized lenses, guiding a new genre of surf film features that spanned across the next decade. His surf films featured the same common attributes of other homemade videos; the footage was filmed solely by Brown and edited in his garage at home, featuring local surfers, with soothing tones of jazz music in the background of the clips.

A significant distinction of Brown's surf films, however, was that he used his voice as a single narrator, speaking to the audiences live through a microphone, describing with dry humour the scenes in the background. By adding his own narration, comedy and dialogue became threaded into a storyline. This addition was met with such success that it was later decided for his words to be formally recorded onto the footage, as there was something comforting and familiar about 'the wry and ribald remarks a man makes when he is showing his home movies.'[11] With a scripted narration, Brown's films suggested that the visually mesmerizing surf documentaries could also feature a storyline, through comedic sketches and main characters. As Richard Sandomir comments, these films provided an antidote to

[10] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves*, p.97.
[11] Charles Champlin, 'Surf Film-maker Rides Popularity Crest,' *Los Angeles Times,* 5 June 1966, p.N4.

negativity surrounding the surf counterculture, designed to 'change the way surfers had been depicted in popular culture.'[12] The films refuted the ideology of surfers being merely lazy Beach Bums. The raw footage of local surfers hotdogging along the waves of dazzling American landscapes, became a beloved cult-like genre of entertainment for Southern Californians, who relished in this representation of self. As they watched their friends and family showcase their skills on the screen, locals hoped to catch a glimpse of themselves in the background so that they could be preserved in history.

A mixture of artistic skill, luck, and local networks helped the Southern Californian teenage surfer create this new art form. Since his childhood, Brown had been fascinated with capturing surfing, a hobby he also partook in. Brown graduated from Wilson High School in 1955, despite his little attendance, and enlisted in the US Navy under the submarine academy. The teenager had been surfing since he was 11-years-old, and he found a mentor during his deployment in Hawai'i, Angel Jose. Jose, another San Franciscan surfer, showcased machismo on the North Shore's biggest breaks, riding the waves that other surfers would avoid. As Jason Borte records, Jose was a waterman 'not for money, fame or glory, but for the thrill.'[13] He relished the "wipe-out." Captivated by his extreme rides on some of the most dangerous waters, and the adrenaline gained by watching such daring acts, Brown filmed Jose's exploits on his inexpensive 8mm film, adding the soundtrack from the film noir, *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), in the background.

In 1957, a year before releasing his debut film, Brown was discharged from the Navy, and he headed back to the mainland with this footage of Jose. As Charles Champlin summarizes, this is where his career 'started inadvertently' and 'Bruce probably qualifies as a rags to […] riches story.'[14]

When he was not working as a lifeguard on San Clemente's shores during the summer of 1957, the teenager worked part-time as a 'glorified janitor' at Dale Velzy's nearby surf shop, sweeping up wood chips from the floors at night.[15] He had met Velzy in the early-1950s, when he bought a custom surfboard at Velzy's Manhattan Beach workshop. Soon after his

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[12] Richard Sandomir, 'Bruce Brown, 80, Dies: His 'Endless Summer' Documented Surfing,' *New York Times,* 12 December 2017.
[13] Jason Borte, 'Jose Angel,' *Surfline* [online], 5 October 2000 <https://www.surfline.com/surf-news/jose-angel/90057> [accessed June 2023].
[14] Charles Champlin, 'Surf Film-maker Rides Popularity Crest.'
[15] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Visions of Paradise: Images of Eden in the Cinema* (Rutgers University Press, 2006), p.58.

return to California, Brown was invited to be an employee at Velzy's new workshop. Together, they shared tales of each other's Hawaiian escapades and the waves that they witnessed. One evening, Brown informed his boss of his surf films capturing Jose. To make additional money for his shop, Velzy utilized his salesman personality to pioneer a movie theatre experience within his shop, through Brown's Hawaiian footage. It was soon realized, as Holmes describes, that showing a surf film in the shop allowed surfers to clan together to hoot, holler, catcall and groan, in unison.[16] It encouraged a communal spirit over a shared love of surfing. As Brown recalled, during the summer 'while I swept up, Dale would show an 8mm surf film I'd made while stationed on a submarine in Hawaii. He charged 25 cents, and on a big night we'd rake in as much as six dollars.'[17] Watching a film with other surfers allowed a surfer to 'assert one's status in the tribe.'[18] With this quick success, Velzy turned to Brown and said, "Well, how about going back to Hawaii and making a real film, in 16mm?"[19] Therefore, the surf shop and surf film worked in tandem, through an intertwined partnership, to prosper.

Velzy offered $5,000 to Brown to design a full-length 16mm surf film that focused on 'bigger and better things.'[20] Together, Velzy and Brown went to a camera shop in Long Beach, and found a new Bolex reflex camera. This easier-to-handle camera allowed Brown to look directly through the telephoto lens, rather than a view finder. The surfboard shaper turned to the teenager, with a roll of cash in his hand, and purchased the camera and its accessories. The film deal was now official. However, this was not an act of paternal altruism or a love for the arts. For Velzy, by investing heavily in Brown's project, he understood the promotional value of film. The filmic platform offered widespread advertisement across the community for his shop, as he could showcase his recently acquired San Clemente shop and his latest surfboard models gracefully riding down some radical waves. To prove the stability and versatility of Velzy's "Pig" surfboards, the film would showcase average Californian surfers riding the Island's most giant and mythical waves. The film's locations offered an exotic adventure to its viewers that would mesmerize both locals and non-locals alike, in a similar manner as Jose's daring rides. If one wanted their own adventure in Hawai'i, a trip to grab some surfboards first at Velzy's shop would pop subconsciously into their mind.

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[16] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.151.
[17] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Visions of Paradise: Images of Eden in the Cinema,* p.58.
[18] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.151.
[19] Ibid., p.152.
[20] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Visions of Paradise: Images of Eden in the Cinema,* p.59.

Through this generous budget, Brown could also afford airfares from California to Hawai'i for a handful of Californian surfers, with the condition that all of those featured were financially stable enough to pay for their own amusements around the islands. Only one of these surfers was old enough to have an ID, illustrating the youthfulness of those working on this project. By hiring local teenagers, their carefree attitudes and willingness to be part of a 16mm film, allowed Velzy to be faced with few financial demands. The youths were simply excited to be filmed surfing in Hawai'i.

During the 12-hour flight to Hawai'i, Brown prepared for his big film debut by reading, *How to Make a Movie,* learning how to edit the raw footage from his new camera and how to direct an enticing storyline.[21] He also decided it was necessary to have a customized soundtrack made specifically for his film. Brown hired the talented jazzman Bud Shank for the soundtrack, costing Velzy $200. The soundtrack was recorded in the offices of Pacific Jazz, with the film showing on the wall as Shank's quartet played at the same time. Mixing flute, saxophone, bass, drums and guitar, these easy-listening tones followed the visual movements of the storyline, as the men tackled the trials and tribulations of getting every product they needed along California's highway for their surf trip. From buying new surfboards, to befriending local surfers, to fixing broken-down transport, the surfers showed their wit and determination as they fought to succeed in finding the most secret and exotic surf spots of distant Hawai'i.

One of the songs on the film's soundtrack was titled "Up in Velseyland," which is an ode to Velzy.[22] The track's title paid homage to a new surf spot, dedicated to Velzy, which was discovered by the documentary's stars during filming. Whilst travelling in Hawai'i, Brown and the other surfers discovered a secluded reef break, which had yet to be named. With the North Shore being relatively new to surfers, with hidden vacant lots, this quiet spot was collectively decided to be labelled "Velzyland," which it has been called ever since. With this naming, Californian surfers had colonized a valuable surf break in Hawai'i, importing the commercial surf sphere and mainland imagery onto the Islands' shores.

When *Slippery When Wet* was released in 1958, it was no coincidence that Velzy was the first surfer to feature in the film, as he was the main financial contributor. It was a chance for him to advertise his shop as the main provider and instigator for the protagonist's upcoming

[21] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Visions of Paradise,* p.59.
[22] Bud Shank, *Slippery When Wet,* prod. by Richard Bock (World Pacific, 1959) [Audio].

adventure, in the first few seconds of this feature-length film. As Matt Warshaw adds, Velzy made sense to star in the film as the camera naturally loved him, as he oozed a distinctly genuine and roguish spirit. Velzy had 'his crooked smile and Boozefighter haircut and a merchant marine tattoo on his bicep,' which made him a local 'loveable hustler.'[23] For Californian surfers, Velzy – the veteran kingpin of the surfboard industry – was a beloved, familiar face that enticed viewers to watch the film. Although Velzy starred in several of the early scenes in the film, Brown emphasized that the surfboard shaper repeatedly said, 'It's your deal kid, just do it.'[24] Thus, he still remained at the sideline of the project, simply using his charm and products in the film as a promotional tool for business.

The other key actor for the film was Del Cannon, a surfer who was a different style of handsome, as he was an athletic-built man much quieter in nature, with an ability to act a story with the minutest of expressions. Compared to Velzy, he was the boy-next-door, and continued to star in Brown's films when Velzy disappeared after the IRS removed his businesses. As Brown reflects, although Velzy brought fame to the film, Del was a 'San Diego guy, a good surfer, and a great swimmer […] he'd do anything you asked.'[25] It was this combination of a well-known name and an "average" surfer, that made *Slippery When Wet* an early exciting feature for local surfers. With the film being shown around Southern Californian auditoriums and halls, the great profits and public demand enabled a chain of surf films to be produced by Brown, continuing his path towards filmography fame. Further, with the audience being local, it promoted Velzy's shop as the place to go in Orange County.

The film itself served as an authentic display of period surf culture, beginning with Velzy's San Clemente store, and placing the consumer culture of surfing centre stage. Accompanied by a jazz flute song, the opening scene of *Slippery When Wet* begins with a focus on the exterior of Dale Velzy's surf shop in San Clemente. Driving his red truck into the car park, Velzy arrives at his shop in the morning; the camera focuses on the side of the truck proudly displaying "Surf Boards by Velzy and Jacobs, San Clemente, Calif."[26] Velzy jumps out of his truck, shoeless, wearing a plain white t-shirt and brown boardshorts, as he unlocks the main door to his shop. The narration, added by Bruce Brown during the editing stages, comments,

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[23] Matt Warshaw, 'Del Cannon: Surfing is Easy, Comedy is Hard,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://eos.surf/2021/11/30/del-cannon-surfer-friend-and-muse/> [accessed June 2023].
[24] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.154.
[25] Ibid.
[26] *Slippery When Wet,* dir. by Bruce Brown (Bruce Brown Films, 1958) [Moving Picture].

‘Dale went through the tedious morning ritual of opening his shop for business.’[27] This “tedious ritual” was Velzy turning his sign to “Open” in his small rectangular window by the door, before standing outside again. This interaction illustrated to the audience Brown’s sarcastic and wry nature. Outside of the shop, the mailman arrives to put an envelope in the shop’s mailbox, panning the camera along the Pacific Coast Highway, where the shop is situated. Velzy opens the envelope to find a series of photographs from Hawai’i, sent by a friend. Whilst he stands by the mailbox, Cannon drives up to him in his estate wagon that is falling to pieces. Wearing a Hawaiian shirt, the barefoot Cannon joins Velzy on the pavement, and comes up with the idea of going to Hawai’i. To do so, he has to find some friends to travel with. Cannon searches along the barren highway to find lost surfers. He comes across a broken-down car and two surfers, Henry Ford and Freddie Pfahler, looking for help. With this introduction, the film has prepared the plot for the audience; it is a tale about a group of nomadic surfers travelling to the Islands to surf.

Velzy’s surf shop appears again in the next scene. Needing surfboards, Cannon, Ford and Pfahler, return to Velzy’s shop. This time, the camera is facing out away from the shop, focusing on the car park and the empty green hills of San Clemente’s highway. The surfers arrive just as Velzy loads a finished balsa surfboard onto the back of his truck. In the car park, Velzy is working alongside his employee, Kemp Aaberg, who is sanding a new surfboard. Aaberg is covered in sawdust and is wearing white overalls and a face mask. Cannon pats Aaberg on the shoulder to greet him, comically releasing a puff of white dust into the air, as the surfer frantically tries to brush it off his hands. Within moments, Aaberg decides to join Cannon on his trip to Hawai’i, ‘after he cleared the sawdust from his eyes.’[28] In the final part of this opening scene, the film shows a smiling Velzy miming, with the comically high-pitched voiceover of Brown, shouting “you can’t quit” to Aaberg. Aaberg ignores his command and leaves. The four surfers walk away from the shop, beginning their journey to Hawai’i, which fills the remaining scenes of *Slippery When Wet*. In this scene, the surf shop is displayed as a practical hub of activity and facilitator of adventures, enabling the surf trip to begin.

Brown spent a lot of his time and energy in guaranteeing his film got recognized, as he promoted it across California. It was a slow-building success. The director stated in 1966, ‘we were playing places like the Elk’s Club in Laguna, and running around tacking up

[27] *Slippery When Wet.*
[28] Ibid.

posters, which were made by hand in the garage.'[29] To draw in crowds, they placed posters up during the night, to avoid any police intervention. Bruce and his *Slippery When Wet* stars then decided to branch the film across bigger venues along the coast. In July 1959, the *Los Angeles Times* advertised the film's showing in Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, calling for people to attend this 'surf-riding picture.'[30] This modern concert venue was built in 1958, and could seat 3,000 people, making it the second biggest venue in Los Angeles area and a key location for Brown. Although the film was predominantly aimed at Southern Californians, the audience numbers were significant in this region. Although initially the total film audience size was 'not more than 10,000,' by annually playing the film, the 'attendance has roughly doubled every year since then,' noted Charles Champlin in 1966.[31]

With growing profits, Brown turned to create a series of surf films, producing them annually for Californian audiences. The surf shop remained an integral backdrop for storylines in his follow-up features. With the removal of Velzy by the IRS, Brown turned to other surf shops and factories, although often unidentified.

In *Barefoot Adventures* (1960), a film centred on following the bare feet of Del Cannon as he travelled around surfing hotspots, Brown showcased the contemporary growing desire for the new foam surfboard prototype being sold in Orange County's surf shops, such as Hobie Surfboards. In this film, Cannon starred once-again through a comedic sketch to show the behind-the-scenes crafting of a polyurethane surfboard in a Southern Californian factory, although it is a poor attempt at craftsmanship. He arrives at a locked white bricked factory, with the sign "Foam Surfboards" on the external wall. Climbing the wall and sneaking into the building, it reveals a simplistic and crude internal room, with bare bricks and a variety of tools on the ground. Mixing ingredients in a bucket and pouring the mixture into a surfboard mould, Cannon attempts to make his own foam surfboard. With Hobart "Hobie" Alter and Gordon "Grubby" Clark's industry of foam surfboards being a success in the late-1950s, this film depicts the contemporary booming market in surfboard designs. With an element of visual humour, Cannon struggles to create his own board, as the mould is overfilled, leaving the factory floor covered in bubbles of thick and gloopy foam. He throws away his jagged and bubbled surfboard into an outside dumpster, sighing and walking away from the factory. Through this scene, it illustrated to the audience the complexities and incredible skills needed

[29] Charles Champlin, 'Surf Film-maker Rides Popularity Crest,' p.N4.
[30] 'Surf-Riding Picture on Screen Tomorrow,' *Los Angeles Times,* 17th July 1959, p.C4.
[31] Charles Champlin, 'Surf Film-maker Rides Popularity Crest,' p.N4.

to produce the foam surfboard, one that was contemporarily ridiculed as an easy surfboard to make.

Through this film, the factory, and its processes of product manufacturing, is showcased, allowing these early spaces to be preserved visually. With each step shown, it illustrated that the production of polyurethane surfboards required a careful technique and skilled professional shaper. Further, the dedication by Cannon to create such a surfboard illustrated an appeal for the foam surfboard, as even famed surfers wanted to ride these prototypes. This film broadened the appeal for foam surfboards.

As Matt Warshaw explains, Brown was the leader of surf films in this era, as he was 'able to present surfing as it really is, to non-surfers.'[32] His films delved into the everyday spaces and processes that enabled the sport to thrive. It is necessary to note, although Brown's films attracted the most profits and fame across Orange County, he was not alone in this budding industry, with John Severson and Bud Browne also having names in the film industry. These independent veteran surfers were part of the surf film movement several years prior to *Slippery When Wet*. Creating his first film in 1953 at 41 years of age, Bud Browne produced more than 20 films, with significant local commercial success. Browne focused on more conventional documentary appeal with factual descriptions and comic sound effects; whilst, the teenager, Brown, showcased an element of wit that was hard to replicate. It was the visual lowbrow comedy with sarcastic narrations that captured the younger surfers' humour. Although a vision shared, Wheeler Winston Dixon states that the directors did not see their films as a competitive art, but merely a creative way to fund their surfing lifestyle.[33] Each embraced their own style, sharing their ideas to local audiences that sought more thrilling stories of self-representation. These films showcased a variety of spaces, technologies and characters that were authentically dedicated to the contemporary Californian surf scene. These films, primarily, were made for surfers. With little explanation needed about the sport, people and spaces appearing on-screen, it is evident that these films were made for those who already understood the surf culture of California.

[32] Richard Sandomir, 'Bruce Brown, 80, Documentation of Surfing,' *New York Times,* 13 December 2017, p.B12.
[33] Ibid.

Gidget (1959)

The surf film's identity changed in 1959, when another subgenre began to run in parallel, introducing a second category of surf films under the budget and directorship of Hollywood. Concomitantly to *Slippery When Wet*, Hollywood released its first surf feature, *Gidget* (1959). It's characters, storyline and aesthetic, greatly differed from the surf documentary style that had been flourishing independently under Brown, Browne and Severson.

No longer a surf film made for surfers, David Rensin describes that this was the start of a new genre of 'beach party exploitation flicks' which set off a 'youthquake.'[34] Hollywood displayed surfing as an inclusive summer vacation activity for fun-loving youths, which encouraged teenagers to flock to the ocean *en masse*. These beach flicks were screened across the US, a nation with a weekly movie theater attendance of 40 million in 1960.[35] This critical statement, however, surrenders the film to being merely a beach flick, which was not the case. *Gidget* was part of a growing contemporary Hollywood fascination with the turbulent social themes of youths, making it a film that focused on surfing as a part of teenagerhood, but not the whole of the youths' experience.

In the early 1950s, young people were staying longer in education, enrolling in college and further education, allowing an extended period of adult dependency. *Gidget* offered to show empathy towards suburban youths whilst they navigated authority in their home environments, as they attempted to gain social rights and independence. Surfing was simply the selected counterculture of the film's protagonist, acting as the backdrop for the rebellious journey in this coming-of-age tale. J. David Slocum refers to this new genre as the exploring of the 'marginal status of adolescents' in a new world of bourgeois suburban pressures.[36] Teenagers had grown more and more distant from suburban ideals, and having their own subgenre in the filmic sphere was deemed a necessary advancement. As Peter Lev observes, the teenage social problems of substance-abuse, peer pressure, and immoral behaviour, were deemed solvable through directors that validated these complex issues and offered guidance through a relatable teenage protagonist.[37]

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[34] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.9.
[35] Searle Kochberg, 'Cinema as Institution,' in *An Introduction to Film Studies,* third edition, ed. by Jill Nelmes (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp-3-51 (p.35).
[36] J. David Slocum, 'Rebel Without a Cause,' *Senses of Cinema* [online], June 2011 <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2011/cteq/rebel-without-a-cause/> [accessed July 2023].
[37] Peter Lev, *The Fifties: Transforming the Screen, 1950-1959* (University of California Press, 2003), p.246.

Shown through melodramatic scenes of teenage angst and forbidden romances, these cohering trends that reflected suburban realities were featured in several other Hollywood hits, including *The Wild One* (1953) and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). Through these films, directors purposefully chose a new style of camera-work, with restless movements to indicate a conscious decision to use technology as a way to propagate the psychological confusion of youths navigating the world. Popular stars, such as Marlon Brando and James Dean, demonstrated the new youth countercultural movements, such as hotrodders and motorbike gangs, for different generational audiences. This promoted societal awareness about youth pressures to parents and teenagers alike. Thus, it is unsurprising that the surf counterculture was soon selected as one of the marginalized youth movements to explore in film. After all, *Gidget* is a story about 'growing pains of young people who are neither criminal nor delinquent.'[38]

Why, however, was a female surfer chosen as the protagonist for the film? Not only did this stray from Hollywood's trends, but opposed the male-dominated sport and formula of successful surf documentaries too. By having a suburban, middle-class female as the protagonist, the storyline enabled many inland and non-surfer viewers to relate to her role and position in society. Then, by placing her into a male-dominated environment of advanced and rowdy surfers, which represented California's shores, it allowed a rebellious and romantic storyline to play out.

Gidget was based loosely on the real-life story of a young female surfer, Kathy Kohner. Since she was three-years old, Kohner regularly visited Malibu Colony, the beachside area for the affluent and wealthy suburbanites. On the journey there, her mother would drive two teenage surfers, Matt Kivlin and Buzzy Trent, to get to the surf, with their surfboards tied onto her Model T-Ford. Although Kohner had been part of Malibu's beachscape for most of her life, she had not ventured onto Surfrider Beach, a spot beside the pier where the top and most notorious surfers surfed. At 15 years of age, Kohner decided she finally wanted to learn to surf, in the summer of 1956. Recalling her first experiences of surfing in the isolated male-dominated surf community, she states in an interview for *Los Angeles Magazine,* 'I was pretty much the only girl out there, and the boys teased me a lot. I didn't have an easy time. But it was fun, too.'[39] Being 5ft tall, she soon earnt the throwaway nickname of "girl midget,"

[38] '"Gidget" Grooved for Youth Biz,' *The Hollywood Reporter,* 1 March 1959, p.3-6.
[39] Kathy Kohner, 'When Malibu Ruled,' *Los Angeles Magazine,* May 1994.

which was joined together to form "Gidget," by Malibu surfer Jerry Hurst. Thus, Gidget was born.

Living over 300 miles away from Malibu, Kohner's home was situated in the suburban region of Brentwood, near to San Francisco Bay. Here, she would make peanut butter sandwiches to trade at Surfrider Beach, for a chance to borrow another surfer's surfboard. Although her surfing journey began with heckling from male surfers, she soon navigated the male-dominant surf scene of Malibu and its male leaders, Terry "Tubesteak" Tracy and Miki Dora. Describing her experiences, Kohner states, 'the guys used to tease me. They'd buried my surfboard; they'd once disconnected my car's distributer […] I was just a pest that would bring him [Dora] sandwiches, or give him rides home.'[40] Eventually, bringing peanut butter sandwiches to the shoreline worked as an initiation. As Tubesteak comments, to be enrolled in this surf group, it was necessary for surfers to 'bring food with them and cold beer, and that was that.'[41] Thus, Kohner navigated her way into the Malibu crowd, eventually seeing her summer days filled with Malibu surfing, and playing Ping-Pong with Dora in her suburban house.[42]

In comparison to Kohner's upbringing, both Tubesteak and Dora had grown up in "broken homes" and had found solace in the isolated areas of Malibu's coastline from a young age. As Tubesteak describes, he was dropped like a 'bowling ball' and 'Dora and I were kindred spirits. We were both raised by our grandmothers. And by the ocean.'[43] A key mentor for Tubesteak during his youthhood was Velzy, as Tubesteak watched him carve surfboards in his shack on Manhattan Beach. Similar to Kohner, Tubesteak had learnt to surf at 15 years of age and was given a unique nickname, which derived from working in a restaurant called Tube's Steak and Lobster House. He had a notorious personality, leaving one surfer, Johnny Fain, with eighteen stitches. Fain remembers his relief in earning his acceptance to join the Malibu crowd, after taking 'licks [physical attacks] for about a year' from Tubesteak.[44] Alongside Tubesteak, there was Dora, with leadership split into two. In 'the water it was Dora. On the beach it was Tubesteak.'[45] Dora was a technically outstanding surfer, and Kohner could 'pick

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[40] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.95.
[41] Terry "Tubesteak" Tracy, 'Tubesteak: "We Weren't Divers or Fishermen. We Were Surfers!"' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], ed. by Ben Marcus and Matt Warshaw, 13th February 2017 <https://eos.surf/2017/02/13/tubesteak-we-werent-divers-or-fishermen-we-were-surfers/> [accessed on July 2023].
[42] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.95.
[43] Terry "Tubesteak" Tracy, 'Tubesteak: "We Weren't Divers or Fishermen. We Were Surfers!"'
[44] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.101.
[45] Terry "Tubesteak" Tracy, 'Tubesteak: "We Weren't Divers or Fishermen. We Were Surfers!"'

him out of any line. He had mannerisms […] Miki was the King.'[46] Dora's loner nature, however, made Tubesteak the leader of the sands, with his love of communal living amongst the regular Malibu surfers. Although not the best surfer, Tubesteak could be spotted through his typical pose of a "T" shape, as he rode the wave with his arms outstretched and chest puffed out. As Matt Warshaw describes, once accepted into the group, Tubesteak looked after the "little guy."[47] Thus, Malibu's surf community operated as an exclusive crowd, controlled by a hierarchy of notorious surfers.

Unlike the booming surf shop hubs of Southern California, Malibu's culture was designed around Tubesteak's self-built surf shack on the sands, mimicking Velzy's Manhattan Beach's former shack. This was Malibu's local cultural anchor. In 1956, the shack was the second of its kind to be built, constructed out of palm fronds and telephone poles, due to the first being destroyed by arson. It was built near an orchard of palm trees, and it was the place where all the longboards were stored in a large pile, for the group to use. Inside, the shack's floor had mattresses, sleeping bags and chairs – all mismatched and donated by those passing through. As Tubesteak describes with pride, outside there was a 'four-foot-high roll of barbed wire surrounding the structure to keep out the riff raff' with a 'sign that said, "Uptown Surf Club. Members Only."'[48] This structure prevented another arson attack.

Differing from Dana Point and the suburban Orange County surfers, Surfrider Beach continued to reflect the nomadic Manhattan Beach "Beach Bum" culture of the 1940s. Surrounded by a large mountainous topography, the beach's location isolated itself away from the suburbs and metropolitan locals. Thus, the surf culture was physically protected from modernity's post-war ideals. When asked to describe an average day in Malibu in 1956, Tubesteak recalls, 'Wake up in the shack early in the morning, look out and see the sun coming up over the mountains. I can hear one of those big, green horseflies. And the surf is perfect, of course.'[49] Drew Kampion summarizes that Malibu was 'a place to escape, as a place to manifest, as a place to express,' but 'then after three or four years some guy builds a shack and this girl shows up… and her dad writes about it.'[50]

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[46] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.95.
[47] Matt Warshaw, 'Was Surfing Funny Before Tubesteak," *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 13th March 2014 <https://eos.surf/2014/03/13/was-surfing-even-funny-before-tubesteak/> [accessed July 2023].
[48] Terry "Tubesteak" Tracy, 'Tubesteak: "We Weren't Divers or Fishermen. We Were Surfers!"'
[49] Ibid.
[50] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.95.

Kohner was the daughter of Jewish immigrants from Czechoslovakia. Working in the German film industry, her father was a well-known screenplay writer, but the censorship of his name and role from films in the 1930s, including the popular film *Viktoria* (1935), forced Frederick Kohner to flee the country. Feeling isolated due to the political nature within the industry, he relocated with his family to start a new life in the US. Within the war years, Frederick received an Academy Award nomination through his screen-writing with Hollywood. During his successes, in 1941, Kathy Kohner was born, and the family was raised in middle-class suburbia. During her trips to the beach, Kohner decided 'I wanted to be like them [surfers].'[51] Throughout the summer of 1956, Kohner achieved this goal, as she became a respected surfer of Malibu, owning her first surfboard on the 6th March 1957. Her story, unbeknownst to her and her Malibu friends, was about to become mass entertainment.

Seizing the opportunity when overhearing conversations between his daughter and her surfing friends on the telephone one day, Frederick began to write a novel based on the stories that he heard. Inspired by his daughter's Malibu adventures, he chose to write about her life through contemporary surf slang. This work gave the public a rare insight into the modern "Beach Bum" way of life, and with a teenage girl protagonist. The fictional book was titled, *Gidget: The Little Girl with Big Ideas* (1957), with Franziska Hofer being the character's name behind the nickname of Gidget. The aim of the author was to sound like an authentic teenage surfer of California, in a book that was dedicated to the summer escapades of his daughter, for her to look back on fondly. The contemporary youth captured in this novel is reflected when Gidget first introduces the dynamics of surf spots to the reader. She says, 'when you graduate from Malibu you move down to San Onofre or Tressle [*sic*] where the real big humps come blasting in… and once you've licked those there is only one step further to Makaha.'[52] Despite not being a surfer himself, the information in the book delivered an accurate portrayal of the surf location's difficulty, and illustrates a written description of what was common knowledge for local surf communities. Alongside Hofer, other characters were introduced, loosely based on Dora, Fain, Aaberg and Tubesteak. Surfrider Beach and its nomadic inhabitants became part of the best-selling novel, their identities blurred between fiction and reality.

Unlike other art movements of surfing, such as Brown's filmography, this book was not written by a surfer, nor did it focus on the male surf scene. *Gidget* told a distinct coming-of-

[51] Laurie Bongard, 'The Real Gidget,' *Random Lengths,* 29 September 2006, p.9-11.
[52] Frederick Kohner, *Gidget: The Little Girl with Big Ideas* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001), p.4.

age story about a middle-class, Jewish female surfer falling in love with rogue beach boys. She was a heroine of the waves. Reflecting on the social impact of this novel, with 500,000 copies sold, several female surfers claimed it was this novel that inspired them to surf.[53] For most surfers in the male-dominated sport, the book was ignored. As one Malibu regular stated, "If I had a couple of bucks to buy a book, I wouldn't. I'd buy some beer."[54] The publication of *Gidget,* for the most part, was ignored, dismissed and forgotten about by the Surfrider Beach locals.

It did appeal, however, to non-surfing teenagers. Although Kohner herself did not have romantic relations with the Malibu surfers, the book featured an enticing and exciting fictional romance between Gidget and a rugged Beach Bum character, Jeff "Moondoggie" Griffin. This summer romance subplot in the novel captured the hearts of publishers and allowed Frederick to write several sequels to the Gidget universe. *Gidget* quickly became the quintessential and beloved Californian story of teenage adventure and summer romance. It promoted a romanticized version of the surf culture on its shores, offering a positive lens to this lesser-known counterculture. Surfing during the summer vacation was portrayed as a golden dream for teenagers. In addition, Gidget's middle-class youthhood in the novel was seen as a relatable aspect for many suburban teenagers across the US, allowing Gidget's love story to be met with great interest and relatability. With Frederick's knowledge of the industry, Hollywood and the publication selection, his top-selling book turned into a screenplay two years later. By contrast, in 1958, Kohner herself had decided to quit surfing to go to college, leaving that part of her life for the world of fiction. No longer surfing was a choice made separate from the crowds brought from *Gidget* flooding the shores, she states, 'I was mostly done with that part of my life. It wasn't important to me the way it was to Tubesteak […] it didn't become my life.'[55]

Produced a year after Kohner left the surfing world behind her, the film *Gidget* (1959) was released, drifting further away from Kohner's reality. The film negotiated the identity of surfing through a new Hollywood lens. Greatly altered from the novel, the female protagonist received a new name of Frances Elizabeth Lawrence, erasing the Jewish identity that was integral to the Kohner family. Further, Gidget was played by the blonde and petite New Jersey actress Sandra Dee. Already an established actress and model, Dee was loaned to

[53] Laurie Bongard, 'The Real Gidget.'
[54] Matt Warshaw, *The Encyclopedia of Surfing* (Florida: Harcourt Inc, 2005), p.xvi.
[55] Kathy Kohner, 'When Malibu Ruled.'

Columbia Pictures for the role of Gidget due to her rising stardom. Surfers were depicted as clean-cut, bronzed, athletic Hollywood stars. The actors and actresses, however, could not surf, leaving Malibu surfers to act as stunt-doubles and extras. Some enjoyed the experience, such as Fain, who donned a blonde wig and a one-piece bathing suit to act as a stunt-double when 'Gidget got caught in a kelp bed.'[56] Meanwhile Dora used the film as a chance to follow the production set, as 'they've got a good lunch.'[57] Encroaching on their surf spot, the film brought Malibu into the limelight, as the home of *Gidget*.

Upon reviewing the film, John Engle simply referred to *Gidget* as 'nonsense.'[58] This can be observed by the film's summary of the plot; it is a story about 'a girl, a cuddling, befuddling teen' who is besotted with 'seven young beachcombers with a single thought: to enjoy life and love without working.'[59] It strays from the male-dominated and violent reputation of Malibu, with Hollywood seeing the surf culture through rose-coloured spectacles. For local surfers, this film did not reflect their selves or their pursuits. However, it reached the East Coast of the US with great success. The *New York Times* commented on the effect of *Gidget,* stating that it is 'an ideal way to usher in the beach season […] with the young folk soaking up sun and endless skimming the waves on surfboards.'[60] With romance and comedy being the main attractions of this coming-of-age cinematic hit, the film deviated from the darker reality of Surfrider Beach's culture, and reduced the language and people to fit into a comprehensible teenage summer flick. To the nation, Malibu beach was simply 'dreamy,' and filled with 'all nice boys.'[61]

It did, however, achieve the main premise of the film, which was to tackle the navigation of boundaries towards youth authority, in particular the relationship between daughter and parents. Gidget ventures out of suburbia and into a more working-class terrain with rebellious peers her own age. Eons away from reality, *Gidget* promoted the surf community as an inclusive and welcoming environment for teenagers to discover themselves freely, away from their parents' restraints. By the end of the film, Gidget returned to her middle-class suburbia and values, after her short adventure at Malibu. Kevin Starr concluded, *Gidget* was 'not about

[56] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.99.
[57] Ibid.
[58] John Engle, *Surfing in the Movies,* p.27.
[59] *Gidget,* dir. by Paul Wendkos (Colombia Pictures, 10 April 1959) [Moving Picture].
[60] 'Screen: Sun and Surf,' *New York Times,* 23 April 1959, p.27.
[61] *Gidget.*

rebellion but its exact opposite: the ultimate acceptance of conventional values.'[62] Thus, surfing represented a step into adulthood and a wild adventure of self-discovery. As Kohner reflects, 'It's a fabulous film, always and forever, but the result was that Malibu got crowded. Really crowded. I was a little bit frightened.'[63] At the beginning of the 1960s, Surfrider Beach observed 125-200 people in the water at one time, and up to 400 a day.[64] The impact of this cultural rewriting led to a destruction of Malibu's surf hierarchy, that had been nurtured and protected for two decades.

The biggest change to the hierarchy came with the addition of county lifeguards, who were authorized by the State of California to navigate and control this surge of inland teenagers flocking to the beach. Cal Porte was the first lifeguard and he arrived in the summer of 1959, just after the release of *Gidget*. An article from the *Los Angeles Times,* titled "County Moves to Curb Malibu Beach Rowdies," explained why this arrival was necessary. Written in August 1959, it stated, residents of the 'fashionable colony' have complained of 'rowdiness, drinking and carousing' of surfers, 'endangering the lives of their children.'[65] As a result, Tubesteak's shack was quickly surrounded by new lifeguard towers, with the towers often burned down as a consequence of disagreements with the Surfrider Beach surfers. In retaliation against the crowds of visitors, Dora began to get violent with non-local surfers to discourage them from the sport, often ramming his surfboard into another's, with the fin of his board. To avoid any legal matters, after a surfer received a 'four-inch rail gash,' Dora offered them his 'tab at Gomes Glass Shop,' to pay for any surfboards he broke.[66] As Rensin describes, the 'golden era of natural balance between waves and riders was consigned to the commercial slag heap of new market trends.'[67] The bugle had sounded for thousands of youths to come over the mountains and into the water, to try out this exciting new sport advertised by Hollywood.

Steve Florian states it was *Gidget* that brought the flood of teenagers to Malibu that transformed the space into an epicentre of young, bronzed bodies, which combined the culture with the burgeoning surf commercial industry.[68] The book and film took the alluring counterculture and placed it firmly in the homes of everyday American teenagers. Teenagers

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[62] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (Oxford University Press: 2009), p.378.
[63] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.108.
[64] Ibid., p.111; 'Law Curbing Surfers Safeguards Bathers,' *Los Angeles Times,* 14 August 1960, p.WS10.
[65] 'County Moves to Curb Malibu Beach Rowdies,' *Los Angeles Times,* 9 August 1959, p.WS1.
[66] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.111.
[67] Ibid., p.9.
[68] Steve Florian, 'The Rhetoric of Surf: A Lexical and Archetypal Migration of Los Angeles Counterculture into Popular Culture' (MA Thesis, California State University, 2015), p.154.

wanted to visit the golden beaches of California to tan, surf and find romance. As John J. Bukowczyk furthers, these light beach movies portrayed California as a 'freewheeling paradise of young, golden-bronzed bodies with sun-bleached blonde manes, a place where whiteness was taken for granted.'[69] The popularity of wanting to tan on California's beaches furthered the 'appropriation, in approximation, of the pigmentation of the exoticized racial Other,' as Bukowczyk continued.[70] Through *Gidget,* surfing was no longer observed as a non-white, Hawaiian sport; wave-riding was claimed as a Californian symbol of exoticism for white Americans to enjoy. The deep, golden tans of white Americans signified their loyalty to leisure and the great outdoors; it showcased their ability to afford a moment of imported exoticism. The rise of surf films in Hollywood returned the Golden Californian dream to the shores. The growing desire to live this exciting Californian teenage dream amongst peers can further be linked with the sudden rise in youth spending and consumption. A prospering economy combined with these exotic filmic ideas, created a demand to experience a summer of youth escapism and golden days on California's shores.

This is observed through the wider contexts of social and economic shifts since the Second World War. In his double-paged exploration of the value of teenagers for the economy, Dwight Macdonald commented in 1958, that teenagers were not just children transitioning to adulthood, but the commercial muscle behind 'the latest – perhaps the last – merchandising frontier.'[71] Since 1956, the average teenager had as much to spend on unnecessary purchases as the average family in the 1940s.[72] This new and enticing market led to industries investing in popularizing new images and lifestyles to become synonymous identities for teenagers across the nation. This also included the ability to go on vacations. The teenager's affluent economic security and allowance to spend on items that were wanted, rather than needed, allowed the purchasing of cultural identities that were being sold to them. Prior to *Gidget,* surfing challenged the mainstream capitalistic dream; post-1959, teenagers were travelling in flashy cars to surf shops to buy polyurethane surfboards and stylish swimwear to parade on the shores.

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[69] John J. Bukowczyk, 'California Dreamin', Whiteness, and the American Dream,' *Journal of American Ethnic History,* 35:2 (Winter 2016), pp.91-106 (p.92).
[70] Ibid., p.98.
[71] Dwight Macdonald, 'A Caste, a Culture, a Market,' *New Yorker Magazine,* 22 November 1958, p.57.
[72] Daniel Romer, 'Mass Media and the Socialization of Adolescents since World War II,' *The Changing Portrayal of Adolescents in the Media since 1950,* ed. by Patrick E. Jamieson and Daniel Romer (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.3-27 (p.6).

The two leaders of Malibu were increasingly frustrated by these inland teenagers flocking down to *their* beach, most of whom had no interest in surfing, but rather being immersed in the culture with peers. Tubesteak soon left his shack indefinitely and dropped completely out of the Malibu surf scene for 25 years, as he could no longer surf freely due to the state's control over the shores. Tubesteak, however, continued to live a surfer's life. As surfing was a psychology, he refused to be pressured into a 'Mercedes life,' choosing instead to continue the traditional nomadic surfer lifestyle getting 'from A to B in an old Ford and die of natural causes.'[73] Similarly, Dora was deeply impacted by *Gidget,* and would spend several decades bitterly criticizing the film and Kohner simultaneously. In one example, he penned a letter to journalist Deanne Stillman, who had asked him for his views on the new film. His response back was that Kohner was never part of Malibu, 'I told her to fuck-off and go back to her Kook, Wine-o-friends! They hated me, I hated them […] now if you want to know how I helped sabotage that film, that's something else.' With his fiery temper, Dora remained to verbally contradict the reality of their friendship, as he navigated his relationship with the film industry. His despising of the popularization of surf films and those that endorsed them, led to his ban from movie theatres and halls. Regardless of the surf film and its director, Dora was a critic.

Dora's dislike for surf films also went far beyond *Gidget.* At the showing of Greg Noll's *Search for Surf* (1961), a surf documentary under the mentorship of Brown, Dora even sabotaged the screening with his sidekick, Tubesteak. At the screening at Pier Avenue Junior High, Redondo Beach, Dora arrived with a mayonnaise jar filled with moths, and 'Miki disappeared to find another way in because lifeguards had been posted to be on the lookout for him. Miki was dressed like Groucho Marx [glasses with eyebrows and a bright coat].'[74] Entering the back door, Dora snuck into the movie theatre and unscrewed the cap, allowing the moths to go 'swirling in formation until they saw the projector light.'[75] Screaming, "I know he's in here," Noll knew exactly who had done it.[76] He recalls, 'The first time he did it was with June bugs […] generally, he was not crude enough to duplicate a prank,' so upon seeing the moths, 'I knew damn well they came from Dora.'[77]

[73] Matt Warshaw, *A Brief History of Surfing,* p.647.
[74] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.97.
[75] Ibid., p.99.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

Although bitter about the loss of leadership in Malibu, Dora still enjoyed the limelight, free lunch, and $25 earned from Hollywood's film industry.[78] Despite his reservations, Dora acted as a stuntman for *Gidget Goes Hawaii* (1961), *Gidget Goes to Rome* (1963), and *Beach Party* (1963), all of which were teenage-targeted beach films. As Velzy reflects, 'he [Dora] was always doing something to do with the studios because it made him sound important. He'd come into the shop like a wannabe movie star.'[79] Despite the bravado, the main reason for Dora's disdain for Hollywood was not about consequences of the surf film industry on Malibu, but rather that he was not the starring act. Fain, by contrast, achieved far more screentime, due to his blonde-hair and athletic physique. In comparison, due to being a violent character and a liability to the industry, Dora did not adhere to being worthy of a named-role in either genre of surf film, and he feared his loss of power. Rensin agrees, it was not true that Dora hated these films, but he challenged them as he 'was pissed that he'd signed his rights away for a reported $1500,' while the director earned millions.[80] Dora was losing his reign as the king of Malibu's waves. The social hierarchy was changing, and Hollywood had its hand in the rearrangement.

With fear of social unrest and violence across Malibu in 1964, Brown strategically released an antidote to this dangerous "Hollywoodisation" of the sport. His new film was referred to as the "counterprogramming" of the growing surf film problem. Brown began work on a global surf film designed for surfers and non-surfers alike, offering such exoticism that it would be craved by any generation, and turn the attention away from California's shores. To combat the propagation of Hollywood that surfing was designed for teenage suburbanites looking for an escapist romance on the shores of California, Brown used his profits to make a high-quality cinematic feature that honed in on the adult male experience. With a $50,000 budget, this feature transported the traditional surf documentary formula across the mainland, through a strategic advertising campaign that targeted small inland movie theatres. As a result, he created the most successful surf film, *The Endless Summer* (1964), which offered a prevailing definition of post-war surf culture on a global stage. As deemed by Warshaw, the film was 'beautifully and memorably, creating a standard' which 'has not been topped.'[81] It became the surf film masterpiece, dwarfing its predecessors and competitors.

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[78] Davis Jones, 'History of Surfing: Gidget, The All-Powerful,' *Surfer* [online], 7 June 2017 <https://www.surfer.com/features/gidget-history-surfing> [accessed July 2023].
[79] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.100.
[80] Ibid., p.55.
[81] Matt Warshaw, 'Rough Cut: Surfing on Film.'

Endless Summer is a documentary-style film that follows two young surfers, Mike Hynson and Robert August, as they journey around the globe searching for the perfect wave. Created during seven-months of travels, the footage was edited by Brown into a shimmering and golden feature that oozed exoticism. As the advertising handbill offers, audiences will 'share their experiences as they search the world for that perfect wave which may be forming just over the next horizon.'[82] In the film, the surfers travel great distances across the Southern Hemisphere, riding legendary and crystal-clear summer waves in Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa, Australasia and Tahiti. California's own, August and Hynson, surf each wave with style, confidence and dignity, proving their easy adaptation to each nation's waters, in front of intrigued local populations. By the end of the film, one empty wave in particular lingers in the audience's mind as the "perfect wave," which was found in Cape St. Francis, South Africa. Matt Warshaw remembers seeing the film in the movie theatre in 1967, thinking that scene was 'perfection. The wave. The day. The surfers. The edit. The shivery little chamber orchestra melody, as Bruce Brown and crew mule-train their way over the dunes.'[83] Focusing on the exotic nature of places afar, the film did not disturb California's surf spots, but promoted a need for surfers and non-surfers to find new horizons. Surfing was about the beautiful wild adventure of the unknown, a journey for nomads, rather than being part of the growing crowds of Malibu.

The two male leads offered different appeals to the audience, with both propagating juxtaposing styles and identities, despite neither having a speaking-role. It was easy for the viewer to relate to at least one of the stars, which were visually distinct in their personalities. Hynson was born in San Diego, a nimble and athletic surfer who was one of the first to surf Pipeline in O'ahu, Hawai'i. Being from La Jolla, he helped found the rowdy Windansea Surf Club as a charter member, known for its notorious localism and issues surrounding substance abuse. Warshaw directly refers to Hynson as being part of the first aggressive wave against the 'jam-wearing tadpoles' of the 'post-Gidget teenager surfers,' similar to Dora.[84] In one description by Jamie Reno, Hynson is described as having 'street-hewn charm,' living in a

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[82] Matt Warshaw, *The Encyclopedia of Surfing,* p.183.
[83] Matt Warshaw, 'Bruce Brown and Cape St. Francis: Lying Your Way to the Truth,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 3rd February 2015 <https://eos.surf/2015/02/03/cape-st-francis-the-white-lie-is-handmaiden-to-the-truth/> [accessed July 2023].
[84] Matt Warshaw, 'Mike Hynson is your Vandalizing Guest of Honor,' *Encylcopedia of Surfing* [online], 8 May 2023 <https://eos.surf/joint/sunday-joint-5-7-2023-mike-hynson-is-your-vandalizing-guest-of-honor/> [accessed July 2023]

'netherworld between wayward beachcomber and surfing god.'[85] Outside of the water, his life was increasingly less smooth, with his arrest in 1959, after stealing surfboards from Hobie Surfboards. Despite this incident, his creativity encouraged him to start shaping for Hobie Surfboards, and Gordon and Smith Surfboards, throughout the 1960s. For those in Malibu and La Jolla, Hynson's cocky attitude and wicked sense of style, made him a relatable noble hero.

Meanwhile, the dark-haired 18-year-old surfer, August, had just graduated from high school, as senior class president, when Brown invited him to star in the film. The clean-cut goofy-footer was born and raised in Orange County, and followed in his father's footsteps to become an excellent surfer. Describing his youth, August reflects, 'I had such an amazing childhood, which sculpted who I am today. I appreciate my teachers and education […] I never went to prison, never did drugs.'[86] Although initially rejecting Brown's offer, due to wanting to go to college, August's parents promoted that seven-months around the globe would be life's biggest lesson. So, he accepted the offer, joining Hynson and Brown for the filming.

The premise of the film was to illustrate there are perfect summer waves in the Southern Hemisphere, when it is winter in California. Brown chose to film *Endless Summer* on his trusted 16mm camera, one that had to be cranked manually. Each 45-seconds the camera had to be cranked, resulting in long reels being transported across the world in suitcases, with the tripod. There was no film crew, so the feature relied purely on the three young men to film and capture their adventures. In one instance, as August remembers, the camera had 'suction cups. You'd put it on the front [of the surfboard], make sure it's cranked up, and when you feel like you're going to catch a wave, reach up and turn it on and then surf.'[87] It was a ground-breaking technique, inviting the viewer to have a first-hand account of catching these picture-perfect waves.

Another important difference to his prior features, was Brown's audience. Unlike his other films, Brown spent significantly less screentime showcasing wave-riding, opting to focus more – instead – on the tales of adventure as the two surfers interacted with their new surroundings. When visiting Cape St. Francis, the surfers spent three-hours marching up and

[85] Jamie Reno, 'The Endless Summer: Then and Now,' *San Diego Magazine,* July 2001.
[86] Jeremy Berger, '30 Minutes With: Robert August,' *Gear Patrol* [online], 5 December 2013 <https://www.gearpatrol.com/outdoors/a85731/30-minutes-robert-august/> [accessed July 2023].
[87] Ibid.

down sandy dunes to capture enough footage of the spectacular views. Without knowing if there was any water beyond the sand, the men crossed the dunes for miles in the hot sun, thankful to find a 'heavenly vista of empty, sparkling-blue, right-breaking point surf.'[88] Upon finding this surf spot, as Bruce states in his narration, Hynson 'knew he'd finally found the perfect wave.'[89] The focus on exotic landscapes and nomadic surf lifestyles became the thrilling plot of the film, encouraging everyone to seek an unknown adventure to find their own piece of heaven. Using less surf terminology during his recorded voice overs, Brown chose to make *Endless Summer* distinctively suitable for non-surfers through its simplistic and uncomplicated depiction of surf exploration.

Similar to his previous successes, Brown initially released his film to audiences in 1964, with its debut at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. It sold out for seven nights in a row, deeming it a local success. As Warshaw acknowledges, a key to the film's success was its uncomplicated nature, as it was an 'earnest, nonpoliticized, nonsexualized film,' that all could watch.[90] Witnessing the audience's enjoyment of his movie, Brown branched out to movie theatres further afield, choosing to send his film to Sunset Theater in Wichita, Kansas, during the dead of winter. Bringing golden images of sun, sea and surf to the inland State, was a significant marketing success. With this demand, Brown edited the film to a larger 35-mm version, which made it purchasable by Columbia Pictures. Upon this sale, the film was sent across the nation under new directorship, earning $30 million in profits.[91] The success of this film can be highlighted through several key statistics. *Endless Summer* ran for 47 weeks at theatres in New York City, it was listed on *Newsweek's* top-10-movies-of-the-year list for 1966, and was shown by the State Department at the Moscow Film Festival.[92] As Warshaw explains, Brown's films were 'the surf boom's last and best manifestation.'[93] It had, to some extent, returned the original surf ethos back into California; surfing was a spiritual adventure of patiently waiting until the perfect wave came across the horizon. The film affirmed the idea that surfing cannot be a culture that is bought, it is a lifestyle earnt by the individual.

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[88] Matt Warshaw, 'Bruce Brown and Cape St. Francis: Lying Your Way to the Truth.'
[89] *Endless Summer,* dir. by Bruce Brown (Columbia Pictures, 1966) [Motion Picture].
[90] Matt Warshaw, *The Encyclopedia of Surfing,* p.184.
[91] Matt Warshaw, 'Endless Summer: The One Thing We All Agree On,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 9 September 2014
<https://eos.surf/2014/01/09/endless-summer-the-one-thing-we-all-agree-on/> [accessed July 2023].
[92] Dennis McLellan, 'A Long Ride on the Crest: Culture: After 26 Years, Bruce Brown's 'The Endless Summer' Still Holds Up as the Ultimate Surf Film,' *Los Angeles Times,* 24 July 1991.
[93] Matt Warshaw, 'An Invincible Summer,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online]
<https://www.eos.surf/history/the-ten-year-boom/an-invincible-summer3> [accessed July 2023]

Despite his fame, Brown still oozed the barefoot adventurer aesthetic after the release of *Endless Summer*. In 1966, he reflected that upon seeing an old friend, they asked if he was 'still takin' [sic] surf pictures.'[94] Brown replies, 'yeah,' and the friend replied, 'when are you gonna [sic] get a real job.'[95] This job, however, cemented Brown into the Surfers Hall of Fame in 2009, and his films remain cult classics across present surf communities, globally. *Endless Summer* is still nostalgically shown in movie theatres across the globe, including at Dana Point, Southern California, and Newquay, Cornwall, in 2023.

When approaching the surf culture of Southern California in the early 1960s, it is undeniable that the film industry had an impact on its shores. Three stages occurred in a decade of filmic identities. The first stage was pre-1959, in which surfing was a reflection of self through homemade videos to create a collective communal memory bank. Local identities and surf breaks were shared amongst friends and family as a private celebration of talent and wry humour. The second stage was Hollywood, transporting a romantic notion of surfing and planting it in the houses of teenagers across the nation. Surfing was seen as the most romantic and golden rite-of-passage into adulthood, as teenagers struggled to navigate societal pressures of suburbia. The final stage, the one that negotiated a final definition of surf culture, combined the two. *Endless Summer* combined Hollywood budgets and productional ideas, with the simplistic homemade documentary footage and storyline. This golden, masculine and authentically thrilling experience showcased that surfing was a sacred and beautiful counterculture of nomadism. It welcomed the nation to find its own perfect wave, with respect to the local surfers that were already on this journey. With this context, the surf shops had to adapt to this new surge in ideas, most of which were made outside of their control. By 1966, surfing had spread like wildfire across the globe, and this required a new perspective on marketing. No longer a small industry, surf shops had to experiment with the best way to prosper from this boom.

[94] Charles Champlin, 'Surf Film-maker Rides Popularity Crest,' p.N4.
[95] Ibid.

7. Owning the "Bible of the Sport:" The Partnership of *SURFER* Magazine and Surf Shops

> "*SURFER* represents youth, freedom, and a time when absolutely nothing was more important than that next wave coming down the line. *SURFER* is a deeply personal photo album, and even if the photos may be of someone else, each different issue represents a snapshot of a surfer's life at that time. Just as we don't throw away photo albums, we don't throw away *SURFER*."[1]
>
> - Shaun Tomson, *SURFER Magazine 50 Years* (2010).

A Strange Little Creature in Surf Shops

Amongst the tug-of-war cultural disputes of the surf film industry, in 1960, a 'strange little creature' appeared on Southern California's shelves.[2] It was a horizontal, small 36-page surf photobook. A grainy greyscale image of a solo surfer riding a curling wave in Hawai'i featured on the cover, with the turquoise mismatching block-letters, "*The Surfer,*" printed in the corner. This one-man production was founded by the eccentric, creative artist and filmmaker John Severson in his garage. Unbeknownst to Severson at the time, this photobook was the beginning of what would become the bi-monthly "bible" of surfing, *The Surfer* magazine – later renamed, *SURFER* in 1964.

The photobooks arrived in fresh bundles from the back of Severson's Volkswagen van onto the shelves of surf shops, with flyers pasted on the storefront windows announcing their arrival. Young surfer Steve Pezman excited to grab a copy, remembers, 'I promptly stole the flyer off the wall of the surf shop, which was how hungry we were for printed validation.'[3] With *The Surfer*'s arrival, Californians flicked through the pages of the little booklet, and found – what initially looked like – a personal photo album. It was a collection of black-and-white photographs, with rough annotations, a couple of words, and caricatures of surfers in the margins. The photographs were dramatic, with heightened contrast added to the shadows

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[1] Shaun Tomson, 'Foreword,' in *Surfer Magazine 50 Years,* ed. by Sam George (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010), pp.6–7 (p.7).
[2] Matt Warshaw, '"In This Crowded World": John Severson Recalls his Perfect Epithet,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 4 September 2019 <https://eos.surf/2019/09/04/in-this-crowded-world-john-severson-recalls-his-perfect-epithet/> [accessed September 2023].
[3] Ben Waldron, 'The Surfer Archives: Volume 1, Issue 1,' *SURFER* [online], 13 April 2018. <https://www.surfer.com/features/surfer-volume-1-issue-1> [accessed September 2023].

of the waves, to emphasize the majestic nature of the ocean. Taken on a still-Bolex camera, during his filming across Hawai'i and California, these images showcased the intense depths of big waves, emulating the ferocity of the swell.

At the end of the photobook, opposite a Hobie Surfboard advertisement, a single image could be found of a curling wave breaking at Hammonds Beach, Santa Barbara.[4] Next to the wave, an unknown surfer is shown knee-paddling out into the spraying water. It was Severson's personal favourite photograph, one that 'struck me,' as 'here was this guy going out to these perfect waves all alone. I mean that's it; you know?'[5] Amongst the visual simplicity of the photograph, there was a deeper message. To decipher its impact, on the black background, there featured a single quote by Severson: "In this crowded world the surfer can still seek and find the perfect day, the perfect wave, and be alone with the surf and his thoughts… john severson."[6] The no-caps signature served as a fitting end to a book that observed a mismatch and playful aesthetic, hard to define. Its sombre colour scheme and final tribute, offered a thought-provoking timeless quote for surfers who had surfed the journey on the pages. Amongst the chaos of trying to defend their surf culture from external grasps, Severson offered these words, and the photobook itself, as a reassurance that the surf lifestyle was still theirs to own. After its publication, Fred Van Dyke spoke to Severson, "You don't even know what you wrote there; the significance of it."[7] Severson responded, "No, I understand it perfectly."[8] From its very first publication, *The Surfer* became a printed journey dedicated to the die-hard surfer.

[4] John Severson, *The Surfer,* 1:1, 1960, p.34.
[5] Matt Warshaw, '"In This Crowded World."'
[6] John Severson, *The Surfer,* p.34.
[7] Matt Warshaw, '"In This Crowded World."'
[8] Ibid.

[THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS THESIS FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS]

Figure 7.1: John Severson, *The Surfer,* 1:1, 1960, p.34.

The photobook was quickly absorbed into the Californian surf community, it became an object that was well-travelled, torn, and stored in sacred places across domestic spaces, vans and garages. By its second volume, in 1962, *The Surfer* had become established as a popular magazine. Surf shop owners kept one on their counters at all times, the pages bent from numerous fingers turning the pages, with a sticker written in a Sharpie pen saying "store's copy."[9] At Southern Californian schools, as Ben Waldron remembers, surfing youths were 'huddled around the mag, pages would turn, guesses of where the photos were shouted out' and they would cut 'out prime stoke-inducing photos to be scotch-taped to a bedroom wall surf collage.'[10] Thus, the impact of *The Surfer* transcended generations by its appeal to both young and old, as it provided a guide to all things surf, and was found in all places surf. Its transition from photobook to magazine meanwhile, provoked a pivotal change to its purpose; Severson's personal project grew from merely a collection of photos to a social guide that navigated larger societal issues.

[9] Sam George, 'Shop Talk,' *Surfing Magazine,* December 1989.
[10] Ben Waldron, 'The Surfer Archives: Volume 1, Issue 1.'

The Surfer served as a uniting and cohesive item in the 1960s, a sanctuary for surfers during the cultural turmoil of the period. The magazine provided an antidote to Hollywood, tourism, contemporary politics, and crowded spaces – it offered both a pipe dream and glimpse into the forgotten surf ethos of the uncrowded surf in the 1940s.

The Social Impact of Magazines

Since the 1800s, magazines provided a powerful platform for societal change in times of hardship and dispute. Heather A. Haveman refers to magazines as mediators that use their conversations to create cohesive communities and common actions through their 'invisible thread of connections.'[11] Magazines have their foundations in the US during civil disputes on political matters, as observed in the American Civil War. However, a new string of magazines emerged in the early 19th century, due to experimentation with the format's structure. Through creative designs, magazines became seen as an artform. Printing poetry, short-stories and photographs, enabled a unique cultural reflection of society to emerge on paper. This can be observed in *The Ladies Magazine,* which was the first magazine edited by a woman, and published in Boston in 1828. This press offered original poetry, sketches and short stories, by women and for women in the US. In the 1834 issue of *The Ladies Magazine,* it explored its own values by commenting that 'communications may be made between young ladies' and allowing mothers to understand 'her own daughter's course of thought, and principles of action.'[12] Reflecting upon the publication's success in its 7th volume, the magazine offered two reasons: 'pictures and pretty covers,' and the continued 'support of the good and gifted among our own [female contributors].'[13] Thus, magazines offered a welcoming and relatable glimpse into the contemporary for specific groups. It was an educational platform and guide for womanhood, adulthood and political pursuits.

By the end of the 19th century, the cultural realm of press moved further away from political and larger social groups, into smaller specific leisure identities, distancing itself from political discourse during the Progressive Era. This can be noted through a series of sportsman magazines across the US, such as *Forest and Stream* (since 1873) and *Recreation* (since 1894). *Forest and Stream* offered a yearly subscription of $5, and offered a range of tips on

[11] Heather A. Haveman, *Magazines and the Making of America: Modernization, Community and Print Culture, 1741-1860* (Princeton University Press, 2020), p.1.
[12] A. H. L. Phelps, 'Intimate Friends,' *The Ladies Magazine,* 7:1, January 1834, pp.15-19, (p.18).
[13] 'Our Title,' *The Ladies Magazine,* 7:1, January 1834, p.48.

outdoor sports. In 1874, the magazine described the abundance of outdoor leisure in California, stating 'the hills come down to old ocean and lave their feet in its cool waters, while upon its crests the gigantic redwood rears its lofty spires.'[14] This beautiful state had a 'great variety of game' for the sportsmen.[15] This example offered the subscribers an escapist glimpse into a world that understood their needs and wants, transporting them to the ideal landscape through the words and images painted. It also produced a nostalgia for the American West, transporting the readers' minds back to a simpler time of wilderness exploration.

Through printed leisure magazines, Haveman defines that society became a space divided into a multitude of organizations, with members being dispersed more widely across localities due to the distribution of press.[16] A subscription to a magazine allowed a person to purchase an identity. Owning a collection or subscription to magazines, allowed others to find other likeminded opinions on contemporary news and ideas. Post-1945, magazines dedicated to specific outdoor sports flourished, including *Ski* (1948) and *Skin Diver* (1951), and in 1960, *The Surfer* began circulating. While several local surf magazines developed, Severson's work was the only founding magazine to continue into the present day, becoming a beloved collectible item for all surfers. Shaun Tomson, who has been subscribed to *SURFER* since he was a 'little surf-stoked boy', commented on the magazine's importance, '*SURFER* was a window into the heart of surfing, and if I read between the lines, really drilled into it, I heard the heartbeat of surfing.'[17] Therefore, it is unsurprising that surfers celebrated this cultural print platform; it created a secure, cohesive space during the turmoil of Hollywood's surf culture ownership, with the lifestyle tugged in a multitude of directions by others.

The magazine could not have had its long-standing prosperity without the brilliance of Severson. He was born in Los Angeles in 1933, and his family moved to San Clemente, California, when he was 12-years-old. In San Clemente, Severson was immersed in the beach life, where he learnt to body surf on mats and ride surfboards. When not at the beach, he worked numerous roles for his family businesses, including selling orange juice at his father's souvenir and leather shop. As a teenager in Orange County, Severson began his journey into surf art, through paintings and sketches. This love for the arts progressed into photography,

[14] 'Sports in California,' *Forest and Stream,* 2:1, February 1874, p.1.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Heather A. Haveman, *Magazines and the Making of America,* p.1.
[17] Shaun Tomson, 'Foreword,' p.7.

when he bought his first camera, a Keystone 16mm, for $50. [18] On this camera, the photos produced were uniquely dark, with highly contrasting black-and-white tones, bringing out the wave's depths as surfers nonchalantly rode down them. People began to ask Severson for photographs, due to their high quality and unique angles.

It was then, when staring at his series of photographs in his bedroom, at 15-years-old, Severson exclaimed, "Aha! I am going to make a surfing magazine when I grow up, and then I will live off the magazine."[19]

His plan was halted in 1956, when he was drafted by the army to Honolulu. Whilst serving in the army, Severson continued to record a series of surfing clips with surplus army film. At night, soldiers and local surfers would watch the footage with their favourite drink of pineapple rum punch, whilst he built a name for himself in the independent surf film industry. Noticed by the Army for his surfing abilities, he was given membership to a new Army Surf Team. Over the course of the next few years, he created home movies, from Hawaiian glassy waves of hotdogging surfers, to the crashing "wedge" wave of Southern California, and became part of the growing surf film movement. Eventually he produced his first full-length film, *Surf* (1958), making it his mission to produce a movie each year. With each film screening, Severson sold 8x10-sized glossy photographs, which he took on a still-Bolex camera during filming, on a table. He was surprised at how many he sold, with bundles selling for up to $1.50, with each screening.

With the release of his third film, *Surf Fever* (1960)*,* Severson decided to publish a photobook called *The Surfer* as a way to promote his new film. As Sam George concludes, this was 'the most culturally influential movie program ever printed.'[20] When choosing a name for the program, Severson decided against copying the film's title "Surf Fever," as he predicted that 'it could go on and this could be an annual.'[21] The decided title, *The Surfer,* was chosen from a long list, due to it being a unifying title to explain who the target audience was: those that surfed. Thus, the magazine was born, a state-of-the-art horizontal photo album featuring some of surfing's best monochrome images. It was a mix of a magazine, book, and promotional booklet. In 1961, he released the next volume of the magazine. His dream had

[18] The Surfers Journal, *Fifty Years of Surfing on Film: John Severson,* dir. by Ira Opper (Opper Sports Productions, 2008) [Documentary].
[19] Ibid.
[20] Sam George, 'Introduction' in *Surfer Magazine 50 Years,* ed. by Sam George (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010), pp.8-11 (p.10).
[21] The Surfers Journal, *Fifty Years of Surfing on Film: John Severson.*

come true, he began to live off the magazine, as it transformed from being produced annually to seasonally.

One reason why *The Surfer* succeeded so rapidly, was due to the artistic designs, posters and caricatures, distinctively known to be Severson's own creations. With an M.A. degree in Art Education, the photobook's creator had a flare for unique page designs, especially with his cartoon surfers and woodblock prints. These were not solely created for the book. These aspects had been long-established on his film posters, with the popularity of his designs amongst surfers noted when *Surf Fever* posters were stolen within 15 minutes of them being put up.[22] That particular poster features striking red and black squares, and block letters spelling out the movie and name of Severson. It has a grainy black-and-white photograph of a surfer riding down a big wave. A small red box in the middle features one of Severson's famous surfing caricatures. With many stolen, Severson began to overprint his posters. Some surfers personally wrote to him asking to 'send me any posters you have.'[23] Realizing the demand for surf art was large, he began to sell bundles of 10 posters for $1.[24] Severson used his caricatures, bright block colours and black-and-white geometrics for all of his poster work, and eventually the photobook. Matt Warshaw describes *The Surfer,* as a 'scruffy but earnest art school project, beginning with its horizontal format, grainy cover shot, and hand-lettered logotype. Doodled surf figures glide around the margins.'[25] Its repetitive and simple aesthetic offered a visual of familiarity and consistency with each page.

The high initial demand for the magazine in 1960 showed the value of the content for the surfer. With this new platform, surf shops partnered with the distribution of the magazine and sponsored advertising, which in turn, helped the surf industry regain its value and protect its identity. The magazine offered endorsements for a variety of surfing spaces. When deciphering the content of *The Surfer* magazine's first volume, one can note how partnerships with surf shops were already at the forefront of its design. Across the 36-pages in the photobook, there were a total of 13 advertisements, ten for surf shops, two for wetsuits and one film.[26] The wetsuit advertisements captured the attention of Severson; despite being 'newfangled – and still not generally accepted,' the promotion of wetsuits 'thrilled' Severson

[22] The Surfers Journal, *Fifty Years of Surfing on Film: John Severson.*
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Matt Warshaw, 'Surfing the Newsstand,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://eos.surf/history/section/severson/> [accessed August 2023].
[26] John Severson, *The Surfer*.

as ‘I could sell an ad that wasn’t just surfing.’[27] The photobook was open to pioneers and new ideas that could enhance and assist the surf culture.

Severson created the advertisements for both big and small names in the Californian industry, including Hobie Surfboards, Surfboards by Gordie, and Dave Sweet Surfboards. When Severson initially asked Hobart “Hobie” Alter to pay for an advertisement in his new photobook, Hobie ‘hemmed and hawed.’[28] The owner of Hobie Surfboards feared that supporting the issue financially would also support ‘his competitors. He really didn’t know if he wanted to do it.’[29] After promising to pay for one advert, Severson commented, Hobie ‘never quit’ and continued to work with the magazine.[30] Advertisements appeared after the ninth page, and were typically minimalist combinations of simple logos, illustrations, and text. The advertisements were almost unifying in nature due to their similar sizing and aesthetic, rather than seen as competitive.

For most advertisements, the text was simply the address of the business, so surfers could find their nearest commercial outlet. For others, such as Wardy Surfboards, and “Surf Shop” by a lesser-known shaper at the time, Jack O’Neill, the businesses had personalized Severson caricatures. In O’Neill’s example, Severson decided on an illustration of a surfer riding a tree log, with the figure wearing a black-and-white swim suit. Beside it, was the witty slogan, “But you don’t have to ride a log [an informal name for surfboard].” This personalized advertisement for the “Surf Shop” in Santa Cruz and San Francisco, was produced a few years before its rebranding to “O’Neill.” The magazine helped to build both famed and soon-to-be-famed brands into the reader’s consciousness.

The layout of the magazine also offered assistance to help guide new surfers to their local surf shop. Pages were scattered with “frame grabs,” a series of photos from consecutive moments of time, to illustrate the wave-riding tricks observed at each surf spot. Featuring on page 10, Kemp Aaberg and Reynolds Yater were captured riding on glassy waves at Rincon, Santa Barbara. Strategically beside these photographs was an advertisement for Reynolds Yater and Dick Perry’s Santa Barbara Surf Shop. Keeping to the minimalist nature of the photobook, the advertisement simply described the shop as ‘specializing in surfboards for the

[27] Paul Holmes, *Master of Water, Wind and Waves* (Newport Beach: Croul Publications LLC, 2013), p.53.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

experienced surfer. Foam-fibreglass construction.'[31] The magazine partnered surf breaks with nearby shops.

Turning to the next page, there was a series of photos of Mickey Muñoz riding a single wave in transitioning frames. One featured the surf trick self-titled the "Quasimoto [*sic*]," with Muñoz squatting, hunched over, with his left arm out. As George comments, Severson's capturing of moments, especially the images of frivolity by Muñoz, quickly became iconic to surfers.[32] For readers, a series of comical and entertaining manoeuvres on the surfboard encouraged surfers to visit the location to practice these unusual techniques. This is furthered by Paul Holmes, he states Muñoz's poses of the "Quasimoto" and "El Telephone" were 'emulated by thousands of surfers just for kicks – and laughs.'[33] The magazine was for experienced surfers, rather than to act as a guide on how to surf as a beginner. By reading these four pages, surfers learnt where to buy a surfboard, where the wave was, and how to ride it. The magazine thus provided the ultimate platform to produce well-circulated advertisements for numerous Californian locations and businesses.

On the final page of the first photobook, exposed at the back to the public without needing to even open the pages, was the advertisement for Severson's film, *Surf Fever.* Featured on this black-and-white promotional piece, with similar turquoise blocks of colour as the cover page, was the "Quasimoto" photograph on display next to the film's title.[34] Beside it, a doodle of a surf van, with three surfboards piled up, the turquoise colour once again splashed between the lines, breaking up the familiar greyscale tones of the book. With this final advertisement, *The Surfer* had been read, and its purpose to promote his film had been achieved.

Sales peaked immediately when *The Surfer* was first sold. Severson printed 10,000 copies of his project*,* for $3,000. Each issue was sold for $2.00.[35] For his first volume, Severson and his brother drove the magazines from the printing press to surf shops and book shops alike, in his Volkswagen van. As Matt Warshaw comments, 'copies were snapped up like kibble by gremmies [young surfers]' who were 'lined up and waiting.'[36] However, despite the excitement, only 5,000 copies were ultimately taken, with the other half kept in Severson's garage collecting dust. Warshaw critics the roughness of the magazine, stating on one of the

[31] 'Santa Barbara Surf Shop,' *The Surfer,* ed. by John Severson, 1:1, 1960, p.10.
[32] Sam George, 'Introduction,' p.9.
[33] Paul Holmes, *Master of Water, Wind and Waves,* p.52.
[34] John Severson, 'Surf Fever,' *The Surfer,* 1:1, 1960, p.36.
[35] John Severson, *The Surfer,* 1:1, 1960, p.2.
[36] Matt Warshaw, 'Surfing the Newsstand.'

pages, 'opposing pages often don't fit together […] half the photos are blurry – a hard thing to overlook,' but it remained 'friendly, authentic, and handcrafted.'[37] This distinct aesthetic was one that divided surfers.

Taking a break from publishing another magazine to focus on his filmmaking, Severson resurfaced *The Surfer* a year later with slight adjustments. Instead of being a photobook, Severson decided his "creature" should become a more frequent magazine that was sold seasonally, separate from his film productions. An important practical adjustment was to change the format from landscape to portrait in orientation, preventing his magazine from getting hidden behind others on shelves. Further, the magazine included more written articles, with several short stories and comic threads. Instead of a higher cost of $2.00, each magazine was sold at 75 cents, allowing more surfers to afford it.[38] Further, copies were sent to convenience stores around South Bay. With more written sections, the magazine began to function as a bible and guide to its readers, offering advice and comments on current affairs.

Lowering the prices of the magazine and increasing its availability in convenience stores benefited urban youths who were interested in the sport. Teenager Jack López showcased his cultural membership of surfing through his purchasing of the magazine. In the early-1960s, López grew up as a Latino youth in urban Los Angeles, some distance from the beachscape. In his neighbourhood, there were two distinct paths, 'hood or surfer.'[39] He recalled, 'we all wanted to be surfers' and 'one of the ways you could become a surfer was to own an issue of *SURFER*.'[40] Despite wanting to buy a used surfboard by Velzy-Jacobs, with the 'coolest red oval decal,' López could not afford its cost of $45.[41] With the magazine being less than $1, it was decidedly cheaper to buy the magazine and parade it around. After convincing his father to go to the store, López saw the magazine on the shelf, 'an ocean-blue cover with a huge wave completely engulfing a surfer.'[42] He held it 'with great reverence, as if I was holding something of spiritual value, which it was.'[43] Despite his father and the store clerk 'poking fun at my magazine in Spanish,' as 'silly adolescent nonsense,' López had secured his identity through his purchasing.[44] The magazine showed youths in the urban environment

[37] Matt Warshaw, 'Surfing the Newsstand.'
[38] John Severson, *The Surfer,* 2:1, Spring 1962, p.1.
[39] Jack López, *Cholos and Surfers: A Latino Family Album* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1998), p.54.
[40] Ibid., p.53.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p.56.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., p.57.

how to become a surfer, how to dress like a surfer and how to act like a surfer. It helped those who could not access the ocean easily, to see the culture through the pages and photographs presented. It was a detailed guide to a surfer's society.

SURFER Magazine's Guide to a 1960's Society

The written articles in the new regular edition of *The Surfer,* offered clarity and guidance on all manner of current affairs and problems within the community and afar, with strong undertones of sardonic humour. Unlike Bruce Brown's use of the film *Endless Summer* (1964) as a blend of inclusive and exclusive content, to blur Hollywood's new crowds with the traditional surf nomads, *The Surfer* remained loyally exclusive to the original surfer: the local Beach Bum. It openly alienated new surfers and tourists alike, creating distinctions between them and local intermediate and professional surfers. Differentiating labels grew in popularity on the pages, referring to non-local and beginner surfers as inferior "kooks;" thus, the magazine catered to a specific crowd of surfers.

This surfer elitism could be seen in the second volume of *The Surfer,* in an article called "By the Fire." In this short story, Severson writes of a character who has had enough of the overcrowded state of local surf spots, as 'you have to battle ten thousand kooks from the hills.'[45] The surfer in this story wishes 'some sort of typhoon will come up and suck 'em [*sic*] into the sky. Boy, I'd get a kick out of that. Watching all those boards and legs and blond-haired-bodies whirling around in some big twister.'[46] Avoiding his local surf breaks, the surfing protagonist travels along the coast trying to find a quiet spot for a moment's surf, but to no avail. Eventually, he lights a fire and watches the crowded surf of kooks from the shore. The conclusion, as the surfer decides, is 'maybe I'll just stay here all day. Maybe nobody will notice that I didn't go in.'[47] Accompanied with an illustration of the lone surfer by the campfire, this tale addressed the crisis of tourism and overpopulated beach spaces. It validated the contemporary issue, and expressed sympathy to the regular surfer, who is the reader. The surfer of this story would rather stay true to himself and the ethos of not mixing with beginner surfers, than fight for waves amongst those he did not deem worthy of them. *The Surfer* thus offered a safe space to vent, rant and acknowledge the current problems in the

[45] John Severson, 'By the Fire,' *The Surfer,* 2:1, Spring 1962, p.10.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

surf communities. It validated the frustrations created by crowded surf spots from an influx of tourists in the early-1960s. This mirrored the same notion of earlier sportsman magazines, which propagated nostalgia for the American wilderness and once unpopulated lands.

After the magazine's slight adjustment to its name, Drew Kampion became associate editor of *SURFER* from 1968-1972. In his reflections, Kampion critically dissects the impact of the magazine's contribution to social issues. Although originally a one-man project, the *SURFER* team developed throughout the mid-1960s. By 1968, there was Shirley the receptionist, Larry Rink and Hy Moore in the art department, Brad Barrett running photography, and Hugh Severson – John's father – running accounting. John Severson was still working for the magazine when he could, in between his art and film projects; but he left the articles and themes to Kampion. Kampion explains, in between his 'strict regimen of ten joints and twenty cups of coffee,' he could publish whatever he wanted, as he sat editing and writing every day.[48] He interpreted the magazine as 'a major paradigm shift, a full-on countercultural coup attempt.'"[49] At its heart, '*SURFER* has always expressed a very strong sense of "us and them."'[50] Its doctrine was to be faithful to the loyal, working-class, male surfer. As a result, this supressed the development of other minority movements within the surfing realm.

For example, talented female surfers rarely featured in the magazine*,* and when they did, were treated as an anomaly. Women featured sporadically throughout the magazine's first decade. In the first issue, a teenage Linda Benson was caught riding a wave in Makaha, Hawai'i, in the photobook. Featured at the end of *SURFER's* third issue in 1961, Benson appeared again in a photograph taken from the women's open at Doheny beach, an event with waves 'hardly there.'[51] The article does not comment on the women's open, except for the results, stating that the crowds primarily arrived to watch the tandem surfing and 'big events' such as the junior race.[52] A few years later, in 1964, a female in a bikini was featured on *SURFER's* cover perched next to her surfboard on the sand, however this image was amongst a montage of photographs showing male surfers on waves. By the end of the decade, women were selected based upon their physical appearance, rather than wave-riding talents.

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[48] Drew Kampion, 'Editing *SURFER:* The Ultimate Reality,' in *Surfer Magazine 50 Years,* ed. by Sam George (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010), pp.140-152 (p.140).
[49] Ibid., p.141.
[50] Ibid., p.149.
[51] 'Contests and Clubs,' *SURFER,* Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 1961, p.32.
[52] Ibid.

In the 1960s, the ideal Californian woman, as Starr described, appeared 'in a bikini, fetching, athletic, bodacious […] a bounteous physicality of a California myth.'[53] Female surfers were expected to pose for the camera in a bikini, rather than surf alongside the men. As sociologist and historian Douglas Booth furthers, male surfers 'deemed women comparatively frail, delicate, passive, and neurotic. Of course, these views were not confined to surfing, and were consistent with traditional social thinking about sport.'[54] Surfing remained a predominantly fraternal sport, with women acting as "props" for men.

Surfer Joyce Hoffman, the first woman to be recorded surfing the notorious waves of Pipeline in 1968, recalled, 'there were many occasions where I was physically challenged, yelled at, chased out of the water. Guys cut me off, shot their boards at me or just let me know I wasn't welcome out there.'[55] Most wave-riding women were at a disadvantage by the degrading lexis used in articles, which confined them to their roles as inferior and sexualized surfers. In the 1964, "Why Girls" feature, *SURFER* stated that although female surfers should be equal in the water, they should have 'no special privileges' and 'girls are just not equipped for power surfing.'[56] In this debate on whether women should surf, the magazine quoted one surfer's summative statement: "Girls are OK as long as they don't get in the way and if they don't get any better."[57] Reflecting back on the statements made in this article, Kampion believes '*SURFER* has to shoulder some of the blame for this cultural snubbing.'[58] If there were more inclusive articles at the time, 'we might not have had to wait so long for the Roxy Girl [first popular retailer of female surf clothing] to appear.'[59] This critical examination illustrates how the magazine both honoured and hindered the cultural developments of surfing. It also worked in tandem with commercial markets, ensuring the surf market catered for certain individuals, with the focus being on intermediate or professional male surfers. For the athletic, male surfer, *SURFER* magazine remained a loyal representation of self, securing its popularity amongst its predominant clients. Meanwhile, female surfers lacked representation in both the magazine and on the waves.

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[53] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p.378.
[54] Douglas Booth, 'From Bikinis to Boardshorts: "Wahines" and the Paradoxes of Surfing Culture,' *Journal of Sport History,* 28:1 (Spring 2001), pp.3-22 (p.6).
[55] "Joyce Hoffman," interview by Jim Kempton, December 1994, in *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/interview/joyce-hoffman2> [accessed May 2015].
[56] 'Why Girls,' *SURFER,* 5:5*,* November 1964, p.36.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Drew Kampion, 'Editing *SURFER:* The Ultimate Reality,' p.146.
[59] Ibid.

In some instances, *SURFER* produced a statement in its magazines, clarifying its views on certain acts and social issues that denied 'human dignity.'[60] This can be observed in the discussion of race. As a response to growing racial tensions in South Africa's apartheid, *SURFER* published the article "Black and White Photography," written by Patrick McNaulty. This article, published in 1967, addressed the wider themes of race, racism and aggression against black surfers. McNaulty penned in his article that the majority of readers are 'critical of any policy of racial discrimination' and '*SURFER* has always fought any force that would hamper any surfer from enjoying his sport.'[61] This statement in surfing's "bible" demonstrated to surfers that racial abuse should not be tolerated nor seen within the sport. Regardless of location, 'when a surfer is excluded from a surfing break for any reason – whether at Dairy Beach, Trestles, or Ocean City, New Jersey – *SURFER* will call attention to this injustice.'[62] Although McNaulty directly challenged racial othering in surfing, California's waves continued to be dominated by white males. Despite the article's progressive nature, the sport continued to be, as Peter Westwick and Peter Neushul emphasize, 'an overwhelmingly white (and male) sport in most places outside of Hawaii.'[63] Throughout the 1960s, surfing – and *SURFER* magazine – simply continued to reflect mainstream attitudes, with the majority of surfers unaffected by these wider societal and political injustices. As Westwick and Neushul conclude, Southern California's surf culture was not actively revolutionary; instead, surfers remained reactionary, predominantly focusing on representation of self and evading significant social change.[64]

Defining why the magazine needed to focus on its male surfer audience, Kampion explained that *SURFER* acted as an antidote to political issues that were encroaching on local white, working-class, male surfers. It offered a necessary escapism, relatability and normalcy to its readers. With both the 'Vietnam [War] and the draft' being 'the major issues of the day and surfers were either avoiding it or caught up in it,' the magazine wanted to offer some escapist, humorous and light entertainment.[65]

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[60] Patrick McNulty, 'Black and White Photography,' *SURFER,* 8:1, 1967, p.25.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Peter Westwick and Peter Neushul, *World in the Curl: An Unconventional History of Surfing* (Crown, 2013), p.146.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Drew Kampion, 'Editing *SURFER:* The Ultimate Reality,' p.141.

The Vietnam War

In 1964, direct US military involvement in Vietnam escalated, prompting young, healthy and eligible men to be drafted into a long and devastating war. Vietnam veteran Rick Thomas reflects on the importance of *SURFER* during his deployment. The magazine 'would take you back and put you right back in the world. If someone sent you a copy of *SURFER* magazine – you could have people pay you money to read that sucker.'[66] The drafting of men to fight in Vietnam for two years was a terror faced by many surfers. Throughout the 1960s, the magazine helped those who were homesick and needed an escape from the conflict; it reconnected surfers to the surf. In one letter to *SURFER,* from Saigon, Vietnam, surfer Steve Caird wrote to 'explain what *SURFER* means to me.'[67] Whilst sat in his 'funny green clothes,' the magazine 'speaks to me and I listen. It can take me on a time-space surf trip in minutes.'[68] The surf magazine allowed Caird, and other surfers, to escape the terrors and sights of the war, as it teleported him back to his home; a moment he was thankful for.

The social impact of the war, on surfers, was displayed in the documentary *Between the Lines* (2008); a film illustrating the difficult decisions made by Californian surfers when the letter to enlist arrived at their front doors. For some surfers, the call to war was one's duty.

In *Between the Lines*, Vietnam War veteran William "Pat" Farley Jr., from San Francisco, California, explains why he took up arms for his nation. Growing up in a working-class community, with his parents dealing with the trauma of losing two young children unexpectedly, Pat turned to surfing as an escape from a hostile domestic life. To him, surfing was not just a sport, 'it's a lifestyle. It's not so much a lifestyle, it's the essence of who you are.'[69] Growing up "playing army" as a child, he volunteered for the US Army in 1968. In training, however, he soon realized that surfers were not embraced into the military community – unlike during World War Two recruitment. Instead, surfing was seen as 'hippy' by officers, and Pat was forced to suppress his identity to avoid heckling and isolation.[70] The war showcased that outsiders saw California's surf culture as a negative and shameful way of life.

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[66] Jade Bremner, 'Surfing in the Vietnam War: How Catching Waves Saved These Soldiers,' *Mpora* [online], June 2 2017 <https://mpora.com/surfing/surfing-vietnam-war-catching-waves-saved-soldiers/> [accessed October 2023].
[67] Steve Caird, 'We Get Letters,' *SURFER*, 8:6, January 1968.
[68] Ibid.
[69] *Between the Lines,* dir. by Scott Bass, Troy Page and Ty Ponder, (Pure Frustration, 2008) [Documentary].
[70] Ibid.

Despite its mainstream popularity in the early-1960s, the surfer identity had seemingly once again returned to a negative social status by the mid-1960s. The new-age surfer's image mimicked a return to the "Beach Bum" stereotype, not helped by a new branch of Bohemian surfers taking ownership of quiet coves in the period. The rise of Bohemian hippiedom arrived on California's shores in the 1960s, filling the vacuum left after many local surfers left for war. The popularity of this broader new counterculture can be noted in the Summer of Love festival in San Francisco during the summer of 1967. It was also found on the Pacific Ocean's waves.

The hippiedom movement is difficult to define. It depended wholly on the individual's wants, making it an amorphous idea rather than a cohesive culture. The general notion was born in the State during the 1950s, with the idea of personal liberty beginning through the Beat Generation of writers in California, who expressed a rejection of economic materialism and the desire for liberation and exploration. The sexual obscenities and drugs encouraged in these written pieces, such as *Howl* (1955) by Allen Ginsberg, shocked mainstream society. In 1957, there was an unsuccessful trial to censor Ginsberg's book. The publicity caused an interest in reading this published work, making it critical to encouraging a wider hippiedom movement in California. In tandem to this interest in personal liberty, the next few years showcased numerous societal events. The Beatles toured the US in 1964, promoting a psychedelic sound and free love. The birth control pill, in 1960, was an enabler of more sexual liberties. As Terry Anderson argues, hippies 'significantly altered cold war culture' through the promotion of personal freedoms.[71] Freedom could be illustrated through numerous radical and revolutionary acts, for example, civil rights marches, growing long hair, and anti-war protests. The message was consistent: simplicity and love were the answers to global chaos. With the Cold War and Vietnam War threatening to encroach and destroy American society at any moment, the movement believed itself to be the antidote.

In a broad sense, the summer of 1967 encompassed a space for those who identified with the label, and encouraged the use of hallucinogenic drugs, free love and anti-war lexis. With radical sounds from rock 'n' roll musicians, such as The Rolling Stones and Jim Morrison, a consciousness was developing. *Time Magazine* defined the "hippie code," by writing their ethics down in 1967: 'Do your own thing, wherever you have to do it, and whenever you want; drop out. Leave society as you have known it. Leave it utterly.'[72] Through this ethical

[71] Terry Anderson, *Movement and the Sixties* (Oxford University Press,1995), p.ix.
[72] 'The Hippies: The Philosophy of a Subculture,' *Time Magazine,* 7 July 1967, cover.

definition, there are similarities between the "Beach Bum" surf movement and hippiedom, with members of the original surf movement in San Onofre choosing to live self-sufficiently on the beach to escape modern demands of suburban expectations. Although the individual ideals did not correlate with the surf movement, the broader ethics of liberty against mainstream society could be observed in both movements. It is therefore natural that the counterculture attracted some surfers. A necessary differentiation, however, was that not all surfers agreed with the hippie ideology, with some rallying against such ideas.

One of the most popular hippie locations was Laguna Beach in Orange County, once famed for its middle-class vacation homes, now a new Bohemia. As the *Los Angeles Times* article "Laguna Draws Hippies" warned, there is a new 'general Bohemian atmosphere,' with people 'in their blankets, beads, tunics, headbands, floppy hats and bare feet.'[73] After interviewing local residents, there was a consensus of local disdain about their arrival. In one conversation, a resident described the beach-dwelling hippies as 'parasites. They're lazy and don't contribute to the society they preach against and prey on. They preach against materialism, but they pan-handle […] in the 1930s they were called bums.'[74] This correlation with "Beach Bums" made a broader population link surfing to the hippy movement. Continuing the investigation into the new subculture, the *Los Angeles Times* sent Jack Smith to explore several beaches along California to find "flower children," known for their taking of hallucinogenic drugs.[75] However, out of the dozens of surfers he met, none met the requirements of this label. Asking a lifeguard where the hippies were, the lifeguard simply replied, 'Hippies? That was yesterday. They're all gone home. Or wherever they go.'[76] Unlike surfers, who remained loyal to a particular place, hippies were transient people.

There turned out to be no direct correlation between surfers and hippies, as not all hippies were surfers and vice versa. However, some individual surfers decided to identify as both, as the outbreak of war fuelled men to find solace in drugs and free love to escape the looming doom of global political changes. During the mid-1960s, as Matt Warshaw states, 'young, entitled, leisure-class' surfers were turning towards drugs, drug dealing and trafficking. With many surfers having flexible working hours and access to the water, smuggling drugs in surfboards was a quick way to earn money. Angered by the rise in drugs within the surf

[73] Gordon Grant, 'Laguna's Magnetic Charm Attracts Two Breeds of Hippies,' *Los Angeles Times,* 14 April 1968, p.A1.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Jack Smith, 'Left Out at a Love-in That Wasn't,' *Los Angeles Times,* June 26 1967, p.D1.
[76] Ibid.

community, world champion surfer Fred Hemmings penned an article to *SURFER* magazine to promote a healthy way of living, in 1969. He wrote, 'there will be no room for dope in the ranks of Professional surfing association' as surfers are becoming 'longhaired dope freaks who hallucinate and ride waves all day long.'[77] He concludes, 'although drugs seem to be in vogue with a great number of "in" surfers today, I can assure you that there is *no* hope in dope.'[78] Despite his pleas, drugs remained a consistent substance utilized within California's surf communities, particularly throughout the 1960s-1980s. Surfboard shaper Donald Takayama was impacted by the drug movement, after being caught smuggling cocaine in 1985. He wrote, 'I really blew it by getting involved with all that stuff,' with his business reputation negatively impacted by his involvement.[79]

Brant Page, from San Diego, grew up surfing with his father and his father's friends. He stated that 'surfing was so big and important to me,' that when the call to war arrived, 'I had no time for wars.'[80] Becoming a draft evader, Page travelled to many locations. He lived off fresh fruit and regularly used the psychedelic drug Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). Every month, Page wrote to the US Army to explain that he had a new home location, and he did not receive any requests to enlist. Surfers earned a reputation as draft evaders, their identity marked by refusing to give up the freedom of surfing. Kampion, before earning the job at *SURFER,* was also a '[Bob] Dylan-loving hippie kid' who made a complex series of plans on how to evade the war. [81] His ideas included escaping to Canada, 'plot to feign homosexuality, or even to become a homosexual.'[82] If these ideas did not succeed, some surfers turned to exploiting their "surf knots" as a way to evade war. Surf knots are injuries that appeared on the body from over-paddling. Although not a permanent problem, this ping-pong sized injury was seen as too debilitating for active duty. With the rise of draft-evading surfers, the broader reputation of wave-riders was being tarnished as unpatriotic.

Thus, when Pat Farley entered Vietnam, his own reputation was quickly tarnished by this wider, mainstream disdain towards drug-fuelled surfers. Leading a group of soldiers through the dense thick vegetation of Vietnam, merely days after arriving, Pat was sent to the front of

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[77] Fred Hemmings, 'Fred Hemmings: Professionalism is White!' *SURFER,* November 1969.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Scott Hulet, 'First Person: Donald Takayama,' *Surfer's Journal,* December 2008.
[80] *Between the Lines.*
[81] Todd Prodanovich, 'We're Re-Envisioning Classic Covers for Surfer's 60-Year Anniversary Volume,' *SURFER* [online], February 21 2020 <https://www.surfer.com/features/surfer-magazine-60-year-anniversary-reenvisioning-classic-surfer-covers> [accessed October 2023].
[82] *Between the Lines.*

the group and ridiculed by his superiors. His nervousness and relentless observations as they trekked through the jungle were observed by his comrades. Through torment on this journey through "Viet Cong" territory, Pat was shamed as a rookie, a "cherry." The focus of taunts was often about his hippy appearance. Yet, as the young veteran argues, surfers made some of the best soldiers as they were 'attuned to what is going on' as they 'tune into their environment.'[83] To him, the adrenaline of war was similar to that of catching a curling barrel wave, and he enjoyed the thrill.[84]

Enlisted surfers decided that the best way to release this frustrating negative image was often to find some solace amongst the waves and beaches of Vietnam. Soldier Tom Luker found waves during one mission, surfable waves. Rest and Relaxation (R&R) sites were soon constructed up and down beaches, allowing soldiers to enjoy some of the ocean's delights. The temptation of enjoying the ocean forced GI Lifeguards to be put on duty, after a series of soldiers drowned in the rough waves. To help with rescues, surfboards were sent to these beach outlets. The surfboards, however, soon became a tool of entertainment. The most prominent of these R&R stations was China Beach Surf Club, where only the elite surfing members were allowed to hire a board. Even *SURFER* made its appearance at these hubs, bringing images of California, Hawai'i and Australia to the war-torn nation. The magazine provided an escape for soldiers, offering home comforts of masculine identities and the simplistic joys of local surf spots. With this, as the war progressed into the late-1960s, the negative attitude towards surfers gradually declined, with many wanting to become members of the elite surf clubs.

The hippy movement also affected the lives of surfers in California. In 1969, the *Los Angeles Times* produced a scornful piece on Hobart "Hobie" Alter, founder of Hobie Surfboards. It blamed the surfboard shaper and surf shop owner for the hippy movement and the subsequential social effects. Referred to as a 'sea urchin,' Hobie was described as the creator of a surf 'cult' which consisted of people with 'long green hair, to sneer at the Establishment's workaday world, to go about as near-naked as Indians.'[85] This, however, was a claim with little substance. As Scott Laderman offers, during this period of political anxiety,

[83] *Between the Lines.*
[84] Ibid.
[85] Jim Murray, 'Hobie Cat a Tiger,' *Los Angeles Times,* April 10 1969, p.D1.

'it is not difficult to be a rebel when one defines rebellion as simply choosing to surf.'[86] During this time, Hobie in reality decided to move towards a more stable and acceptable lifestyle, with his focus being on supporting a mortgage and family. He released a new item in his shop, a move away from surfing-only products. The "Hobie Cat," a catamaran, began a new market for the surf shop owner. This sleek sailing equipment was a success in Dana Point's harbour and afar, with 41 out of 131 sail boats in Lake Havasu Desert Regatta being this new model.[87] Hobie's shift to a market for middle-class sailors rebranded his surf shop as a stable and traditionalist establishment for water leisure. It was therefore erroneous to assume Hobie was linked to any hippie involvement.

Such stereotypes showed the growing dichotomy between what non-surfers and surfers thought about the surf culture. For the original Californian surfers, most of whom were veterans of the Second World War, their dislike towards broader political and social changes grew more radical, even desiring to reverse the new "love" movement. Miki Dora, for example, was deemed the most extreme of this reversal. In his summary, Laderman describes Dora as a surfer who 'embraced a "rebellion" predicated on violent aggression, white supremacy, criminal activity […] he was the best known of the so-called surf Nazis.'[88] With Malibu beaches getting more crowded, a small group of surfers turned to Nazi symbols to promote violence and racial hatred, to scare away non-surfers and to create an exclusively white space for local male surfers. These symbols threatened to prevent minority surfers from entering Malibu's waters, similar to earlier de facto segregation rules. Surfer Nat Young commented, Dora is 'a supreme racist, always has been.'[89] Wearing the Iron Cross and swastika on his clothing and surfboards, Dora staffed a desk at a UCLA protest, to rally against civil rights. As a result, as Daniel Duane concludes in his article on "Surf Nazis," this group of surfers continued to perpetuate a 'white racial fantasy,' as 'nothing about either the sport or wave-riding or California itself is intrinsically white, much less blond.'[90] This divide pushed surfers away from one single cohesive culture and ethos, as several new branches of the surfer identity appeared, such as the surf hippie, Nazi, and "kook" beginner.

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[86] Scott Laderman, 'A World Apart: Pleasure, Rebellion, and the Politics of Surf Tourism,' in *The Critical Surf Studies Reader,* ed. by Dexter Zavalza Hough-Snee and Alexander Sotelo Eastman (Duke University Press, 2017), pp.47-61 (p.49).
[87] Jim Murray, 'Hobie Cat a Tiger.'
[88] Scott Laderman, 'A World Apart: Pleasure, Rebellion, and the Politics of Surf Tourism,' p.49.
[89] Daniel Duane, 'The Long, Strange Tale of California's Surf Nazis,' *The New York Times,* 28 September 2019 [online]
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/surf-racism.html> [accessed May 2025].
[90] Ibid.

Dora's temperament against the new age of surfing was further observed in an interview with Kampion in 1968, for *SURFER* magazine. When asked about his thoughts on the growing use of hallucinogenic drugs, he stated, 'I've made my peace with reality' and there should be more of a focus on the 'acute overpopulation problem' instead.[91] He declared that the real surf culture died on November 22nd 1963, when a 'curse' fell upon the stability of society, after the death of President John F Kennedy. [92] He continued, 'people who play ball by reading publications such as this are dooming themselves to extinction.'[93] Blaming the influences of magazines, publishers, cinematographers, and surf shop companies, for all of the cultural changes to surfing, he argued that the surf subculture was in its final stage. When Kampion asked for a further explanation, Dora commented on the evolution:

> The Genesis days [1949-1954] were a time of innovation, creation, birth and individuality. The Recession embodies the passage of time from the Genesis period's end to the present. Essentially, mediocrity and rehashed mediocrity. To the unenlightened eye, things have constantly been progressing, however, close scrutiny reveals the modern world to be a mere illusion of opulence, grandeur and good feelings. People currently riding the calm before the storm, and have been lulled into a false sense of security […] The Death is the fall of the above mentioned illusionary society, values and prosperity. It will also entail a general shattering of the weak.[94]

Behind the rainbow-coloured psychedelic covers of *SURFER,* the first of these covers published in March 1969, these dooming words of Dora appear on the pages within. It provided a juxtaposition for the reader, with the cover honouring modern freedoms of peace and love, with lexis of death predicted on the pages within. It was nonetheless not *SURFER'*s role to determine which strand of surf culture should be chosen as the leading identity; the magazine remained predominantly impartial and apolitical. As Sam George offered, the magazine displayed 'each of the components' that contributed to the 'overall perception of who we are as a culture.'[95] The biggest dilemma was that what had developed was a 'very diverse surf culture. Surfers of every ilk obviously still felt like it was their magazine.'[96] With the war forcing 'alpha males' out, Kampion explained that he aimed to illustrate that 'peace

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[91] Miki Dora, 'Interview: Mickey Dora,' *SURFER,* ed. by Drew Kampion, September 1969.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Sam George, 'I am Surfer,' in *Surfer Magazine 50 Years,* ed. by Sam George (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010), pp.132–140 (p.133).
[96] Ibid.

and love ruled the lineups.'[97] As a result, the question was asked, 'how do you maintain the authenticity – and intimacy – that is essential to the magazine's core audience?'[98] And the answer was to publish the controversy and invite the reader to choose who represented them on each page.

The Power of Advertisements

Controversy also surrounded *SURFER* in terms of the magazine's laissez-faire approach to derogative advertisements. In *SURFER* magazine*,* Dora, Greg Noll and Duke Boyd, owner of Hang Ten International clothing company, created an advertisement campaign for Noll's surfboard partnership with Dora. When initial advertisements began in 1964, the surfboard itself had not yet been designed. In 1966, "Da Cat" surfboard was finally released to the public, with a "step-back" design and soft full rails. Although not that radical in shape, it's old-school longboard style was desired due to the mention of Miki "Da Cat" Dora's name. Advertisements for the board continued, which was at the forefront of selling the product. For three years, the advertisements emphasized the surfer's value by earning the mysterious reputation from surfing "Da Cat." Some controversial advertisements for the Da Cat model included Dora mimicking the crucifix with his surfboards, and an edited theory of evolution, using apes to ridicule the abilities of parodied surfers. As David Rensin noted, the Da Cat surfboard advertisements were 'cutting too close to the bone.'[99] Due to the magazine's want of promoting businesses to traditional male surfers, the crude nature of these advertisements was dismissed as permissible. Despite some being offended, the majority of surfers – albeit those not identified in the joke – 'thought it was hilarious, and only Miki could have thought of it […] lots of people had the magazine.'[100] Thus, with surfers wanting to view these crude advertisements, Dora fuelled a further demand for the magazine. Commercialism worked in tandem with surfer localism, to help both the surfboard business and the magazine to survive.

With multiple campaigns published in the magazine, 'when the new issue of the *SURFER* arrived, the first thing they'd [business competition] do is to look to see who Greg and

[97] Drew Kampion, 'Editing *SURFER:* The Ultimate Reality,' p.141.
[98] Ibid., p.149.
[99] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), p.171.
[100] Ibid.

Mickey were screwing over this time, before they looked at their own ads.'[101] As Noll acknowledges, 'I'd have surfers say, "Jesus Christ, man, can you tone Dora down?"'[102] Creating controversy on the pages of *SURFER,* was the intention of the designers. The surfboard was designed to be for the loyal and aggressive surfer. As Noll argues, 'Da Cat is too pure and sensitive for the clumsy touch of the occasional pseudo-surfer.'[103] Dora, Noll and Boyd worked to revive the laid-back and traditional surf ethos of Dale Velzy, Noll's role-model and teacher. The Da Cat advertisements showed Dora 'agonizing over the encroaching wasteland of modern society, which was threatening his idyllic world,' stated Drew Kampion.[104] The revival of the isolated, masculine and cowboy surfer was seen as the only way to save surfing from becoming hippie and mainstream.

The most controversial of all of the board's advertisements appeared in the magazine's July 1967 issue, which is claimed by Rensin as 'the greatest surfboard ad of all time, certainly the most memorable.'[105] It was called "Da Cat's Theory of Evolution," dissecting the different surf identities, with Dora saying he had been asked to do so by 'several leading universities.'[106] Some key fabricated identities include, the "Retardess Kookus," 'the earliest stage, unworthy of discussion.'[107] The "Vallei San Fernando" were groups of inland surfers who were 'small brained.'[108] The surfers called "Mafias Dana Point" were an ode to Hobie and the birthplace of the surf culture, and were defined as having a 'pleasant smile and gaudy outfits. It is quick to sell out to any side.'[109] The final of the human evolution is "Homosapens *[sic]* Mickey Dora," 'the peak of perfection' and 'very rare.'[110] Although merely an advert for the Da Cat surfboard, the images illustrate the classification of surfers, surfboard shapers, and the industry. This marketing technique to be the best "evolved" surfer created a host of interest in Dora and Noll's partnership, leading to a surge in surfboard sales.

[101] Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge* (Berkley: North Atlantic Books, 1989), p.132.
[102] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.169.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard* (Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2007), p.109.
[105] Ibid. p.109.
[106] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.169.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

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Figure 7.2: 'Da Cat's Theory of Evolution,' *SURFER,* an advertisement, July 1967.

The Da Cat surfboard sold for $175 each, becoming one of the most popular surfboards of the 1960s.[111] Dora decided that there would only be a limited number of only a few hundred surfboards, which secured a legacy for the surfboard. It was a rare collectible. Creating a limited number of a popular surfboard was partly due to Dora's stringent demands. Noll remembers exploring the logistics of the surfboard with Dora, who showed up with a lawyer, 'whose tie was on sideways and his hair was messed up.'[112] Dora had a series of demands: he must be paid in '$50 bills sealed in manilla envelopes,' Noll could only 'print so many labels,' and Dora had to personally 'sign on the labels.'[113] Agreeing to these terms, it took Noll 'four days to get over the whole ordeal of watching Dora have to trust someone. But we did okay on Da Cat models, both times.'[114] By combining the uniqueness of the surfboard's rarity and the vigorous advertising in *SURFER,* Noll's Surfboards prospered.

The controversial theory of evolution advertisement also contributed to further profits for Noll. One of the earliest evolutionary apes used in the surfboard's advertisement was "Pigmio Phainas," named after Johnny Fain, who was labelled 'jerky' and 'uncoordinated.'[115] Upset

[111] Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.132.
[112] Ben Marcus, 'RF,' in *Surfing's Greatest Misadventures: Dropping in on the Unexpected* [e-book], ed. by Paul Diamond and Tyler McMahon (Solana Beach: Casagrande Press, 2006).
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.169.

by the remarks, Fain stated in an interview, 'I knew it was all-out warfare. He tried to get me off that beach [Malibu] and he thought he couldn't do it any other way except to humiliate me.'[116] As a result, Fain, who had won the Hermosa Beach Surf in 1968, asked Noll to join in a partnership to make "The Fain Formula" surfboard model. Matt Warshaw contends that this model was 'among the best California-made boards of the period.'[117] Fain had succeeded in his goal; 'That was my way of getting back at Miki for the Pigmio Phainas ad. That's the only reason I did it.'[118] For surfboard shapers, the magazine had created more business and competition, as the best surfers focused on being crowned with the best surfboard model.

SURFER contributed to surf culture's development. It was a guide that remained a raw reflection of outlawish contemporary opinions, opening its pages to comments from other surfers who wrote in to express their thoughts. In a time of cultural and political divisions, the magazine was left to explore the impact of current affairs through a multitude of voices and opinions. Even with Dora's advertisements, its humour appealed to surfers and helped them escape from contemporary political fears. It was loyal to its readers, even if it divulged unconventional ideas.

To be published in *SURFER* was a big deal in the 1960s, but why was printed validation necessary for the surfer during this time? George offers an answer; *SURFER* allowed the surfer to appreciate and adhere to 'the overall perception of who we are as a culture.'[119] From clothing worn to language used, the magazine dissected the cultural practices of the surf community into two segments: the hippies and the traditionalists. Acknowledging the perception of self was key to making a culture exclusive, however, for surfers, this "self" was formed by many factors. What is clear, as George furthers, is that what 'earlier surfniks [surfers] didn't have was the forum that distinguishes a cult […] surf movies of the '50s came close' but a film was 'nothing a surfer could hold up as proof.'[120] *SURFER* magazine was a published guide to surfing, that surfers referred to as proof of their existence. It was a place to escape to, whether from themselves or the wider issues of the nation out of their control. It catered for the Vietnam solider, the hippie surfer, and the upset Dora who was trying to grasp

[116] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.171.
[117] Matt Warshaw, 'The Bittersweet Ballad of Johnny Fain,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 13 March 2022 <https://www.eos.surf/joint/sunday-joint-3-13-2022-the-bittersweet-ballad-of-johnny-fain> [accessed August 2024].
[118] David Rensin, *All For a Few Perfect Waves,* p.172.
[119] Sam George, 'I am Surfer,' p.133.
[120] Ibid.

onto the meaning of surfing. All of these contributors and readers created *SURFER.* It provided a community project of reflection on the sport and the world. As will be observed in the next chapter, *SURFER* magazine even helped Noll to develop his own surf shop. This demand for a mythological and technological 1960s society enabled Noll's shop, one built upon unconventional practices and bizarre items, to thrive in California.

8. Like Da Bull in a Surf Shop: A Hawaiian Design

In August 1966, the International Surfing Hall of Fame Awards were hosted by the *International Surfing Magazine,* in the Santa Monica Civic, also home to the Academy Awards presentation. The night resembled the glitz and glamour similar to that of the Academy Awards, except its guests of the night were surfers, surfboard shapers and surf media representatives. The dress code was strictly black-tie, with many parading the room in white or black tuxedos, rather than the typical combination of sandy bare feet and boardshorts.

The Hollywood-style glamour was initially observed outside the Civic building, with surfboard manufacturer Greg Noll stepping out of a limousine with his arms open towards the crowds. The crowds consisted of 'teenage surfers noticeably uncomfortable in suits and ties with unruly sun-bleached hair,' hoping to catch a glimpse of surfing giants, and perhaps gain an autograph.[1] Also arriving in style was Huntington Beach's "Hole in the Wall" surf team member Bob Carbonell, who drove into the block in a beloved golden Rolls Royce, loaned from the Movieland Wax Museum. This car was commonly used to transport A-list actors and actresses to and from the museum to see their wax figures, but the always-smiling Carbonell had managed to hire it for the night. Inside the venue, the event began with a cocktail party at the Cliff House, with invitees swiftly moved to the restaurant for the awards ceremony.

Inside the Civic, during the ceremony, music played, champagne flowed, and an uncomfortable Miki Dora looked out of place amongst the pageantry. Constricted by a black tuxedo, the surfer had his own self-presented golden medal pinned to his chest, claiming he was already the 'ultimate' surfer, irrelevant of any awards.[2] As documented by the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* who reviewed the evening in detail, 'There comes a time in our lives to be humble. Mickey [*sic*] Dora might well have passed his few seconds by.'[3] Dora, nonetheless, received several awards from four categories, adding further rise to his surfing status.

The 1966 Awards ceremony was the first glamourous parade of the world's best surfers, filled with a variety of personalities, skillsets and ages. It paid particular tribute to those that had nurtured the foundations of the surf subculture, that had now consumed the majority of California's shorelines. Critically examining the winners of the categories, Matt Warshaw

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[1] Ron Haworth, "Surf Spray," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 17 June 1966.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

comments that the results were 'more to do with seniority than merit.'[4] The trophies handed out were equally sophisticated, mirroring that of other high-brow sports awards. The award had a brown stand with a plaque showing the name and category, and upon it was a metal stand with an Academy Awards-style man standing, surrounded by a globe structure. Attached to the top of the globe was a sign with metal detail of an albatross and a carved grid-like globe, saying "We cover the surfing world." The award, similar to the new marble-based competition trophies, elevated surfing as a legitimate professional sport. It was part of a new movement in the mid-1960s, where 'surfboard makers were still looking for – begging for – mainstream acceptance.'[5] In order to create more demand in surfboard sales, more financial rewards in competitions and a long-term career from professional surfing, the sport had to undergo a remodelling to fulfil the criteria of being a reputable activity. The Awards played a part in this identity change.

One photo of the 1966 Hall of Fame inductees depicted eleven winners holding their trophies, most of whom with red leis, Hawaiian floral garlands, around their necks. The one person not to wear the lei was Dora, blurred and moving mid-photo. Within this group there were several surfboard shapers, including Greg Noll and a smiling Dale Velzy, who was chosen to accept the posthumous award for Bob Simmons. Wearing a black-and-white checkered bow-tie and described as surfing's 'John Wayne,' Noll accepted two awards in both the categories of Hall of Fame Inductees and Big-Wave Surfer.[6] The bleach-blond surfer, Dewey Weber, owner of "Surfboards by Dewey Weber," also featured in the line-up, winning three awards. The common thread was that the more dominant surf shop owners were also some of the best surfers on the West Coast, as demonstrated by the number of awards that they received. It was a star-studded night witnessing an array of different surfers, from several global destinations. As the winners were based upon the results of the magazine's ballot votes, the awards seemed different from the usual competition events, whereby surfers got awards directly from ocean contests and physical mastery of the waves. The Hall of Fame winners were voted upon based on their general surfing abilities and characteristics, offering a more community-led celebration of those that made the sport greater. By the end of the night, as the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* concludes, 'there was an air of "we've come of age,"' and that it was a 'high point of modern-day surfing.'[7] Immediately after the awards, the night continued with

[4] Matt Warshaw, *History of Surfing* (Chronicle Books, 2011), p.222.
[5] Ibid., p.224.
[6] Ron Haworth, 'Surf Spray.'
[7] Ibid.

a cocktail party at the prestigious Cliff House. The Civic ceremony was a big success. A similar event for 1967 was in the works by the end of the night, offering to turn the high-brow event into an annual tradition to modernize and popularize surfing, and promote the image of the wave-riding sport to new audiences.

[THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS THESIS FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS]

Figure 8.1: '1966 Hall of Fame Inductees,' a photograph taken by LeRoy Grannis, featured in "1966 International Surfing Hall of Fame Awards," *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/contest/1966-international-surfing-hall-of-fame-awards> [accessed January 2024].

One Hall of Fame inductee had a significant hold over the sport's commercial identity in the 1960s; in particular, he sold the thrill of big-wave surfing, globally. Greg "Da Bull" Noll had become a big name in surfing during this decade, his trajectory linked with many of the cultural threads of the post-war surf period. Noll matured in tandem with the surf shop's boom, inherently intertwining his personal story with the development of the surfing commercial space in California. He was one of the initial young apprentices who observed the first surf shop, under the guidance of his mentor, Dale Velzy. He dabbled in creating magazines and screened his own surf films, in a similar manner to John Severson and Bruce Brown. He was one of the first people to surf the notorious Outside Pipeline, in Hawai'i, a wave that soared 25ft in height. In the 1960s, he copied the polyurethane foam formula used by Gordon "Grubby" Clark to advance his own surfboard designs. He manufactured mass popularity through mysterious *SURFER* magazine advertisements for his signature "Da Cat" surfboard models. His easy-going nature and continued willingness to adapt his methods to

mirror new commercial trends in the sport, enabled him to shift the identity of the surf shop, and make it thrive in the 1960s golden commercial age. As Matt Warshaw contributes, Da Bull seized every opportunity that came his way, 'Greg Noll Surfboards, which like Noll itself, was big and solid.'[8] Achieving these milestones before the age of 30, Noll enabled a youthful revival of the sport. His laid-back approach, and drive to change the direction of the sport, fuelled new radical developments in the surfboard manufacturing process and in the popularity of surfing.

It was thus no surprise that Noll was deemed by the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* as the 'hero, a John Wayne to the gremmies [young surfers]' at the awards ceremony in 1966.[9] He was, in a sense, like Wayne, a national hero. Comparing the obituaries of both men printed in the *Los Angeles Times,* Wayne and Noll were both remembered most for their grit, pursuing of danger, and larger-than-life paternal charisma. Wayne and Noll grew up working numerous laborious jobs in their childhoods. Small in stature as children, both men underwent a growth spurt as teenagers, growing into muscular and large builds that boosted their masculine status in society. Wayne and Noll were seen as hard-working professionals and personable men, earning mass popularity from peers and youths. As the *Times* article summarized about Wayne, he was a 'consummate professional,' who worked at a 'breakneck pace' to become a 'larger-than-life' character with a 'rough-and-tumble pioneer spirit.'[10] Similarly, Noll was described as an 'entrepreneur' having an 'outsize personality,' with a 'ferocious and fearless style.'[11] Both were referred to as "legendary" role-models. Noll embraced being a paternal and popular role-model for many youths in the 1960s, offering an escapist environment in his shops that honoured integrity and good work-ethics. As an apprentice of "Greg Noll Surfboards," Eddie Talbot reminisced, 'Greg was the closest thing to a father I've ever had […] Greg was a model to me.'[12] His partnership with the notorious Dora, proved an example of the unique bond Noll could create with anyone. To understand why Noll had such a

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[8] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 1 July 2021
<https://www.eos.surf/feature/greg-noll-surf-ad> [accessed January 2024].
[9] Ron Haworth, 'Surf Spray.'
[10] Robert Kistler, 'John Wayne Dies at 72 of Cancer,' *Los Angeles Times,* 12 June 1979, p.SD1.
[11] Steve Marble, 'Greg Noll, South Bay Surfer and Legendary Bi-Wave Rider, Dies,' *Los Angeles Times* [online], 29 June 2021
<https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2021-06-29/greg-noll-south-bay-surfer-legendary-big-wave-rider-dies> [accessed January 2024].
[12] Eddie Talbot, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* ed. by Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1989), p.116.

distinct impact on surfers in the 1960s, it is necessary to explore the circumstances of his own youthhood, that differed significantly from other surf shop predecessors.

Greg Noll and His Hawaiian Dream

Hawaiian rituals and cultural practices first seeped into California's shores during the sport's founding decade on the mainland in the 1930s, with the Islands being the birthplace and main exporter of modern surfing. Surfing culture found a base in San Onofre, in the early-thirties. Californian-born, Lorrin Carrell "Whitey" Harrison cemented the Hawaiian culture into Southern California, after he stowed away to Hawai'i to find work as a beach boy. Surrounded by surfing Hawaiian natives, Whitey learnt that surfers 'love their music and instruments as well as their waves.'[13] He would sit in front of the Waikīkī Tavern, watching surfers 'make music till we fell asleep.'[14] In this decade, it was common practice for wave-riders to stow away on freighter ships to visit the Islands to have a glimpse of 'paradise.'[15] When Whitey returned to the mainland, he wore a straw hat, played a ukulele and donned a Hawaiian shirt. Jim Kempton states that the ukulele was an instant hit with surfers in San Onofre, as it had four strings and could easily be played with a 'happy sound.'[16] Across the shores of San Onofre, a world away from suburban and urban growth in the bustling cities, Hawaiian culture flourished as part of the new "Beach Bum" lifestyle. Those living in San Onofre's secluded cove spent their days under a palm-thatch shelter on the beach, and would surf and fish all day. It was a small Californian space representing Hawaiian surfing cultures. With the outbreak of war, the beach transformed into Camp Pendleton, a private marine base. As a result, the Hawaiian cultural exchange was halted.

Noll was born in 1937 – the same year that Walt Disney released *Hawaiian Holidays* (1937), a vivid Technicolour animation showing Goofy surfing a wave on a plank in front of his beloved friends, Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Pluto and Donald Duck. The short colourful film started the "Disneyfication" process of Hawai'i, with visual elements of Polynesian artifacts and cultural symbols, such as the ukulele, hula, surfboard, and lei, turned into cartoonish objects of fun exoticism. The film offered a unique combination of both Hawaiian lifestyles, through its scenery and activities, and California personalities, through the familiar

[13] Malcolm Gault-Williams, *Legendary Surfers Volume 3: 1930s* (Lulu.com, 2012), p.78.
[14] Ibid., p.78.
[15] Ibid., p.75.
[16] 'How Southern California Went Hawaiian,' *Dana Point Times,* 8 July 2014.

Disney characters. Only 8-minutes in length, Brandy Nālani McDougall and Georganne Nordstrom critically see *Hawaiian Holidays* as exploiting Hawaiian culture for American consumption, as the film removed indigenous peoples and showcased Hawai'i as empty lands open for endless adventures.[17] With Hawai'i becoming the 50th American state in 1959, Disney continued to utilize the exoticism of the Polynesian Islands through Disneyland's "Enchanted Tiki Room" built in the park in 1963. The fascination with Hawaiian culture and the nation's spirituality, led to some youths wanting a more Hawaiian-style of surfing in California – this group included Greg Noll. As Tak Kawahara explained, Noll was different to other surfers, 'the Hawaiian style is a big part of Greg. For all practical purposes, Greg is Hawaiian […] he loves talkin' [*sic*] Hawaiian style with all da [*sic*] boys.'[18] How did a young San Diego-born surfer produce a dual surf culture that aided this wider collaboration between Hawai'i and California?

Since he was a child, Noll was surrounded by a blossoming local surf community, with the already established Manhattan Beach Surf Club merely seven houses away from his home. He was a second-generation Californian surfer living in a post-war consumer society. He grew up living with his mother and step-father, Ash Noll, a chemical engineer who would later help Noll to replicate the polyurethane surfboard. At the age of 8, Noll worked at the pier, dishing out bait to fishermen, watching the fish, ocean and tides. This is where he observed the older surfers on the sands below, including Velzy and Bev Morgan. After asking to buy a second-hand redwood surfboard for $15 from one of the Club members, Noll created a large wooden trolley to wheel the surfboard up and down the beach to practice his surfing. He was not the only surfing child in the late-1940s, with Buzzy Bent and Bing Copeland also surfing California's shorelines. Both Copeland and Noll were decided upon by the Club to be young honorary members, being called the "Everlasting Mascots." They were to be the only children allowed membership.

Noll remembers 'we grew up quickly, surrounded by guys eighteen and older, in their prime. They lived to surf, drink, raise hell and score heavily with women.'[19] The members were like older brothers to Noll, mentoring him throughout his teenage years. For example, Morgan

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[17] Brandy Nālani McDougall and Georganne Nordstrom, 'Stealing the Piko: (Re)placing Kānaka Maoli at Disney's Aulani Resort,' in *Huihui: Navigating Art and Literature in the Pacific,* ed. by Jeffrey Carroll, McDougall and Nordstrom (University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), pp.160-181 (p.164).
[18] Tak Kawahara, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* ed. by Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1989), p.113.
[19] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* ed. by Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1989), p.17.

would drop Noll off at Mira Costa High School after their morning surf together, in return for a cooked breakfast at Noll's house. The two of them would arrive in Morgan's black Chevy, which had a hole in the back window for their long balsa surfboards to stick out from comfortably. Students and teachers would stare as the loud-motored car arrived in the car park of the school. His reputation of hanging out with "Beach Bums" led to multiple trips to the principal's office to discuss other career choices away from the beach. It was a pointless discussion, as Noll states, 'my folks already knew that they had lost control.'[20] When not in school, Noll would do everything with the Club, from carving balsa surfboards in Velzy's new garage, to drinking beer on the sands. With Velzy and the members focus on 'women, alcohol and surfboards,' Noll jokes, 'How were we poor little guys supposed to turn out?'[21]

As he entered his sophomore years of high school during the 1950s, Noll witnessed his peers becoming caught up in the growing teenage subculture dedicated to surfing. Several other young and later-influential surfers attended the same school, such as Weber, who graduated in 1956. Noll observed a significant increase in new surfing teenagers. Instead of American Football and Varsity teams, many males who would have worn a 'letterman sweater' opted to be part of the "Beach Bum" lifestyle.[22] Growing up in the surfing boom, Noll's identity became part of a fast-growing new surf culture, one that had previously been limited to veterans and outlawish figures evading modern expectations. Trying to find his own identity, and after acquiring the necessary skills from Velzy, Noll started to shape his own balsa surfboards in his family's garage.

Unlike the other surfboard shapers in Orange County, Noll's childhood evaded the majority of the Great Depression years, and subsequent war years. Instead, his youthhood revolved around two booms, which witnessed a surge of affluence and technical developments. Initially, one economic boom was under the New Deal projects that spanned California. The Work Progress Administration (WPA) of 1935 enforced a new wave of infrastructure to the South Bay area, creating more jobs for migrants and an improved quality of life for those in the state. Under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the WPA program enabled major infrastructure changes for education buildings, airports, libraries and parks. This was

[20] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge*, p.18.
[21] Ibid., p.27.
[22] Greg Noll, "Greg Noll Interview," *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], ed. by Matt Warshaw, 1989 <https://www.eos.surf/interview/greg-noll> [accessed January 2024].

particularly present near Manhattan Beach, with new elementary schools and stadiums for baseball being opened.

A second economic boom was continued with a subsequent wave of infrastructure upgrades after the war, which transformed old military training sites and wartime spaces into new public buildings. The potential of redeveloping California's landscapes at a quick rate was first pioneered by Levitt and Sons. During wartime, civilian construction was halted, with the prioritized demand for low-cost housing in defence areas. This allowed real estate corporations to gain the necessary experience to build identical residential buildings quickly through mass production. Once the war ended, civilian construction resumed, these businesses turned to creating large-scale residential operations, known as suburbs and creating the necessary facilities to cater for growing populaces. The population of Manhattan Beach, for example, increased by 175% between 1940-1950, with Noll being part of this suburban migration.[23] Thus, unlike other members of the surfing community, Noll was raised in this suburban golden era of modern infrastructure in South Bay.

Surfing was a popular leisure for those moving to South Bay. In 1958, the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California opened to students, a new 408-acre addition for the university. In the *Los Angeles Times* article announcing the campus, the title heavily focused on it being a "Sand and Surf Campus," with its own private beach.[24] Replacing the once military air base training centre for the Marine Corps, the campus signalled an age of affluence for a leisure-based society. This is similarly mirrored at El Camino College, who wrote a report on the need for outdoor education across California's education institutions. In their findings, they agreed that 'more than three-million college youths would profit by learning activities in camps, parks, forests, gardens, and on the water.'[25] As a result, students would have better knowledge on 'science, outdoors skills, citizenship, social living.'[26] One example workshop in this report recommended ocean-use. This included scuba diving lessons, skin diving, 'uses of floats,' learning about 'surf and rip currents,' and oceanography.[27] Through both of these institutes, California's education system showed an

[23] Barry Checkoway, 'Large Builders, Federal Housing Programmes, and Postwar Suburbanization,' in *The City: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences,* Vol.2, ed. by Michael Pacione (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.37-61 (p.41).
[24] 'Sand and Surf Campus Set at Santa Barbara,' *Los Angeles Times,* 22 June 1953, p.2.
[25] Doris E. Downey, *An Outdoor Education Curriculum for El Camino College* (University of Southern California, 1958), p.4.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Doris E. Downey, *An Outdoor Education Curriculum for El Camino College*, p.71.

interest in implementing surfing and ocean sports into the curriculum by the late-1950s. Unlike older Club members, who had few surfing classmates before and during the war, Noll was raised amongst a new local teenage surf subculture that increased across beachside campuses.

Wanting to break away from California and follow the footsteps of older surfers, Noll sought a more adventurous lifestyle that promised a world of big-wave surfing. Noll transferred to Waipahu High, in O'ahu, Hawai'i. He reflects back on this move in his autobiography, 'somehow I bullshitted my folks into believing that Billy Ming [a Hawaiian surfer in Makaha] was a fine, upstanding individual and that he was going to be my guardian while I finished high school on the Islands.'[28] Being on average seven years younger than his Club peers, Noll 'couldn't wait to go' and have his own adventure in the Islands.[29] He achieved his goal; Noll moved into a Quonset hut in Makaha, living on the beach with Ming.

During his years in Hawai'i, Noll was one of two "haoles," or white Americans. Noll reflects on his school years as being 'a really tough time,' as his classmates found joy in 'spitting on the ground in front of me wherever I walked.'[30] Knowing he had to adapt quickly to the Hawaiian culture to find friendships, Noll learnt to use his creativity to earn respect in the community. He began to use his woodwork skills, which he learnt through Velzy's shop as an apprentice, to make friends. Knowing one classmate, a three-hundred-pound Hawaiian who had a high-ranking in the school's hierarchy, was bad at woodwork, Noll helped him with his projects. Earning the respect of this classmate, he was accepted as 'his haole boy.'[31] Eventually Noll began to adapt to Hawaiian culture, not wearing his shoes to school and also learning the language. As Kawahara mentioned, Noll picked up 'their way of talkin' [*sic*], he loves Hawaiian food,' and would export these skills to California on his visits home.[32]

In 1957, after graduating High School, Noll decided to ride the bigger waves of Hawai'i, taking on Waimea Bay, which had only been surfed once by a lifeguard since a young Honolulu surfer died attempting to in 1943. Knowing the possible dangers, Noll paddled out and caught the 15ft wave, and rode it with ease. In this moment, Noll knew his life was to be dedicated to big-wave surfing, but he still needed a sustainable income. Noll sought work in any sphere of surfing. In an episode of *The Surfer's Journal: Filmmakers* featuring Noll, the

[28] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.39.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Greg Noll, 'Greg Noll Interview.'
[31] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.40.
[32] Tak Kawahara, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.113.

shaper remembered how he 'just wanted to make a living anyway I could, if there was a buck in going out and waxing boards for guys, I would have probably done it. I wanted to shape boards, I wanted to make movies, I wanted to do anything and be part of surfing in any way that I could.'[33] Noll explored a multitude of careers in the field, usually with a camera in his hand to capture any moment. His list of accomplishments include journalism, with his one-issue *Surfer's Annual* and surf cartoon strips; and filmmaking, through his five surf films. Assessing Noll's media production, Matt Warshaw describes these ventures as looking like 'a middle schooler's cut-and-paste college project' and a 'middling TikTok.'[34] With these media projects gaining little financial success, Noll turned to his preferred art of surfboard shaping, the skill that he thrived in as a youth. In the year after graduating High School, Noll was making ten balsa surfboards a week from his garage.[35]

It was his surf at Waimea Bay, however, that cemented his name in popular culture, with his epic ride at Outside Pipeline. The third reef of Pipeline, known as Outside, rarely came to fruition, as it only occurred during a combination of extreme conditions. It was the furthest away surfable part of the Pipeline waves, and it took a lot of skill to ride. Paddling out with Phil Edwards, another big-wave rider, they began to surf the dangerous conditions, with Bruce Brown filming on the shore. The third reef was a tubular break that funnels energy and spits out the surfer once the tube is completed. One of the 25ft swells began to build, and Noll took off onto the wave. Recollecting that moment, Noll states, 'I was riding with my back to the wave, goofyfoot [right-leg leading], and it was a god-awful uneasy feeling […] for about fifteen and twenty-feet, I was airborne. Then I was literally blown off my board.'[36] Surviving the impact, the footage showing the courage of Noll became an instant hit with surfers. He became known as Da Bull from his surfing of Pipeline, after Edwards called him 'you bull-headed sonofabitch.'[37] This established Noll as a big-wave surfer, and gave him instant status elevation. With this famed reputation, Noll began to build his own surfboard industry, one that spanned both California and Hawai'i.

[33] *The Surfer's Journal Filmmakers: Greg Noll,* dir. by The Surfer's Journal (1996) [Documentary].
[34] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game.'
[35] *The Surfer's Journal Filmmakers: Greg Noll.*
[36] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.138.
[37] Ibid., p.136.

Greg Noll Surfboards

Kawahara, known as the Father of Japanese Surfing, accurately refers to Noll's commercial spaces as a 'state-of-the-art operation from start to finish.'[38] By the early 1960s, Noll had already opened a small retail outlet situated on the Pacific Coast Highway at Hermosa Beach, California. In 1965, Noll expanded this successful commercial space by opening an additional 20,000 square-ft factory a few blocks away. The factory space was where the surfboards were manufactured, and it was the largest surfboard factory at the time. Inside the factory, he introduced board production on a mass-scale, an entire world away from Velzy's simplistic workshop for hand-carved balsa surfboards, despite only 15-years between the two spaces opening. The factory had its own foam room for polyurethane surfboard blanks to be blown. These blanks would then be wheeled into a shaping room with eight workhorses. Once shaped, they entered a temperature-controlled laminating room, and a heat-controlled space for glassing. In the sanding areas, huge blower systems were used to remove 21,000 cubic-ft of dusty air per-minute from the room.[39] As Noll states, 'it was quite an operation,' with up to 40 surfboards being produced a day.[40]

If you wanted to find the big-wave surfer, his office was also situated within the factory. The room had a carpeted floor and a tank of exotic fish, including piranhas. The office exuded corporate professionalism, combined with Hawaiian exoticism. As Kawahara remembered, 'Everything is so new and clean […] the first time I went into his office I was covered with foam, dust and resin. I thought the least I could do was take off my shoes.'[41] Noll was serious about his business, and it is unsurprising that he quickly earnt the reputation as a reliable and uncompromising businessman.

With this layout, this seemingly more business-oriented space reflected an environment akin to Hobart "Hobie" Alter, who was the first to have a factory and separate retail outlet for two functional spaces: the workshop, and the showroom. A distinct difference, however, was that Noll remained focused on the consumer being a "traditional surfer." His outlets were more than simply industrial workspaces, despite their impeccably clean and active nature. They were spaces to share "The Aloha Spirit." This is defined by the University of Hawai'i, as a

[38] Tak Kawahara, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.113.
[39] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.112.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Tak Kawahara, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.113.

person exuding ‘charm, warmth and sincerity’ with no obligation for something in return, except shared ‘good feelings.’[42]

Despite his ambitious work ethic, his “aloha” spirit and promotions of social get-togethers caused the outlets to have another function depending on its purpose of the hour. Through this lens, Noll’s commercial spaces offered a “compromise.” The space paid tribute to Velzy’s original Manhattan Beach workshop, which was predominantly a space for barbeques and beer socials in the evening. Greg Noll Surfboards’ everchanging function, from commercial to social, fuelled this notion that the surf shop – even with its flawless industrial systems in place – could not completely leave its community function as a clubhouse. Noll prioritized this “aloha” aspect to his customers and in his business competition, allowing the community to partake in celebrating their surf culture. This dual function explains why outlaws such as Dora and Johnny Fain, who evaded other commercial partnerships, ended up striking deals with Noll to build exclusive signature model surfboards.

Through his likeable and sociable nature, Noll spent many days with other surfers in the field of shaping and filmography, despite often being in business competition with them. Although competing for business, Noll emphasized that it was ‘friendly competition,’ as ‘these guys are the guys that you’re around, you’re surfing with, your buddies.’[43] If Noll was in his car and saw Bud Browne standing with his camera for his latest film, the shaper would ‘grab the camera equipment […] just to watch his butt pucker.’[44] Chuckling whilst telling these stories, Noll emphasized how much he valued sharing moments with the close-knit network of surfers in the 1960s.

Noll’s largest competition came from surf corporations at Dana Point, the hub and founding area of surf consumerism, by a group of surfers known as the Dana Point Mafia. Included in this list was Hobie’s surf team: Edwards, Joey Cabell and Corky Carroll. Other Mafia members were filmmaker Bruce Brown, fabric designers Walter and Flippy Hoffman, journalist John Severson, and shop owner Dick Metz. Grubby, famed for founding the polyurethane foam business in Southern California, was also a member of this elite group. In 1965, to celebrate the opening of Greg Noll Surfboards’ workspace, Noll hosted a party, inviting almost all local surfboard shapers and influential surfers. To find humour in their

[42] Center for Labor Education and Research, ‘Hawai’i Law of the Aloha Spirit,’ *University of Hawai’i* [Online] <https://www.hawaii.edu/uhwo/clear/home/lawaloha.html> [accessed January 2024].
[43] *The Surfer’s Journal Filmmakers: Greg Noll.*
[44] Ibid.

supposed new competition at this open-house party, the surf Mafia decided to roleplay their name. Dick Metz reflected on how they prepared for the party, 'We all grew moustaches and raided local thrift shops for old clothes. The guys wore twenties-style double-breasted suits, old hats and carried toy guns.'[45] Everyone was a chosen mafia 'gangster,' except Edwards who dressed as the law enforcement agent, Elliot Ness.[46] The Mafia hired a bus to get to the party.

The party was held in the large-scale factory, and inside was a buffet dinner and an open bar. Despite its well-organised manner, the night remained unserious. Metz remembers how Noll 'had a whole program planned for the evening, including a bogus awards presentation – things like elevator shoes for Dewey Weber [who was 5ft 3" in height] and a time bomb for Hobie.'[47] Despite humorously stating that his new business would threaten Hobie Surfboards, the night was filled with joy. For Metz, that night was seen as 'the greatest party of all time.'[48] Noll's state-of-the-art factory was officially opened to accelerate his business further.

Through these processes, Noll spearheaded a new model for the surf industry, and created an inclusive, state-of-the-art, dual functioning industrial empire. Importantly, this notion was one he wanted to encourage and export globally. This blueprint for a modern surf business, one which included a factory and a homely space for gathering, was eagerly transferred to younger generations by the owner, with Noll mentoring many youths to help build their own businesses across both Southern California and Hawai'i. To name a few, he mentored Eddie Talbot (E.T. Surfboards), Ben Aipa (AIPA Surf), and Pat "Gumby" Ryan (E.T. Surfboards). Therefore, in the 1960s, Noll was at the heart of the surf shop's developments and its upgrades. His commercial outlets reflected an entirely distinct and complex system that had yet to be featured in Southern California, one that merged the nuggets of technical advances of others into one system.

With his travelling to and from Hawai'i for big-wave swells, it was innate for his business to expand onto the Islands themselves in the 1960s. Drew Kampion summarizes that Noll's relationship with Hawaiians was unique, 'initially bullying his way into their circle and finally gaining their respect and abiding friendship.'[49] This friendship would allow his

[45] Dick Metz, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* ed. by Greg Noll and Andrea Gabbard (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1989), p.117.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard* (Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2007), p.73.

business to soar across the Islands. Managed by Charlie Galanto, a big-wave enthusiast, "Greg Noll Surfcenter Hawaii" was born, distributing and mending Noll's surfboards in the community. It was located at 1235 Kapiolani Boulevard, near Waikīkī Beach; this address was sometimes printed on the surfboard's design to advertise the shop further. Galanto reflects on his ownership of the centre, stating 'we had a major thing going on there […] everyone shaped in my shop.'[50] Metz commented that 'Greg and Charlie made a good team. Charlie was very loud and vocal. He'd get on the radio and promote the shop, really taking up the big-wave deal.'[51] This development into Hawai'i, opened the door for Noll's industry to obtain Hawaiian partnerships to further his reputation across the Islands.

The most famous partnership was with the "Father of Modern Surfing," Duke Kahanamoku. Kahanamoku was the first to demonstrate surfing globally in the 1910s, and was known for his Olympic gold-medal in swimming, and lifeguarding skills. To partner with Kahanamoku was an honour, with Noll stating, 'he embodied the Spirit of Aloha and the purity of the Polynesian approach to life. It was one of the great privileges of my life.'[52] The partnership began whilst Noll designed and crafted signature surfboards for his team ahead of the Duke Kahanamoku Invitational Surfing Championships. Since 1965, the Invitational had promoted the best of big-wave surfing, and was aired on CBS television. During this time of preparations, Kahanamoku asked if he could partner with Noll to create a signature board for his team, that honoured Hawaiian materials. The team included big-wave surfers Jeff Hackman, Fred Hemmings, Steve Bigler, Paul Stauch and Bruce Valluzzi. This unexpected partnership led to a series of advertisements in *SURFER* magazine to promote this new collaborative design. The centre of one advertisement page showed a colour photograph of Noll's team with two signature surfboards, with Noll and Kahanamoku stood on a bridge behind. The surfboard series for the Team was called the "Duke Kahanamoku Nollrider." After finishing the signature boards, Noll received a wristwatch inscribed with, "To Greg, From Duke, 1967."[53] By collaborating with Kahanamoku, these surfboards became an expensive and rare collectable, with very few surfboards of that era donning the Hawaiian's name.

The partnership was cut short with the death of Kahanamoku in 1968. To honour his friend, Noll recreated a couple of traditional surfboards in Kahanamoku's shaping style, which

[50] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard*, p.94.
[51] Dick Metz, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.117.
[52] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard,* p.131.
[53] Ibid., p.72.

involved hand carving redwood without a template. Using traditional myrtle and redwood, the wooden grains shone with deep red and golden tones. Noll referred to the wood as looking as if 'it can have fire in it' and being simply 'beautiful, just gorgeous.'[54] These surfboards were a fitting tribute for the Hawaiian, and illustrated the friendship between the two surfers.

Thus, Noll, through his youthhood, immersed himself in two different cultures, and offered a different stance on the surf shop model. Being part of a new wave of surfboard shapers, his late exposure to the original surf subculture in a post-war affluent boom, allowed him to view the sport differently. Instead of focusing on the nostalgic past and the once-had-been surf culture on the shores of Malibu and San Onofre, Noll was interested in the what-could-be of the surf shop. Noll was not afraid to adapt the model blueprint, which had been passed down to him by its founders. The viewpoint of the second-generation of California shapers afforded a new stance on commercialism. Further, he had a focus on uniting California and Hawai'i, and he earnt an informal dual-citizenship of both locations and cultures. He utilized his successful business in mass-manufacturing, to create an equally successful enterprise in Hawai'i, illustrating a blend of identities in an era of Hawaiian cultural exportation.

The King of Marketing

Although Hawaiian culture played a significant role in Noll's personality, his childhood at Manhattan Beach remained an integral part of his Hermosa Beach retail shop's charm, and Noll blended the Californian into his stores. The façade of his retail shop, after all, was a radical bright shade of turquoise blue. As this was the primary space for sales, it had to attract customers. To do this, Noll focused on a 'side gig as a marketing man,' as Warshaw comments.[55] In fact, 'I'd go so far as to say that Noll was as good at marketing as he was riding huge Waimea.'[56] There was a multitude of marketing techniques that Noll used to sell his business to the public, with certain objects becoming solely linked to the surfer – for example, his black-and-white striped boardshorts. With established iconography to promote his image, these items allowed him to be recognized by the public with a few simple descriptors. This section will observe how these surf consumer icons were developed and

[54] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard,* p.72.
[55] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game.'
[56] Ibid.

how they attracted the public's attention, through business cards, advertisements and mysterious tales. One particular mystery that captured the public's interest was "The Thumb."

Walking into his Hermosa Beach retail store in the late-1960s, Noll was greeted by a crowd gathering around a glass display case. From a first glance, the cabinet was filled with an assortment of the usual items, such as fins and surf wax, placed neatly next to the cash register. Noll remembered watching what 'must have been eight or ten guys shoulder-deep' pushing each other to get a glimpse of one item that stood out.[57] On the shelf, tucked beside the typical surf accessories, was a severed thumb suspended in a blob of resin, the material used to glass a surfboard. The thumb was preserved indefinitely as a morbid paperweight pointing towards its onlookers. It was strictly not for sale; it was a promoted piece of shop memorabilia. Watching the group stare at the unusual artifact, Noll had grown used to the dialogue between gaping customers, that usually went as following: "Hey, take a look at this fake thumb!"[58] Which was soon corrected with, "Jesus Christ, it isn't fake."[59] The dirt under the nail was the final determining factor that illustrated that this was – indeed – a real thumb. The next follow-up question was who did the thumb once belong to? The answer was shrouded in secrecy by the shop's employees.

It was revealed in Noll's later autobiography that it belonged to Ricky James, a shaper for Greg Noll Surfboards, who suffered an accident whilst sawing centre strips for the Da Cat signature surfboard model. After racing to the hospital with the hopes of it being reattached, it was clear that the thumb could not be saved. As the nurse went to dispose of it, Noll quietly asked if he could keep it, but 'I didn't tell Ricky.'[60] Returning back to the workshop, the shop owner placed the thumb in a Dixie cup and filled it with a batch of resin from his factory. This unique paperweight earned its pride of place in the surf shop. A then-twelve-year-old, Mike Purpus, reminisced, 'my friends and I hung out at The Greg Noll shop after school and passed around "The Thumb."'[61] The Tale of the Thumb spread across California.

With it on display, James, who continued to work for Noll – albeit without a thumb – finally got wind of the paperweight that was coaxing in people from around the nation. Hiding the

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[57] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game.'
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.112.
[61] Mike Purpus, 'Greg Noll, Rick James and the Tale of the Severed Thumb,' *Florida Surf Museum* [online], 21 July 2021 <https://floridasurfmuseum.org/kahuna/greg-noll-rick-james-and-the-tale-of-the-severed-thumb> [accessed January 2024].

thumb before being confronted by its former owner, Noll decided to argue that it was not James' digit that he had. Instead, Noll claimed, 'I found it,' to an unconvinced James. Although 'it's not marketing, exactly,' as Matt Warshaw summarizes, it was 'very on-brand for Noll.'[62] The paperweight proved one of a multitude of methods used by Noll to turn the shop into a commercial space that could not be replicated. The surf shop represented a mystery of outlandishness and shocking designs not for the faint-hearted. It allowed curiosity. When Purpus discovered the owner of the thumb, almost a decade after handling it as a "surf grom," child surfer, he nostalgically told James that, 'I loved that thumb.'[63] A disgruntled James responded with, 'Not as much as I did.'[64] Although Noll kept the thumb, eventually storing it in a box, the bizarre tale has not been forgotten, and has remained uniquely linked to the surf space.

The Hermosa Beach surf shop was bold and gutsy, similar to Noll himself. To such a degree, his shop was one of the most prolific surf companies in the 1960s. The space was peculiar and enticing, representing a mix-match aesthetic, similar to earlier rugged models, but taken to appeal to the curious customer. Da Bull marketed "an experience" for customers, offering a compromise between modern requirements and outlaw narratives. The thumb, although small, proved only one example of the many marketing techniques. Plucky objects and individualized consumer purchases were utilized to entice customers. They made Noll's shop the epitome of a distinct surf space. As Warshaw concludes in Noll's eulogy, Da Bull saw that 'all is fair in love, war and self-promotion.'[65] With this definition, it is unsurprising that Noll's shop became the central hub for surfers from all backgrounds, as it made the space a uniquely personable and sought-after experience. The shop was as distinct as Noll himself.

Another key marketing strategy utilized by Noll was creating a distinguishable business logo. In 1960, to encourage clients to visit his Hermosa Beach retail outlet, Noll used a piece of yellow card to create a two-sided price-list. Noll partnered with Rick Griffin, a surfing cartoonist, to sketch a few caricature surfers holding Noll's surfboards. The price-list was easy-to-read and simple to understand, with clear subheadings of the options available, such as customized pigments or centre strips. In the top corner was a playful song, with the lyrics: 'Oh Greg Noll Surfboards are so grand, they're the best boards in the land, Greg boards are

[62] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game.'
[63] Mike Purpus, 'Greg Noll, Rick James and the Tale of the Severed Thumb.'
[64] Ibid.
[65] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game.'

so really neat, Greg Surfboards just can't be beat.'[66] In exchange for this customized price-list card, Noll gave Griffin a free surfboard.

Returning to a more simplistic business card, Noll focused on advertising his custom caricature, which was a pot-bellied surfer in black-and-white shorts. Using only red, black and white tones, Noll's business cards – and surfboard labels – remained mostly consistent in design, despite a few changes in positioning over time. Before his caricature was designed, between 1954 and 1956, Noll had opted for a Polynesian spear going through his name, as his surfboard label. From 1955, his cartoon figure was becoming the more popular choice for design, albeit with monotone shorts and a film camera. This was due to his focus being on the film industry in the late 1950s. In 1960, however, Noll's miniature figure was first shown wearing black-and-white striped shorts and without the camera. Kampion claims that the subtle shift to "jailhouse" shorts in his logos symbolized a shift in Noll's focus towards the surfboard industry.[67] Presently, the caricature with jailhouse shorts remains the standard label used. Why did Noll choose to wear these shorts?

Noll's simple explanation as to why he chose striped shorts was due to 'this one guy [that] kept ripping me off' in photographs claiming it was him.[68] Ordering customized surf shorts from M. Nii tailor shop in O'ahu, who specialized in boardshorts, Noll chose the stripes so he could stand out from the crowd. He achieved just that. In December 1964, John Severson captured a photograph of Noll at the third reef of Pipeline. It shows Noll standing at the shoreline with his long-board, staring out at a tremendous wave crashing. This photo defined Noll's image, partnering his big-wave riding with his shorts, as an identity-making symbol. With the shorts famed and his logo well-known, his striped-shorts caricature was soon stuck onto his shop's window for all to recognize.

The final tool of marketing that Noll honed in on was his unique surfboard designs, that witnessed an array of tie-dye colours and bold contours. In 1960, Noll designed a new surfboard, "The Blob." It was a rare short surfboard and, as the cameraman logo suggested, it was a design ahead of its time, with few being initially impressed by its shape. It was a precursor to the shortboard movement of the late-1960s, in which it would have been more accepted. A Noll surfboard model that was more accepted by surfers was the "Stemwinder," founded in 1967. As Kampion states, it was 'a creature of its time,' featuring psychedelic

[66] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game.'
[67] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard,* p.166.
[68] Matt Warshaw, 'He's Got the Look: Greg Noll Charges like a Bull into the Marketing Game.'

patterns and colours.[69] From tie-dye to hippie bead patterns, these surfboards were decorated with intense colours. With LSD being a popular drug of choice in this era, it is unsurprising that Noll's creation stirred a lot of interest. It was not just surfboards that grabbed the public's attention, but it was also fins, including the square design. Thus, Noll stood out from the crowd with his creative and modern ideas, unafraid to adapt in an everchanging society. However, sometimes his ideas were too ahead of their time.

Throughout the 1960s, Noll dominated the surfboard industry, alongside the Dana Point Mafia. His business was growing and he had shops opening across the US, promoting the shaper as a leader of the field. This all ended in the winter of 1969, when Noll was 32-years-of-age. During his trip to Makaha, an evacuation notice was sent out for people to evacuate the area, due to extreme storm conditions. He decided to see the waves, and remembered being awe-struck as 'the water was nearly as smooth as glass, beautiful, and the waves were so big that they literally put the fear of God in me.'[70] These waves were far out from the shore, much farther than usual, and only arrived once per decade. Noll waxed up his surfboard and raced out to the waves, paddling through the crashing waters. He was greeted by other big-wave surfers, who were huddled in a group, waiting for the smaller waves. As the swell got bigger, the surfers paddled in, leaving Noll. With a giant wave forming, Noll decided 'the time had finally come to either shit or get off the pot.'[71]

Noll paddled onto and committed to a wave, the biggest he had ever surfed, which was estimated at 35-ft.[72] The power of the wave led to his surfboard flying out from underneath his body, leaving him to be thrashed below the surface. He was stuck in the turbulence of every breaking wave. Eventually the current allowed Noll to reach the sands, flopping down on the beach. Hawaiian surfer Buffalo Keaulana drove a buggy over to the collapsed surfer. Handing him a beer, Keaulana stated, 'No way I was comin' [*sic*] in afta [*sic*] you. I was jus [*sic*] goin' [*sic*] wave goodbye and say "Alooo-ha."'[73] As a result of this close-call with death, Noll quit riding big-waves. He liquefied Greg Noll Surfboards and moved to Alaska with his family. It was the end of an era, with Noll hiding away for the next two decades. Eventually, Da Bull began to create surfboards again on a much smaller scale in his own

[69] Drew Kampion, *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard,* p.88.
[70] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.3.
[71] Ibid., p.6.
[72] Matt Warshaw, 'Noll, Greg,' *The Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/encyclopedia/noll-greg> [accessed January 2024].
[73] Greg Noll, *Da Bull: Life Over the Edge,* p.9.

garage and sponsor surf contests, however, his business empire had ended. Although Noll left the surfing scene, his impact on the surf shop blueprint was permanent.

9. You Won't See Them Wearin' Their Baggies: Surf Fashion of the 1970s

In the decade immediately after the Second World War, surf clothing was bare, simplistic and minimalistic, with an anti-commercial stance as part of the surfer's core values. With a majority of surfers being veterans, or youths from a low-income working-class background, a surfer at Manhattan Beach or Malibu would don frayed cut-off US Navy trousers from the local military surplus store. Matt Warshaw summarizes that, for surfers, 'there's a lot to be said, too, fashion-wise, for what *isn't* there.'[1] The act of surfing as a sport meant that surfers focused on how to remove clothing as quickly as possible to reach the water efficiently. Jewellery, shoes and trousers were viewed as a hinderance in the eyes of wave-riders. For most surfers, surf clothing in the 1940s required nothing more than a few pennies and a pair of scissors to create.

This stylistic choice can be noted in a photograph taken by surfer Eddie Clark's wife, who captured the nonchalant fashion of the era in a group photograph. Taken in 1954/55, the group of surfers are stood in their cut-off Navy trousers or jeans, in front of their "kook box" surfboards.[2] It was recommended for surfers to remove 18-inches from the bottom of the trousers, leaving a frayed material at knee-length, which had little durability. These trousers came in either white or blue, which gave a standard cohesive uniform for surfers. In addition, surfers were encouraged to leave their trousers' drawstring undone, in order to reduce any constraints that would prevent the feeling of freedom in the water; this was 'surf culture in its purest form – cheap and simple, homemade, and a bit raunchy.'[3] Surf fashion was not at the forefront of the counterculture's creation in its fledgling years; instead, one's identity was formed through customized surfboards designed by shapers in surf shops.

By the end of the 1950s, specific surfboard models were becoming more and more popular on the waves of California. With high-performing template models, such as the Velzy Pig, Da Cat and Fain Formula, and factory polyurethane surfboards being produced *en masse*, handmade customized balsa surfboard sales were declining. By the 1960s, this loss of individualism collided with the boom in young beachgoers and tourists, creating a population crisis of crowds along the shores. Surfboards, and surfers, were hard to differentiate, especially when riding waves at quite a distance from the shore. How does an individual find

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[1] Matt Warshaw, '"Surf Fashion, Lightly Salted:" The Interview,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], March 2023 <https://www.eos.surf/feature/surf-fashion-lightly-salted-the-interview> [accessed March 2024].
[2] 'Phil Becker: Surfing's John Henry Lays Down his Rockwell Planer,' *Easy Reader News* [online], March 2021 <https://easyreadernews.com/phil-becker-surfings-john-henry-lays-down-his-rockwell-planer> [May 2024]
[3] Matt Warshaw, '"Surf Fashion, Lightly Salted:"

an identity for themselves in a booming mass collective, which shared a single public space? With this dilemma, as Alice Morin answers, fashion had the 'utmost importance' in resolving inner conflicts within an organization of a subculture that was suffering from a loss of self.[4] Self-expression through clothing enabled subculture recuperation, as clothing was an efficient and cost-effective way to show one's identity and style, without having to depart from the group. Whether it was the colour of the clothing, or the way it was worn, surfers began to use up-and-coming inventions to grab attention from onlookers. Wearing specific clothing allowed intermediate and professional surfers to show their worth and abilities in a crowded lineup, and helped photographers to identify them.

By the end of the 1950s, the surf shop blueprint deviated away from the notion of the commercial outlet being merely a surfboard showroom and factory; instead, surf shops across California began to specialize in surf clothing, which offered a novel market to the once minimalistic industry. Whether it was boardshorts, wetsuits, or t-shirts with hand-drawn logos, surfers utilized contemporary technological experiments in materials to prove their commitment to and skill-level in the sport. Offering both function and style, durable and customizable surf clothing changed a surfer's potential out in the water. For example, if a surfer invested in a thick wetsuit, they had the ability to ride in California's colder and more ferocious swells. This illustrated that the individual was a year-round surfer, unafraid of seasonal changes. Tailored fashion was the antidote to enable the return of differentiation; it also propagated a new style of commercial outlets to California's boulevards and highways. The surf shop was evolving.

Developing Wetsuits

As winter crept onto Manhattan Beach in the 1940s, veteran surfers donned their knitted fisherman jumpers, which were covered in a layer of greasy oil to give a slight waterproof coating. Thick and woollen, these jumpers protected the beach-sleepers from the natural elements of strong winds and storms. Some decided to wear them in the icy water, to make the most out of the winter swell that built along the shores like clean blue walls, perfect to surf. When surfing in the 1950s, as Ricky Grigg recalled, surfers' feet turned into 'clods of

[4] Alice Morin, 'The Fashion of the 1960s. A New Power Shaping the American Image,' *Journal of American History and Politics* [online], 1 (2018) <https://usabroad.unibo.it/article/view/7162/7525 > [accessed August 2024].

clay with no nerves. When you're standing on the board you're not sure even where your feet are.'[5] Wipe out in these clothes, however, the wool would weigh the surfer down as they scrambled back to the surface for air. If they decided to not wear additional clothing, surfers would only be able to stay out there for a limited time, or be greeted with hyperthermia. As soon as they arrived back onto land, a fire would be lit as they warmed up once again. Thus, for many, surfing in the winter was risky and dangerous, forcing surfers to decide if winter waves were worth a surfer's life.

This problem was addressed in the early 1950s, when designs were trialled to find a protective material for surfers as a solution, so that they could access these previously life-threatening conditions. From these investigations and fabric trials, wetsuits were born in California.

Tetsuhiko Endo writes in the *Inertia*, that wetsuits are 'the airplanes of the surfing world. They allow us to do something miraculous and heretofore unheard of in this history of humanity (survive cold water for hours on end) and yet are completely taken for granted.'[6] Similar to the history of boardshorts, the wetsuit was an item of clothing worn exclusively and temporarily for the act of surfing, rather than as a fashion staple for beachscapes. Originally seen as a practical form of clothing to increase performance levels in the water, it has also navigated a path in the fashion industry in the 1970s. Much like the search for the perfect surfboard, the wetsuit has evolved through several prototypes, materials and models since its founding years.

In the springtime of 1951, UC Berkeley physicist Hugh Bradner investigated the possibilities of improving the working conditions for Navy frogmen during underwater tactical operations. After his work on the Manhattan Project, Bradner was assigned to join with colleagues at the Berkeley Radiation Lab to test various materials. The main ambition was to solve the problem of amphibious employment, to ensure men could comfortably go in and out of waters. To do this, they had to formulate a material that would absorb shock waves and create thermal insulation. Importantly, this material would be best if "wet," rather than "dry." Water could enter the suit, as they had a slight gap to allow pockets of air in the rubber to keep the swimmer warm. Dry rubber suits were uncomfortable, water-tight and thin, which required woollen underwear underneath. This style of suit could not obtain the same air pockets, and

[5] Drew Kampion, *Jack O'Neill: It's Always Summer on the Inside* (Chronicle Books, 2011), p.89.
[6] Tetsuhiko Endo, 'Surfing in 2012: The Good, Bad, and Ugly,' *The Inertia* [online], 25 December 2012 <https://www.theinertia.com/surf/surfing-in-2012-the-good-bad-and-ugly/> [accessed March 2024].

would absorb too much water, making the material sodden and heavy. With these discoveries, it was revealed that the unicellular polymeric material, neoprene, which had been created by DuPont previously, would be best for a "wet" suit.

1952 was a significant year for commercial wetsuit production, after the military report of the findings was declassified. Surf-diver, Bev Morgan, read Bradner's report and began to construct wetsuits for divers at his Dive N' Surf shop. Meanwhile, surfer Jack O'Neill began making neoprene clothing exclusively for surfers. He did not read the report; instead, he had noted neoprene foam in a carpet on a DC-3 passenger plane, and observed its qualities. He too opened his own surf shop, in San Francisco. Despite both of these commercial spaces, wetsuit sales did not gain traction until the late 1950s.

Despite a need for protective clothing in the winter season, the discomfort of wearing wetsuits outweighed the positive attributes of having warmth in the cold water. It was common for surfers wearing neoprene to obtain rashes and abrasions along the skin. The material was also constricting and limited surfer's movements, which was not ideal in a sport reliant on quick reactions. By the end of the decade, it was observed that tank-tops or legless wetsuits, allowed less restrictive movement. It gave some protection from the cold around the main organs in the body's core.

One of the more popular styles of wetsuits was called the "beavertail." Front-zipped, this neoprene wetsuit was short-sleeved and legless, with a popper-fasten that would fasten material between the legs to piece the front and back together. As Matt Warshaw describes, 'for reasons never entirely clear, [surfers] chose to leave the rubber appendage unsnapped, where it would dangle, twist, flutter and snap during a ride.'[7] With this flap dangled, it resembled a beaver's tail. Writing a more critical assessment in the *Inertia*, Rory Parker states that the tail on the wetsuit was merely 'a useless ass-slapping appendage. It'll be uncomfortable, overpriced, and do almost nothing to keep you warm, but all the dorks who think the height of progression took place in 1964 will love it.'[8] In 1970, the more thermal-regulating and practical full-length wetsuit was developed by O'Neill, replacing these less successful earlier prototypes.

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[7] Matt Warshaw, 'Beavertail,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/encyclopedia/beavertail> [accessed March 2024].
[8] Rory Parker, '8 Things About Surfing That Should Die and Stay Dead,' *The Inertia* [online], 2 June 2014 <https://www.theinertia.com/surf/8-things-about-surfing-that-should-die-and-stay-dead/> [accessed March 2024].

O'Neill was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1923, before his family migrated to Southern California, where he learnt to bodysurf. He dabbled in several jobs, such as carpentry and the Navy, and received a B.A. degree in Liberal Arts at Portland State College. Unsure about a career, O'Neill became a parking meter salesman. As O'Neill reflects in an interview with Drew Kampion, the job did not last long, as 'I'd go surfing and come back to the office and lean over the buyer's desk and water would run out of my nose, all over his blueprints […] the business folded.'[9]

Instead, O'Neill decided to own a surf shop in the mid-1950s, allowing him to craft balsa surfboards under Phil Edwards' guidance, and experiment with neoprene. He did this from a garage stationed along the Great Highway, in San Francisco. The business was straightforwardly labelled, "Surf Shop." The small workshop was unassuming, with fishing nets scattered on its exterior walls and several piles of surfboards outside in the parking lot. His most famous landmark, which allowed surfers to spot the shop on the highway, was a giant wooden pole standing upright in the ground. It towered over the shop. The origin of the pole, as recalled by O'Neill, occurred when Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) refused to run electricity into the double garage space. They instructed O'Neill to 'have some sort of pole out front' in order for the electricity to be attached.[10] The surfer discovered a big driftwood log on the nearby sands, that had washed up on the shore years prior, and asked a truck driver to pull it to his garage for $5. The log, however, could not reach the parking lot and got stuck on the highway. As a result, O'Neill asked a nearby bulldozer operator to bring the log to his parking lot, gathering plenty of onlookers. After celebrating the log's arrival on the lot with a few beers, a crane planted the log firmly into the ground.

With the pole ready for use, O'Neill contacted City Officials and it was deemed good enough for the electricity line. Whilst there, O'Neill told PG&E that he 'wanted to have a gaslight at the top […] so I could have a fire in the sky.'[11] After a short debate, he received permission to build a gas line to the top of the pole, in order to light a fire. This eye-catching pole stood out on the highway like a beacon and O'Neill's shop became an unmissable space. The mystery behind the tall pole's origins and the unusual fire showcased to the public the mystical and creative nature of surf shops.

[9] Drew Kampion, 'At Sea with Jack O'Neill,' *SURFER,* September 1972.
[10] Drew Kampion, *Jack O'Neill: It's Always Summer on the Inside,* p.67.
[11] Ibid., p.69.

Opened only a few years after the founding surf shop by Velzy, O'Neill's shop's interior mirrored early garage-sized commercial spaces: simplistic in design and unassuming to the non-surfer. It was not a serious business, 'we were just screwing around up here,' which was seen when he put 'Mike and Pat [O'Neill's sons] up on the blanks [of surfboards] before the glue was dry to put rocker in them. Phil told us this was absurd.'[12] In those years, 'I was still shaping, using a Jap planer and a draw-knife, plus I was making wetsuits, beavertail jackets and vests mostly.'[13] The shop was a playground of experimentation.

In 1959, O'Neill relocated to Santa Cruz to open a second, more serious commercial space, to allow more space to tinker with neoprene designs. The new shop on Cowell Beach was positioned near a curved and sloping path, which was later used as a skateboarding ramp for customers to play on. The shop name remained the same. Despite still being small in nature, the building had large windows which allowed in natural light, and it had a parking lot area. The rocky rubble around the store was covered in surfboards and surfers alike. Opening during the year of *Gidget* (1959) and during Bruce Brown's surf film series, there was a sudden demand for surfing gear. As O'Neill reflects, 'there were some new surfers around, and it as a whole new thing, and our shop kind of became the center of it.'[14] It was during this time that O'Neill began to shift away from surfboards to wetsuits.

With his three young sons wearing neoprene wetsuits, he would visit boat trading shows to advertise these items by placing his children in ice water. The effectiveness of investing in wetsuits was promoted. This was soon followed by the adding of an elastic-nylon jersey inside the wetsuit – allowing it to be more comfortable and easier to wear. Wetsuits no longer felt as invasive and rubbery. In 1970, O'Neill designed a full-length wetsuit that covered surfers' arms and legs in neoprene. A single-pieced wetsuit, with a back-zip, was the preferred style of covering in the winter times. It became a hit. Soon after this achievement, O'Neill lost sight in his left-eye, after an injury with a surfboard leash. He decided to wear an eye-patch and full-beard, creating a distinct identity in the surf industry. As Warshaw describes, the modern wetsuit inventor was 'perhaps the coolest and shrewdest surf businessman alive.'[15]

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[12] Drew Kampion, 'At Sea with Jack O'Neill,'
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Matt Warshaw, 'O'Neill, Jack' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/encyclopedia/oneill-jack> [accessed March 2024].

Female surfers and divers were not excluded from these neoprene discoveries, with female ranges of wetsuits soon developed. When the initial diving neoprene suits were manufactured in the early 1950s, women attempted to reconstruct male wetsuits to widen and allow more space in the chest area. This was initiated by scuba-diver instructor Dottie Frazier, who made a two-pieced wetsuit pattern with a bra stitched inside. In the early 1950s, she bought a dive shop, the first female to do so, and produced her own line of wetsuits called "Penguin Suits," in Long Beach California. Frazier stated, 'I tailored every suit myself, gave 100% guarantee as long as I took the measurements. Our suits were just glued […] I worked seven days a week, teaching every night or doing ocean dives for about 18 years.'[16] In 1970, she sold the business due to illness, after creating a successful series of both male and female wetsuits. As a woman, Frazier experienced many rejections from clients in her shop, as she recalls. Quite often, Frazier was reminded of her gender when males would arrive for lessons and say, "There's got to be some mistake, we don't want a woman."[17] In spite of this discrimination, Frazier's designs enforced the need for female wetsuits that catered for their body types, redefining who was allowed to access the ocean in harsh conditions.

Meanwhile, O'Neill and Bev Morgan's wetsuit developments generated more competition and spurred on more research to perfect their craft. Other shops joined the market, such as La Jolla Divers Supply offering custom colours for wetsuits. Yet, it was O'Neill who dominated the advertisements, offering double-issue, full-page adverts for his wetsuits, often provocative and controversial. One included a colourized ad featuring a bare, topless female getting into the wetsuit, using the female body as a tool to gain male attention. Another advertisement, which gained attention from a wider audience was the "The O'Neill Factory," printed in *SURFER* in 1974.[18] The ad was a double-paged spread that mirrored a cartoon depiction of an O'Neill's wetsuit factory that could be coloured in. Requested by Pat O'Neill, Jack's son, the factory's design was so crowded and chaotic in the page, children and adults would spend hours scanning it. Featured in the factory is a cartoon O'Neill with his eye-patch, crashing into his factory in a hot air balloon made from US military surplus materials. Next to him is President Richard Nixon with the Watergate tapes, reflecting on contemporary political controversy. Nearby is a female model doing her makeup in a short black dress, with

[16] Eric Hanauer, *Diving Pioneers: An Oral History of Diving in America* (San Diego: Watersport Publishing, 1994), p.144.
[17] Ibid.
[18] 'The O'Neill's Factory,' an advertisement illustrated by Jim Phillips, *SURFER,* 1974.

male employees staring at her with their tongues hanging out. An elderly woman is shown making a four-legged wetsuit, and a man is stood in a Houdini-style test tank filled with water. It is make-believe, fantastical, and mesmerizing, with the ad cluttered with dozens of contemporary messages.

It illustrated the surf shop, especially O'Neill's shop, as mysterious, playful and extraordinary. Purchasing a wetsuit from O'Neill allowed the reader to be seen as radical and lively as the behind-the-scenes fantasy advertised in magazines. Jim Phillips was the chosen artist for the advertisement. Using pen and ink, he wanted to depict the shop as crowded and manic, as there was 'always a lot of experimental design work under way' and 'all sorts of other madness.'[19] The project, to Phillips, was simply a way to have fun.

[THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS THESIS FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS]

Figure 9.1: 'The O'Neill's Factory,' an advertisement illustrated by Jim Phillips, *SURFER,* 1974.

Wetsuits were an inclusive investment that redefined the accessibility of surfing all year round. It was a market that was very much needed to develop the sport and its performance. Wetsuits were similar to surfboards; they were fundamental to the sport. For O'Neill, his shop dominated the market and created a competitive industry to keep progressing the wetsuit. Despite being a functioning space, with minimalist architecture, the myth of the space was

[19] Drew Kampion, *Jack O'Neill: It's Always Summer on the Inside,* p.154.

propelled through popular culture and his larger-than-life character. The surf shop, through wetsuits, illustrated it was ever-evolving and could be transformed through creativity. Meanwhile, for when the golden summer months arrived, another fundamental surfing fashion was being developed in tandem to the wetsuit: the boardshort.

A Customized Pair of Trunks

In Waianae, Hawai'i, Minoru Nii, a one-legged Japanese tailor, worked in a shack, under a bare-bulb in a building comprised of a subsiding wooden structure. Nii and his wife would spend their days sat at a Singer sewing machine, sewing and mending shorts. Next to their seat was a series of exposed electrical wires that spanned the walls, channelling energy to power their business. It was here, in the 1950s, that the earliest boardshorts were tailored, with each item priced at either $3 or $4. Surfers from around the Islands and California would travel to Nii, place an order, and he would arrive on crutches to hand over their customized shorts on the promised day of delivery. During an unfortunate accident a few years later, his wife was electrocuted, also losing her leg. Between them, they continued to run the business relying on crutches, and produced thousands of comfortable and tailored boardshorts around the States.

After a brief period of mending boardshorts, Nii decided to open a shop, M. Nii, a shack that would produce unique customized boardshorts for surfers. Initially, his shorts were made from Palaka fabric, a durable cotton material with a checkered pattern. This was inspired by the clothes worn on local sugar cane plantations. Upon noticing the need for a more durable fabric, Nii turned to canvas twill, with a baggier design. A drawstring was used at the top, taking inspiration from his days sewing school gym shorts. Nii added a pocket for wax at the back of the shorts, to cater for surfers' needs. Each pair of shorts was either a different colour, or had different stripes. No two were alike. Bright and bold, these trunks offered surfers the ability to stand out from the crowd and to find practical comfort when riding big waves in Hawai'i and California. The style of shorts became known as the "Mahaka Drowners," as they did not fall off in a wipeout on a big wave. However, there was a flaw in his business; Nii did not ship out his boardshorts. Each customer had to visit his store in-person, which presented a difficulty in obtaining these shorts for surfers not on the Islands.

Dick Metz was one of Nii's regular customers in the 1950s, before Nii closed his business in the 1960s. Metz fondly remembered, during his first trip to Hawai'i, that he excitedly sought

to put an order in for four custom trunks from Nii. Giving the tailor a week to complete, Nii promised, "I'll have them done, don't worry, don't worry."[20] On the day his ship, the Lurline, was scheduled to leave, Metz remembered being 'on the boat, drinking and talking, and here comes M Nii on his crutch, hobbling up the gangplank with my four pairs of trunks. He drove all the way from Waianae […] I couldn't believe it.'[21] Nii was committed to his customers. His business was sought after due to his understanding of the sport's needs, and how the boardshorts could help ease wave-riding. He produced boardshorts for many professional surfers in this decade, designing the famed jailhouse shorts for Greg "Da Bull" Noll. Nii's shorts became a staple for surfers, alongside two other boardshort tailor businesses in Hawai'i: Take, and Lyn's of Waikīkī. For Californians during this decade, to acquire any of these shorts meant a trip to the Islands, which was unattainable for many.

In the late 1950s, a boardshort trend was emerging on the coastline of Orange County, California, for those unable to travel. This trend was designed and nurtured by "beach moms," according to Warshaw.[22] For example, Mike Doyle's mother, Mary Doyle, sewed her son a pair of customized shorts from black and purple material, and offered to design bright and bold pairs for other teenage surfers. Plaudette Reed spent her time creating surf trunks with embroidered wax pockets, stitching the surfer's name so they could not get mistaken for another's. Women up and down the coast had alleviated the need to travel to Hawai'i to obtain personalized board shorts, by offering their services from within the domestic realm of the home.

There was an exception to this domestic realm of manufacturing; a shop called Kanvas by Katin, which opened in 1956. The shop was owned by a middle-aged couple, Nancy and Walter Katin, who founded a business to craft extremely durable boat canvas covers. As a paternal character, Walter earned the name "Captain" from his decades of sailing, and was always found wearing his powder-blue jumpsuit in the shop. He worked alongside his wife, a highly personable and charismatic salesperson. Nancy was described by Warshaw as an 'excitable chain-smoking redhead in cat's-eye glasses who'd been a vaudeville dancer during the Depression.'[23] Growing up near the Katins, Doyle remembers Nancy as 'the sweetest

[20] Walter Hoffman and Dick Metz, 'Walter Hoffman Interview,' in *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 2005 <https://www.eos.surf/interview/water-hoffman> [accessed March 2024].
[21] Ibid.
[22] Matt Warshaw, '"Surf Fashion, Lightly Salted."'
[23] Ibid.

woman I ever met. Like her husband, she was happy all of the time.'[24] Having no children of their own, the Katins invited the local beachside community to their shop as a local hangout. Nancy found an 'extended family' through the 'kids who had come to her [shop] from the beach,' as stated by one of the surfing youths, Doyle.[25] Not only were the Katins' personalities warm and welcoming, but their boat covers were also a famed product in the harbour area. The canvas covers were incredibly durable, surviving the hundred-pound-test, due to their waxed nylon thread and nickel grommets. The canvas became known as indestructible amongst the boating community.

Two years later, a surfer passed through their shop asking the couple if they were willing to help produce an indestructible pair of boardshorts from their famed canvas material. The teenage surfer with the request, who lived across the street from the couple's home, was none other than Corky Carroll, who later racked up five United States Championships (1966-1970) in surfing. Tired of surfing in cut-off frayed denim trousers, he asked the couple if they could produce trunks that could withstand the surf. Nancy studied the stitchwork on other examples of Hawaiian trunks, before realizing the simplicity of the pattern. During this early production, the couple noted an untapped market of boardshorts, and decided to put their canvas towards this product. By 1960, youths flocked to Seal Beach to claim their own shorts from Kanvas by Katin; the business helped local young surfers to obtain the much-needed clothing to better their wave-riding abilities. The business flourished, despite relying on word-of-mouth, with no advertising or mail orders; a surfer simply had to walk-in to receive these trunks. It was a business designed for locals.

What made these boardshorts the best on the market? Each pair contained 16-ounces of duck canvas, with the main areas of wear around the crotch triple-seamed. The stitches were zig-zagged from a nylon thread. The material was so sturdy, it did not crumple on the floor; it sat upright. For Carroll, he received his red trunks and 'wore them for two-years before they broke in enough that they wouldn't stand up by themselves.'[26] Business boomed to such an extent in 1961 that the couple hired several Japanese seamstresses, including Sato Hughes. Hughes had only arrived in California a handful of months prior, and the Katins asked her to work with them upon finding her tailoring for another business. Hughes could make a boardshort perfectly in 20 minutes, and she quickly became part of their family. Hughes' son,

[24] Mike Doyle, *Morning Glass: The Adventures of a Legendary Waterman* (Carlsbad: Picacho, 2018), p.123.
[25] Ibid., p.154.
[26] Ibid., p.124.

Glenn, remembers the shop being filled with sewing machines, with up to 20 women working at a time, 'the slow ones could make eight pairs, the fast ones 12 to 14. My mom would do 19 or 20.'[27] The employment of women in the manufacturing process of a surf shop highlights a key difference between surf clothing commercial spaces and surfboard workshops. Kanvas by Katin was paving the way for a more inclusive workforce, and a female-led surf business.

In the mid-1960s, Nancy considered retiring from their thriving business venture. The community had little concern with the decision of the name being sold, with Doyle stating, 'I considered that deal a good thing. It gave Nancy Katin a good retirement after years of hard work.'[28] Nancy decided to sell the boardshort business to Catalina Sportswear. In an interview with Glenn, he discusses this turbulent era of change. Glenn explains that although Nancy had hopes of retirement, she 'had a clause' so 'if she didn't like how they were running the company, she could buy it right back.'[29] Thus, Catalina received the Kanvas by Katin name, and the brain power of Sato, who helped to instruct the corporation on how to produce these boardshorts to the highest of quality and durability. The shop itself, was still exclusively owned by the couple, with Catalina not having access to the building. However, the deal was short-lived.

As Doyle concluded, 'Katin had meant quality, and almost overnight Catalina trashed the Katin name.'[30] The shorts did not reflect the previous durability that the Katins had prided themselves on; they had become part of a profitable mass-manufacturing chain. In addition, Walter died in 1967, and Nancy found 'her husband was gone, her business was gone. She had nothing left.'[31] As a result, she paid double for what she received to retrieve her business back from Catalina. Returning the trunks back into the shop, youths flocked back to greet her for business, bringing back her extended family. Around the corner, the new decade of the 1970s enabled Kanvas by Katin to find their place again in the consumer market and gained even more business traction in this fashion-conscious era.

As the 1970s dawned, there was a surge of new fashion trends filtering through from wider popular culture. New genres of fashion, most swiftly moving away from conservatism and

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[27] Glenn Hughes, 'Kanvas by Katin: When Surf Trunks Literally Stood Up for Themselves,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], July 2017 <https://www.eos.surf/feature/kanvas-by-katin-when-surf-trunks-stood-up-for-themselves> [accessed March 2024].
[28] Mike Doyle, *Morning Glass,* p.154.
[29] Glenn Hughes, 'Kanvas by Katin: When Surf Trunks Literally Stood Up for Themselves.'
[30] Mike Doyle, *Morning Glass,* p.154.
[31] Ibid.

modest trends, emerged from Great Britain. These included styles of glam rock, tartan – from the Bay City Rollers – and bohemian. Daniel Milford-Cottam confirms that fashion was becoming a way to express loyalty, especially through self-customized items.[32] Splattering paint on clothing or scrawling words over symbols were acts of defiance, linked with one's political motifs. Milford-Cottam adds, 'people were increasingly learning that they had the right to decide what they did with their own bodies and lives.'[33] The surf movement in California, from the forefront, had always been a counterculture focused on the sentiment of defiance and self-expression. This wave of cheap, radical fashion allowed surfers to discover a new form of cultural confirmation, through extreme and reactive outfits that could radiate their stance on liberation.

Many professional surfers in this decade remained loyal to Kanvas by Katin to ensure they had the best and most fashionable trunks for competitions. Several professional surfers from Australia, South Africa, Brazil, Hawai'i and the USA, promoted these trunks as the crème de la crème of the fashion industry. In a photograph from 1975, Nancy is seen sat on a coastal rockface with a group of the era's most talented surfers, all wearing her designer trunks. Amongst the crowd of surfers, there are two individuals who helped navigate a new appreciation for surf fashion, Peter Townend, and Mike Purpus. Both of these individuals took a very serious approach towards their image, finding a flare for bright colours to attract the limelight. In the new age of the 1970s, trunks were not just a practical investment, but an identity marker in the water for the modern showman.

In an interview with Matt Warshaw in 2014, Townend talks about how he wanted to 'put on a show' in the 1970s.[34] Wearing a perfectly groomed goatee, hot pink boardshorts, and riding a pink and white surfboard, Townend dominated the style inspiration for surfers in the 1970s, offering little fear towards being garish and androgynous. His hot pink surfboard was a staple for his identity, an idea his mother offered after breakfast one morning, as 'that way they'll always know it's you.'[35] Describing his distinct wants from fashion, Townend stated, 'I was always pretty flamboyant […] we wanted to create attention. We wanted to be rockstars.'[36] His inspiration derived from glam rock star David Bowie, with Townend owning several

[32] Daniel Milford-Cottam, *Fashion in the 1970s* (Bloomsbury USA, 2018), p.7.
[33] Ibid., p.8.
[34] Peter Townend, '"You Gotta Put on a Show!" Peter Townend Interview,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], May 2014
<https://www.eos.surf/feature/pt-you-gotta-put-on-a-show> [accessed March 2024].
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

jumpsuits. The surfer remembered walking down Kalakaua Avenue, when he noted a 'gold lame jumpsuit. Lopez turns to me and goes, "You'd wear that right?" And I go, "Well, yeah!" So, I walked in and bought it.'[37] It was important for Townend to wear designer and eye-catching items, to differentiate himself from novice surfers. His striving for stardom is further noted, with the surfer starring in over two dozen surf films, such as *Free Ride* (1977) and *A Sea for Yourself* (1973).

With a rise in the number of surfers, distinctive and designer surf fashion helped to establish a surfer's worth and identity in the water. Similar to Townend, Purpus – who had remained loyal to Kanvas by Katin, and a close friend of Nancy's – furthered this fundamental shift. Purpus stated in an interview, 'I still want to be a star. I want to be the best.'[38] Instead of utilizing aggression out in the water, surfers instead used their appearance as the way to dominate waters. Purpus believes this shift derived from the influence of Australian surfers, such as Townend, who 'developed style and fluidness rather than animal aggression […] they welcome people to surf with them and try to blow them out by out-performing them.'[39] Without violent bursts of outrage on the waters, famed by Miki Dora, surfers instead intimidated novice surfers through stylistic confidence. Exceptional surfing style and looking confident was linked strongly to one's fashion choices in the water.

Thus, to have surfing stars and icons endorse a specific brand, allowed surf fashion to thrive in the 1970s. A series of advertisements were produced in the 1970s to commemorate Nancy's commitment to manufacturing trunks for local surfing youths, with multiple generations of surfers coming in and out of her shop over the past two decades. In 1977, one magazine advert featured a petite Nancy wearing a tailcoat suit stood on a fake red carpet, amongst a line of athletic surfers wearing different styles of Kanvas by Katin trunks.[40] The trunks included styles such as the Kylon, Kapers, Eyekatcher, Kontender and Kords. All of which featured the letter "K" as a trademark to mirror the Katin name. Featured surfers in this advertisement included Terry Stevens, the Levy brothers, and Dennis Jarvis, with his sweeping blonde hair. Pro surfer, Jarvis, famed for wearing a bright pink and yellow wetsuit out in the water, was also a designer of surf goods and an accomplished glasser, creating

[37] Peter Townend, '"You Gotta Put on a Show!" Peter Townend Interview.'
[38] Mike Purpus, 'What is Surfing?' *SURFER,* November 1970.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "KatinVault: Katin Line," *Katin* [online], 3 November 2016 <https://katinusa.com/blogs/news/katinvault-katin-line> [accessed May 2025].

"Spyder" surfboards and equipment from South Bay. To be like these inspiring professional surfers and surfboard manufacturers, one aimed to dress like them.

By the late-1980s, Hughes and her son inherited the business upon the death of Nancy, continuing Kanvas by Katins' legacy in their original shop. The shop has continued to thrive in its original location, now offering a range of surf brands alongside their customized boardshorts.

Surf Fashion for Non-Surfers

For surfers, surf clothing served as a practical investment. Whether the item allowed the surfer to spend more time in the water, or to attract attention in busy crowds, the wetsuit and boardshorts evolution encouraged surfers to invest in new textiles to improve their wave-riding skills. These items were designed and produced for the ocean. Surf shops that specialized in clothing reshaped the definition of a surf shop, transforming it away from merely being a surfboard showroom.

In the 1960s, with a rise in surfers and "wannabe surfers" appearing along California's coastlines, inspired by the images produced in popular culture, non-practical surf clothing appeared. Unlike previous surf clothing, these items were designed and produced to be worn at the beach. This style of beach clothing was more about aesthetic, rather than functionality. For suburbanites and middle-class youths who sought a Golden Californian dream, beachgoers turned to surf-style fashion as their key identity marker. Inspired by the summer-loving styles of teenagers in *Gidget* (1959), and the clean-cut styles of the Beach Boys, a new market was demanded for beach fashion. Popular culture actively directed these young surfers and wannabe surfers through a series of instructions on how to *look* like a surfer, rather than how to *be* a surfer. As Tom Smucker adds, 'the surfer as a symbol was almost as elastic as its predecessor, the cowboy […] surfing could simply stand for lots of fun time at the beach.'[41] To have a claim to the now popular surf culture no longer involved the sole participation of the sport.

Surf fashion in the 1960s became primarily beach fashion, an aesthetic one followed when visiting the sandy shores of Southern California. It was also a style that could be identified with from afar, across inland States. With the success of Hollywood's surf films, beach

[41] Tom Smucker, *Why the Beach Boys Matter* (University of Texas Press, 2018), p.28.

fashion was available at most department stores and these styles were sponsored further by teenage magazines. This trend of fashion catered for the growing materialistic society of the affluent 1960s boom, a world away from California's surf founders.

Notably, at least at first, this market did not permeate the surf shop's shelves, as owners focused more on practical and efficient items that assisted in the act of surfing. Instead of nurturing the ever-evolving trends of beach fashions, surf shops invested in boardshorts and wetsuit developments, formulating exciting, valuable and necessary clothing that partnered in functionality with the surfboard itself. Thus, 1960's surf fashion became defined by dividing the movement into two categories – the popular trends of a teenage beach aesthetic, and the surf shop's development of practical gear for performance. As Morin deduces, cultural 'networks are hard to define in a simple, unified manner' but subcultures had to focus on creating novel routes of change, even if they differed in ethos.[42] Away from the grassroot surf shop, a popular beach fashion was developing across the nation. These items catered for people who liked the idea of surfing, but did not usually surf. Compared to cut-off US Navy shorts, boardshorts, and wetsuits, these items appealed to those who wanted to remain on the sands and be part of the surf culture from the comfort of dry land.

For many summer-loving youths, their experiences of the surf culture derived purely from popular culture. By watching *Gidget,* flicking through surf magazines, and listening to surf music, people around the nation longed to be part of these stories. The exotic surf culture of Golden California wanted to be felt by inland Americans. In order to be a part of this romanticized world painted by directors, photographers and musicians, surfer wannabes demanded ways for their appearance to reflect their love for the surf world. One of the largest contributors that distributed the surf culture around the nation and globe, was the surf music industry.

The initial discovery of the sonic thrill of surf music began in small garages across Southern California in the late-1950s, with surfers experimenting with sounds in the sphere of the home. It was a distinct genre that culturally fused and amplified guitar tones with the mystifying image of radical wave-riding. Surf music was a regional success in Southern California from its early days, with thousands being drawn to dancehalls so that they could get up on their feet and feel the rhythm of the instruments. As Warshaw comments, these were loud and enticing sounds that you could 'drink and fight to. Surfers, most of them, loved

[42] Alice Morin, 'The Fashion of the 1960s. A New Power Shaping the American Image.'

it.'[43] The sound of surf music brought out the primitive nature of surfers, as they stomped to the music. Its success was founded on its mimicking of the epinephrin created from one riding a wave, with the instruments offering deep vibrations and an unusually high reverb.

Surfer and guitarist Dick Dale paved the way for this sound through his Fender Stratocaster and unique stance when playing his guitar, which was held upside down so that his heavier-gauge strings were at the bottom. He would hammer the strings whilst sliding his fingers down the neck of the guitar to create rolling up-and-down sounds. In addition, the amp's settings were so reverbed, that the music sounded purposefully "wet" and distinctly raw. Through this description, the guitar was copying the motion of the waves. John Blair comments that this was a purposeful choice by Dale, to recreate the feeling of wave-riding through 'vibration and pulsification [*sic*]' with a 'thunder-like beat.'[44] Southern California embraced this sound as its own stance on beach rock 'n' roll. Dale showcased this identity, with his hair slicked back, swinging his body around whilst performing. For several years, it remained an isolated genre reserved to the youths along the shores.

With limited vocals and lyrics in this early form of surf music, the feelings and emotions of the genre derived purely from the audio of the instruments interacting with the amp's settings. By the summer of 1960, with the surge of growing public interest in surfing cultivated by Hollywood surf movies, there was more attention paid to local surf musicians. The new sound added to the novelty and exoticism of the sport being presented across media. When he released his debut album, "Surfer's Choice," in 1962, Dale sold 75,000 copies across California.[45] The sound was dubbed as a subsection of the rock 'n' roll movement, which was growing steadily across popular culture from other musicians, like Elvis Presley. The influence of the rock 'n' roll scene on the early surf sounds can be noted in 1956, when Dale won a Presley soundalike contest. Taking inspiration from Presley, "The King of Rock," and country stars, such as Hank Williams, Dale formulated a new all-American sound from its two most popular genres. The sound brought teenagers to halls, wanting to rebel through music as they stomped and jumped to the radical beat.

Dale's successes encouraged others to join the rock 'n' roll surf music movement, even those that could not surf. For middle-class Americans, rock 'n' roll music, however, was seen as a

[43] Matt Warshaw, 'Dick Dale, Destroyer of Amps,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/history/the-ten-year-boom/dick-dale-destroyer-of-amps> [accessed March 2024].
[44] John Blair, *Southern California Surf Music, 1960-1966* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2015), p.7.
[45] Ibid., p.28.

threat to American stability and virtues. As Kevin Starr summarized, conservative Americans associated rock 'n' roll with 'sexually sly African American race music,' which led to many older generations fearing youths losing 'innocence and social compatibility.'[46] For beach rock 'n' roll to be popular, it had to be toned down and conservative. In the 1960s, the music of this once-regional movement of local surfers shifted into a sound of more conservative and palatable musicians for the wider nation. The surf sound was fused with barber-shop style vocals, produced from suit-wearing groups of young, clean-shaven men. Their songs reinforced the traditional 'teenaged-boy-meets-teenaged-girl' trope, with the protagonists 'living happily ever after.'[47] Adding softer lyrics to the reverbed guitar sound and posing in matching suits with short side-combed haircuts, these groups engaged with more universal listeners. Through soothing harmonies and fun lyrics about beach activities, a new element was added to surf music genre. This more palatable image and sound allowed surf music to ascend into a national genre through adaptations of non-surfing groups who sought to integrate this sound into their own popular music.

In 1963, the Beach Boys, a Californian surf rock band famed for their dulcet melodies and harmonized vocals, emerged to lead this conservative surf music movement. The Beach Boys consisted of brothers Brian, Dennis and Carl Wilson, their cousin Mike Love, and friend Al Jardine. Despite recording songs about the thrills and joys of surfing, Dennis Wilson was the only surfer of the group. By having only one surfer in the group, Smucker states that this 'brought the Beach Boys closer to their audience, since it [the surf world] was a distance they [the audience and the Beach Boys] shared.'[48] Through their creative harmonies and soft rock music, the Beach Boys utilized their lyrics to instruct fans on how to look like a modern Californian surfer.

Since the band's origin in 1961, fashion had been at the forefront of the Beach Boys' charm. Whilst deciding the direction and name for the rock band, the group originally chose the label "The Pendletons," before later settling on the Beach Boys. The original name reflected their knowledge of popular fashion of the time. The Pendleton shirt, a woollen, plaid work shirt, was a symbol of the American West. In the 1950s, the Pendleton shirt was a popular item worn by Ivy League students and Hollywood films stars, such as John Wayne in cowboy

[46] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p.378.
[47] Ibid., p.379.
[48] Tom Smucker, *Why the Beach Boys Matter,* p.29.

movies. Through these films, the shirt represented the American wilderness and simplicity of the Wild West past. As the Pendleton Woolen Mills' owner believes, every customer 'will be rewarded with timeless American designs' that will allow 'experiences with meaning.'[49] A decade later, the shirt was seen as a hardy piece of clothing for California's mild winters, with it not being cold enough for thick coats. Wearing their matching blue and charcoal Pendleton shirts on album covers and advertisements, the Beach Boys promoted the plaid item as an identifier for surfers, making the shirt a beach item. Through their use of the shirt, the item transformed into a beachgoer's must-have. Surfers wearing the shirt encompassed the Pendleton mill's ambition for the item to represent great American outdoor leisure.

The Pendleton shirt also symbolized the working-class upbringing of the band members. The Wilson brothers spent their childhood years in Hawthorne, California, five miles away from Manhattan Beach. Despite their closeness to the father of the first surf shop, Dale Velzy, and the blossoming post-war surf scene, the Wilson brothers and Jardine engaged in American football at high school, regular music lessons, and outdoor sports. The Umatilla wool in these shirts offered protection for those who enjoyed nature and laborious work. For example, Love worked in a gas station, and the boys frequently visited local beaches and parks. In Southern California, a marine layer of cloud was produced from the presence of temperature inversion above the ocean, causing a dense fog to block the sun during dawn and dusk. Thus, when taking inspiration for their music, coastal trips in the marine layer were cold and required hardy outfits. With their working-class youthhood focused on rough sports and outdoor activities, the Pendleton shirt suited practical means. Although the band did not take to surfing, their low-income and physical activities represented a more practical stance on their choice of fashion. With their surf sound spreading across the nation, their physical attributes were also observed by "wannabe surfers."

Surf fashion also played a significant role in their song lyrics. Their hit song, *Surfin' USA* (1963), lists that a surfer should wear boardshorts, 'baggies,' huarache sandals, and have a sun-bleached 'bushy bushy blonde hairdo.'[50] On the flip side of the same album, the song *Noble Surfer* (1963), the lyrics explore how a 'surfin' Cassanova' has 'a Woody [Ford Mercury wood vehicle] and his dirty white jeans […] huaraches on his feet, bushy hair on his

[49] 'Pendleton Heritage,' *Pendleton* [online] <https://www.pendleton-usa.com/help-center/pendleton-heritage/content-mission-values.html> [accessed March 2024].
[50] The Beach Boys, 'Surfin' USA,' *Surfin' USA,* (Capitol Records, 1963) [Audio].

head.'[51] Such lyrics reflected the contemporary trends of beachgoers wearing plaid Pendleton shirts, white jeans and huarache sandals along the Californian coast. Surf street wear – distinct from ocean-based practical clothing – was growing in popularity. With the music industry repeating a list of clothing that *all* surfers should wear, keeping up with the latest beach fashion seeped into the wants of youths. To ride a wave was not enough to claim the surfer identity amongst the ever-growing commercialism of the 1960s; one had to *look* like a surfer to confirm one's cultural membership.

One example of surf fashion that was popularized through the Beach Boys' songs was the huarache sandal, a traditional woven leather shoe worn across Mexico. By 1963, the sandal was signified as a surfer's must-have for places where bare-feet were socially prohibited. For Chicanos, Mexican-American populations, the sandals represented an item that identified one's heritage during the Chicano Movement across California, which radically grew in popularity in its heyday of the 1960s and 70s. Maceo Montoya defined the civil rights movement as a fight against 'extreme poverty, working conditions in the fields, the racism and discrimination they [Chicanos] experience in schools and society at large, and their lack of political representation.'[52] It spanned the Southern border states, with a strong presence in California's metropolitan city spaces and university campuses. The use of clothing connected items to the socio-political movement, with supporters wearing 'brimmed straw hats, baseball caps, t-shirts […] huarache sandals.'[53] With the sandals being mass produced in this decade, due to the movement, surfers found them to be an accessible and cheap footwear that represented their roaming freedoms. Linda Chase explains that huarache sandals were adopted by surfers due to their durability, cheapness and symbol of being the 'antithesis of the businessman's wingtips.'[54] In an era of symbolic fashions, working-class surfers picked popularized items that mirrored their nomadic and anti-establishment lifestyle.

Notably, the Beach Boys did not promote new contemporary items, such as boardshorts or wetsuits; they directed surfers and wannabe surfers to pre-existing fashions with connotations to other social groups. These fashions did not focus on improving the surf techniques for the sport's development. Instead, they focused on the sands, painting their ideal of the sport's aesthetics through popular stereotypes. Instead of being a leader in the surf fashion

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[51] The Beach Boys, 'Noble Surfer,' *Surfin' USA* (Capitol Records, 1963) [Audio].
[52] Maceo Montoya, *Chicano Movement for Beginners* (Connecticut, For Beginners LLC, 2016), p.12.
[53] Edward J. McCaughan, *Art and Social Movements: Cultural Politics in Mexico and Aztlan* (Duke University Press, 2012), p.98.
[54] Linda Chase, *Surfing: Women of the Waves* (Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2008), p.70.

movement, their music and style reflected more of their own working-class, outdoor Southern Californian culture and experience as youths, rather than the style of veteran surfers who were raised by the ocean. This working-class fashion turned into the fashion of surfers.

By their second album, the Beach Boys had learnt how to master the surf rock sound, taking notes from surf guitarists, such as Dale, and implementing these new types of sound into their own tracks. Noting the unique tones of the surf guitar and overlap of harmonies, Brian Wilson sought these distinct Californian sounds into songs to make the band unique, with him being the main producer. Their second album, *Surfin' USA,* was released March 25th 1963, and it reached number 2 in the US charts with a stay of 78 weeks. It brought national and international recognition to the group, reaching success in the charts across the UK in 1965. By being influencers, many youths sought to replicate their identity to gain popularity and acceptance amongst peers. You did not have to surf, you just had to look like you did – as the Beach Boys demonstrated. With surfing prevalent across popular culture in the 1960s, musicians, artists and directors took advantage of this wide-spread interest to gain success in their fields.

For founding surfers, the Beach Boys did not reflect the sounds nurtured by Dale and other surf musicians. Greg Noll criticized, 'we hated that crap, these record company guys would come around to the surf shops handing out free Beach Boys records, and two seconds after they were gone, we'd be tossing the records out the back door.'[55] Mike Doyle, another Californian surfer, remembered his first time hearing the Beach Boys in 1963. Doyle heard 'it come on the radio, and it was like, 'What the fuck! What are *these* guys? Trying to pass as real surfers? We *were* real […] it was *Gidget* shit all over again.'[56] Popular cultures' use of selling surf identities through non-surfers, were seen by local surfers as reducing the value of "real" surfers, whose identity could not be simply bought. Despite local disdain across surf communities, the Beach Boys thrived nationally through the pictures they painted from their lyrics, telling tales of the romantic life of beachgoers across California.

[55] Matt Warshaw, 'Dick Dale, Destroyer of Amps.'
[56] Mike Doyle, 'Mike Doyle on the Beach Boys, Jazz, and some Light B&E,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 4 March 2014
<https://www.eos.surf/feature/mike-doyle-on-beach-boys-jazz-and-some-light-be> [accessed August 2024].

The Aloha Shirts

The Beach Boys were not the only non-surfing stars attempting to pitch their own beach styles into the existing surf culture. Rock 'n' roll star Presley, in vivid technicolour, introduced the Hawaiian "Aloha Shirt," with its bright floral prints, to the big screen in 1961. Playing the character of Chad Gates, a Hawaiian veteran, in *Blue Hawaii* (1961), Presley advanced this shirt as a surfing fashion staple and as a vision of sexualized masculinity. Wearing a deep red shirt, with white floral patterns printed on the fabric, and a yellow floral lei, Presley promoted Hawaiian cultural clothing. Prior to this, surf films acknowledged more of the sport's practical attire. Surfers were notoriously known for the-less-the-better, as seen in Bruce Brown's film, *Barefoot Adventures* (1960), where the shirtless characters also refuse to wear shoes. Similar to the Beach Boys' use of the Pendleton shirt, Presley took a garment of rich national history and altered its market to mainland surfers and wannabe surfers in the golden era of consumption. As a result, Presley marketed a more clothed and well-dressed surfer identity.

Despite its relatively short history, the Aloha Shirt, since its founding years, had been a product regularly evolving to suit its clientele. The Aloha Shirt was designed in the late 1920s by Japanese immigrants in Hawai'i, who adapted kimono fabrics into male shirts, due to a shortage of materials during the Great Depression, which encroached onto their shores. Those that could visit Hawai'i during this wave of economic hardship, wore the shirts to promote their wealth upon their return to the mainland, with the bright and exotic Japanese patterns gaining much attention from onlookers. In 1939, the shirt made its commercial journey to southern US, becoming popular for labourers and immigrants due to its light and cheap methods of manufacturing. As war progressed, with Japan declaring war against the US, manufacturers focused on moving away from Japanese patterns to Hawaiian iconography. No longer requiring a trip to the Islands, everyday Americans could purchase these easy-to-manufacture shirts cheaply from migrant tailors, with their Pacific illustrations bringing exotic escapism.

Before its debut on the big screen worn by the "King of Rock," the Aloha Shirt was a gender-neutral item, with its advertisements being propagated primarily towards the female wearer. Since the 1930s, the shirt was seen as a flexible and inclusive item of clothing, due to its

simplistic, 'gay' and appealing design.[57] In 1936, the *Los Angeles Times,* published a description of Hawaiian fashion, stating it was common to see a 'handsome gentleman' wearing a 'cotton Hawaiian shirt printed in a fish pattern of blues and greens. You can wear this shirt outside or inside, but be sure your girl doesn't see it first. Or you won't have it anymore.'[58] With the outbreak of war increasing the proportion of consumers being female in the US, the shirts were tailored for women. In a *Los Angeles Times* fashion segment published in the midst of war, a female wore an Aloha Shirt, buttoned and tucked into dark blue slacks. The caption in the advert stated, "Echoes of the Hawaiian shirt are seen in this gay flower crepe blouse," offering an off-duty leisure outfit to bring joy to the war-torn world.[59] Eight years later, *Seventeen* magazine, published for teenage girls, promoted new summer fashions.[60] The New York-based magazine advertised a range of more gender-neutral fashions, with teenage models seen in shirts and cropped trousers, with resting poses. One of the sportswear items included in the feature was the Aloha Shirt, in colourful print. Untucked and hanging loosely off the model, the shirt had palm trees and large pointed collars. The Aloha Shirt has a rich cultural history that has adapted to different audiences and landscapes. Presley, however, introduced it as masculine beachwear, reshaping its target audience for the white male surfer.

Thus, popular culture and its famed stars influenced beach and "surf" fashions across the US. Beach fashions, clothing with little practical application in the water, were absorbed and propagated into the nation's imagination through romanticized ideals set by the Beach Boys and Presley.

As a result of new beach fashions, the surf shop changed significantly. No longer a surfboard showroom, the surf shop diversified as a commercial space that could also sell clothing and accessories. Although there was a significant divide between practical surf clothing for the ocean, and fashionable beach clothing for the shores, both styles illustrated the growing cultural value of one's appearance. Surf clothing helped to navigate one's allegiance to the beachscape, regardless of one's surfing abilities. With overcrowded lineups and a growing number of beginner surfers appearing on California's beaches, surf communities turned to fashion to prove their worth on both land and the waves. The surf counterculture was

[57] 'Seeing Styles with Sylva Weaver: Off-Duty Fashions,' *Los Angeles Times,* 8 November 1942, p.D12.
[58] 'Western Seas and Summer Sun Set Bright Fashions for California Coast,' *Los Angeles Times,* 23 March 1936, p.A11.
[59] 'Seeing Styles with Sylva Weaver: Off-Duty Fashions,' p.D12.
[60] 'Millers,' *Seventeen*, 9:7 (May 1950), p.82.

transforming into mainstream culture. Meanwhile, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, surf shops began to move away from surfboard manufacturing towards practical fashion. Shops focused on an array of markets, from boardshorts, to wetsuits, to foam boards. The industry was diversifying, and the owner's demographics were too. Women were now owning and manufacturing within these spaces, bringing a necessary shift in the commercial sphere of the sport. With this increase in inclusivity, the surf shop was no longer a male-only domain.

10. The Shortboard Revolution: The End of the Beginning

The 1970s marked an end to the first chapter of California's surf history, merely two decades after the first surf shop opened its doors to the public. As surf shops developed into a global enterprise throughout the 1960s, these spaces transformed to offer a range of goods to be mass-consumed, moving from handcrafted balsa surfboards to mass-produced wetsuits and polyurethane surfboards. Surf shops popped up along the Pacific Coast Highway *en masse* in the late-1960s, fully provisioned and offering normal business hours. Gone were the days of the humble workshop garage and the "gone surfing" sign hanging on the closed door if waves were nearby. The surf shop prototype was no longer an experimental or fledgling idea; the commercial surf outlet was a booming space that represented California's modern leisure market. For two decades, the surf shop reflected the flourishing economy it was intertwined with, modernizing with the State as it discovered its own opportunities of cultural growth from its booming leisure markets. However, 1972 produced the first economic bust for the surf shop industry, leading to owners needing to adjust their business models to stay afloat.

Since the early 20th century, California's leisure growth and affluence have been determined by the wider nation's economic stability and geopolitical status. Leaving the socio-economic deprivation witnessed during the Great Depression firmly in the past, the US government focused on rebuilding and securing its geopolitical and economic status as a global superpower, which succeeded until 1970. Since the unprecedented unemployment levels witnessed in the 1930s, California's economy began to recover through a series of policies under the New Deal (1933-1938), which promoted aggregate spending to increase economic activity. As observed in previous chapters, these economic booms increased with California's commitment to wartime production and exportation of natural resources in the 1940s. As a result of wartime mass-production and technological experimentations, a stage of affluence, employment and consumerism developed across the State.

This stage attracted a migration of middle-class Americans seeking work in this prospering region, allowing California to pioneer a new social class of suburbanites. From 1950 to 1965, suburbanites produced a market for cultural memberships across California, as the group sought to buy more leisure items, fashions and accessories with their surplus of financial savings. This included novice surfers, who sought a commercial space that could create and sell products for the sport – without having to learn the necessary crafting skills that were

once relied upon to make one's own surfboard. The surf shop was an essential space to become a member of the sport, and a member of the culture. Until 1971, leisure was fuelling the State's economic growth, with new markets developing across the highways to cater for demand. The surf shop thrived from this affluent age of leisure consumption, with a growing flow of consumers entering these commercial outlets throughout the post-war years.

The 1970s, however, provided the first bust to California's post-war economic triumphs, forcing the first major decrease in local surf shops' profits. Through a more macroeconomic lens, this decade was home to the Great Inflation, which caused four economic recessions, 'two severe energy shortages, and the unprecedented peacetime implementation of wage and price controls.'[1] As a result, California's economy was stagnant. The United States' identity as a global geopolitical anchor was put into question. The Great Inflation observed such high rates of price increases and unemployment, that the nation entered an era of "stagflation." In 1964, the United States' inflation levels were recorded at 1%, and unemployment levels recorded at 5%; in 1974, inflation levels reached 12%, and unemployment levels were recorded at above 7%.[2] Reflecting the start of the Great Depression's crash, the future of the nation's economy was anything but stable. As a result, as surf historian Joel Smith states, surf shops entered a "retrenchment period."[3]

There are several factors as to why stagflation occurred in this decade. First, the wartime economic deals of aggregate spending were unattainable for a long-term economy, meaning it had reached the peak of a curve that was inevitably going to come down. This was triggered by the US Federal Reserve's removal of gold from the US dollar, ending the Bretton Woods agreement in 1971. The agreement was founded in New Hampshire in 1944, offering a fixed rate of exchange between the US dollar and international currencies. However, this global monetary system was incompatible with domestic wealth, as the dollar reserves abroad exceeded the US stock of gold. This led to difficulty in maintaining economic stability. As a result of this agreement ending, the US dollar was unanchored to gold and its currency had lost its stable value. Harold Walker, owner of Walker Foam, a factory that manufactured surfboard polyurethane blanks to sell to surf shops around California, remembered the 1970s

[1] Michael Bryan, 'The Great Inflation,' *Federal Reserve History* [online], 22 November 2013 <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-inflation> [accessed June 2024].
[2] Ibid.
[3] Joel Smith, 'Surf Shops & The Surfing Experience,' *The Illustrated Atlas of Surfing History* [online], 20 October 2020 <https://theillustratedatlasofsurfinghistory.wordpress.com/2020/10/20/surf-shops-the-surfing-experience/> [accessed July 2024].

as an era that 'got really dire' as 'the economy was bad in those days.'[4] The reduced demand for branded surfboards translated into the return of crafting one's own surfboards, as a cheaper alternative. As surf shop owner Bing Copeland adds, the 1970s demonstrated a return 'to build own boards, backyard type thing.'[5] Stagflation impacted the desire and ability to purchase non-essential goods from big-label surfboard shapers.

The second reason for stagflation lies within global politics, with the Cold War spreading across international stages throughout the 1970s. The Cold War and the reshuffling of international alliances led to a series of energy crises. In October 1973, the Arab oil embargo saw crude oil prices quadrupling, which was soon followed by a second oil crisis in 1979. Francis Gavin describes these resource shocks as 'a cancer on [economic] growth.'[6] Further to this, the US army continued to supply their weapons, persons, and aid to the Vietnam War. The costly intervention of involving the US in the Vietnam War had proved futile, with the US military withdrawing from the country without victory in 1973. The high costs spent on war and international trade caused significant imbalances on domestic economic programmes, leading to a decline in local funding until the 1980s. As Gavin summarizes, 'the 1970s represented a trough, a low point, a period of pessimism and malaise.'[7] Until the late-1970s, California remained part of this stalemate.

In tandem with the wider economic shifts of the nation and beyond, California's cultural identity was significantly altered by these political challenges. Marcia Eymann, a curator for an exhibit labelled "What's Going On? California and the Vietnam Era," defines the political 'tide of national events' as the leading cause of California's 'endless beaches and everything Hollywood […] being replaced by a new image, of scared and sometimes angry young men on their way to war.'[8] In 1970, with President Richard Nixon announcing his decision for US military forces to invade Cambodia, in addition to Vietnam, California hosted a series of antiwar protests, leading to a string of violent skirmishes between protestors and authorities. In August 1970, 20,000-30,000 Mexican-Americans protested the war through the "Chicano Moratorium," in Los Angeles. Three people died during the demonstration, including two protestors and journalist Rubén Salazar. Gloria Molina, one of the marchers, recalled 'our

[4] *Boardroom: Legends of Surfing Shaping,* dir. by Markus Davids (FiveSix Productions, 2012) [Documentary].
[5] Ibid.
[6] Francis J. Gavin, "How 1970s California Created the Modern World," *Engelsberg Ideas* [online], 3 April 2023 <https://engelsbergideas.com/essays/how-1970s-california-created-the-modern-world/> [accessed June 2024].
[7] Francis J. Gavin, 'How 1970s California Created the Modern World.'
[8] Marcia Eymann, 'Introduction: What's Going on,' in *What's Going On? California and the Vietnam Era,* ed. by Marcia A. Eymann and Charles Wollenberg (University of California, 2004), pp.1-12 (p.2-4).

community was destroyed […] they [the police] came in with such force.'[9] In the 1970s, discontent and violence tainted the State's idyllic beachside identity. The war, and subsequent antiwar protests, impacted California's identity. As Eymann states, society moved significantly away from the 'raised on the flag, apple pie […] patriotism, hope for the future' during the 1960s wave of idealism.[10] Instead of sustaining the State's Golden Dream, Californians focused on preserving economic security. The Age of Suburbia and its once thriving leisure markets dissolved throughout this decade of political tension and war.

The surf shop was not immune to this change. The majority of surfers were working-class, young, healthy males, which led to many being expected to join the war when the draft arrived at their front doors. To escape this call to war, groups of Californian surfers fled to Australia to escape the draft program of the US army, hoping to be part of the new Australian surf culture. As Mark Bannerman explains, Byron Bay, New South Wales, was transformed by the arrival of American surfers who set up surf businesses on the Australian coast. Some surfers 'had come to avoid the draft. Most were fleeing overdevelopment' in California.[11] The 1970s witnessed a momentous turning point for the surf industry across California, as the wider socio-economic problems caused California's dominance and significance in the surfboard market to decline. Orange County's first polyurethane surfboard manufacturer, Hobart "Hobie" Alter, moved his focus to producing the Hobie Cat catamarans instead, eventually selling his Cat model in 1976 to Coleman outdoor supplies. After his near-death experience in Makaha, 1969, Greg Noll left the industry, choosing a quieter life with his family inland. In 1973, a warrant for arrest was issued for Miki Dora, which was linked to fraud charges. This saw the Malibu rebel go on the run for three decades, choosing France and South Africa as his hiding spots. The familiar surf shop scene that belonged to the post-war decades disappeared, with a shift in focus onto new characters and locations.

The decision of surfers to remove themselves from the limelight and surf shop narrative was not solely based upon national macro changes. Despite California being the reigning champion of the surf industry, the economic engine of the sport, it was reliant on the

[9] Daniel Hernandez, 'A Loss of Innocence,' *Los Angeles Times* [online], 23 August 2020 <https://www.latimes.com/projects/chicano-moratorium/chicano-moratorium-participants-discuss-movement/> [accessed August 2024].
[10] Marcia Eymann, 'Introduction: What's Going on,' p.7.
[11] Mark Bannerman, 'The Key to Byron Bay's Transformation from "Reeking" Abattoir Town to Coastal Hotspot – American Surfers,' *ABC News AU* [online], 20 August 2022 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-21/byron-bay-transformation-1970s-now/101343964> [accessed August 2024].

manufacturing of surfboards being consistent with its traditional designs. These designs were manufactured by Californians, for Californians, in California. Traditional surfboard models included the All-American Pig, Hobie's polyurethane surfboards and Noll's Da Cat model; all being over 9ft tall and capable of riding across the State's shoreline. To produce these surfboards, shapers needed access to cheap local materials and a populace that demanded surf products, in order to gain a marginal profit to keep the business afloat.

In tandem with the struggling economy of the 1970s, another problem developed for the Californian surf industry in this decade, which was produced by the international surfboard market. Whilst the US fought to redeem their economic and geopolitical statuses, the Australian surf market was flourishing, with Australian surfers, such as Nat Young, winning top world titles in the sport. Further, Rip Curl and Billabong were formed in 1969 and 1973, respectively, supplying the nation and international markets with their products. Australia's first surf magazine was created in 1970, titled *Tracks,* and surfboard shapers pioneered novel surfboards that were better adapted to ride the Australian swells. Australia entered a surf industry boom. One product, in particular, threatened the stability of California's surfboard market: the shortboard. The transition from longboard to shortboard was the final straw for many Californian surfboard manufacturers, who refused to pivot away from their own ideas of surfing.

The radical-in-nature shortboard was designed from a combination of individuals in the late 1960s, all of whom focused on enhancing the quick movements of surfing. Two of these pioneering shapers were Australian Bob McTavish and Californian Dick Brewer. In 1968, the changing of surfboard dimensions was so novel, journalist Dick Graham publicly exclaimed in *International Surfing* magazine, 'there's a surfboard revolution going on!'[12] He challenged that 'new surfing feats will be discovered and higher plateaus reached […] this is the time for a change.'[13] Shortboards suddenly became items in hot demand. In Australia, McTavish debuted the "Plastic Machine," with a V-shaped tail to enable quick turns. With world-renowned Australian surfer Young using the McTavish surfboards to showcase new tricks, this small surfboard was seen as the modern model for champions. The smaller stature of the items allowed surfers to tuck in and ride closer to the wave's face, allowing barrel manoeuvres and quick turns. This exposed a surfer to a feeling of adrenaline that had not been felt before. Whilst living in Hawai'i, Brewer met McTavish and Young, inspiring the

[12] Dick Graham, 'There's a Surfboard Revolution Going On,' *International Surfing Magazine,* January 1968.
[13] Ibid.

shaper to design his own shortboards, such as the "Pocket Rocket" and "Mini-Gun." Both gained demand due to their light, narrow and pintail designs. A shortboard revolution had begun, and older traditions were no longer wanted.

How did this change affect traditional surfboard manufacturers? As Matt Warshaw explains, this revolution was 'disastrous for the big-label surfboard companies, all of whom were caught with a huge inventory of obsolete longboards.'[14] With some refusing to engage in this revolution, and others having an abundance of relatively unwanted materials and skillsets, the traditional surfboard businesses in coastal California suffered. Hap Jacobs, one of the first apprentices of Velzy, recalled 'I'd sold the Jacobs Surfboards name because of shortboards and everything. People wanted shaping appointments, and they'd tell you how to shape the board […] I said, "No thanks."'[15] Jacobs left his business in 1971, choosing to become a commercial fisherman instead. Meanwhile, the average surfboard got shorter and shorter, reaching lengths of only 7ft. Paul Holmes blames this loss of business on the shapers themselves, due to their 'self-satisfaction of their success,' as they had blindness towards the growing wants of 'change and innovation within the youth-driven surf scene.'[16] By neglecting to observe and assist in this revolution, traditional shapers either removed themselves from the industry, or scrambled to keep up with it.

Some shapers did try to stay afloat and adapt to the shortboard market. One traditional surf shop owner in Santa Barbara, Reynolds Yater, famed for designing his "Yater Spoon" longboard in 1964, tried to fit into the shortboard revolution. During the 1970s, 'California was going through that awkward period – vee bottoms to twin-fins to real narrow single-fins, and God, where was it going? We were all over the map.'[17] Feeling exhausted from the changes being made to surfboard designs every couple of months, Yater 'was burning the candle at both ends.'[18] Weather also added to the challenges faced by Californian shapers. With a surge of choppy and temperamental waves occurring across California at the same time, surfers were struggling to ride these conditions, which led to a decrease in demand at many popular surf breaks. Both shortboards and longboards were struggling to sell. With the

[14] Matt Warshaw, 'Shortboard Revolution,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/encyclopedia/shortboard-revolution> [accessed May 2024].
[15] Steve Pezman, 'Shooting the Bull with Hap Jacobs,' *Surfer's Journal,* April 2010.
[16] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk* (Corona del Mar: Croul Family Foundation, 2006), p.184.
[17] Reynolds Yater, 'Interview '05,' interview transcript with Michael Kew, 21 November 2005 <https://michaelkew.com/dispatches/2015/6/2/3eku9jm6qphf5qpqb5qgzcgjt9d0l1> [accessed May 2024].
[18] Ibid.

state's 'crappy surf,' Yater watched 'the big deal guys from the longboard era' disappear.[19] Despite these struggles, Yater and his one shop, "Yater Surfboards," survived these changes, as he remained dedicated to following surfboard trends in his single workshop.

For other shapers, the shortboard revolution was more than merely a change in the surfboard's dimensions. Velzy was publicly adamant against the use of shortboards, as he watched a new generation of surfers appear by the piers of Huntington and Newport. To him, surfers could not enjoy the long ride, as they were more interested in quick turns and quick rides. He stated that 'what they were doing wasn't too exciting to me – just going up and down or trying to crouch down in the tube […] I didn't like it. It was ugly. I didn't want any part of it.'[20] Turning away from the community he had spent over two-decades building, Velzy rejected the revolution. To him, surfers were 'pot-smoking, long-haired, bead-wearing, anti-war protesters, drug dealers and drop outs, even if they could surf.'[21] Finding residence in Arizona, the kingpin of the 1950's surf shop removed himself from the surfing narrative. He was not alone; other founding surf shop owners, such as Hobie and Noll, also chose to take a break from the surfing sphere in this decade.

As a result of the shortboard innovation, many traditional surfboard shapers decided to move onto new ventures. The first chapter of California's surf shop history ended. With Australia's surf industry thriving and the US economy struggling in a time of political turmoil, the Californian surf market lost its dominance on the surf culture throughout the 1970s. As with all chapter endings, a nostalgia was built from those that relished in these early decades of surfing, especially those that were nurtured by and reliant on these spaces during their youthhood.

The Surf Shop Story: A Rose-Tinted Nostalgia?

The surf shop, as a business, always had some flaws during its golden era of 1950-1970. The relatively small profit margins, reliance on suppliers to deliver natural or manmade materials, and everchanging technologies, often caused surf shops to enter a win-some-lose-some situation. Yater acknowledged the difficulty of the traditional surf shop business model by stating, 'Nobody made money on surfboards. Hobie did pretty well, Velzy did okay, but

[19] Reynolds Yater, 'Interview '05.'
[20] Paul Holmes, *Dale Velzy is Hawk,* p.185.
[21] Ibid., p.189.

nobody else.'[22] It begs two questions, how did the surf shop ultimately survive and establish a wider industry in later decades; and, more importantly, why did this space become so sacred to the consumer in the post-war period? The answer to both of these questions is that the surf shop offered an experience like no other. It offered a Thirdspace; a physical space that offers a distinct human experience that allows a sense of belonging. As spatial theorist Edward Soja wrote, these spaces produce the 'relations between the real and the imaginary, reality and its representations.'[23] In particular, the surf shop's sensory experience created a powerful sentiment of fondness and nostalgia in the 1970s, especially with the loss of traditional surf shop owners, as it had been an integral part of many surfers' childhoods in the 1950s and 1960s. Surf shops were the cultural anchors that nurtured a rebellious and exclusive surf counterculture for wave-riding, and many surfers initiated their rite of passage in these spaces. Whether one's youthhood was brushing sand from shop floors or sat flicking through a surf magazine in the workspaces of shaping legends, surfers had learnt their surfing identities within these community spaces.

In a *SURFER* article from 2016, notably named "Long Live the Surf Shop," Justin Housman stated that the surf shop had always 'nailed the business model,' as it specialized in 'humanizing the shopping experience.'[24] It survived wider societal changes as it remained true to being a community hub that catered for all surfers, regardless of whether they were going to buy an expensive one-off product, or paw through new stock to strike a conversation with someone about recent surf. As Housman emphasized, 'We're loyal. We bring our out-of-town friends with us, and maybe they buy a t-shirt or a hat […] we head over with a six-pack. It's a community hub.'[25] Housman was not alone in this ideology; the surfer's longing for self-understanding and cultural acceptance led to the surf shop experience manifesting a customer's visit into an intense feeling of nostalgia and loyalty. The loyalty produced by this space allowed a rhapsodized version of its history to seep into society.

Nostalgia became the predominant reason for a surfer's loyalty to this space. In an article on consumer research, titled "Nostalgia: The Gift That Keeps on Giving," nostalgic experiences are defined as moments when 'the self as a protagonist' interacts 'with close others in the context of momentous life events […] it bolsters social bonds and increases perceived social

[22] Reynolds Yater, 'Interview '05.'
[23] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.242.
[24] Justin Housman, 'Long Live the Surf Shop,' *Surfer Magazine* [online], 24 March 2016 <https://www.surfer.com/culture/long-live-the-surf-shop> [accessed May 2024].
[25] Ibid.

support.'[26] In particular, spaces that were popular during one's youthhood are more likely to influence 'lifelong preferences.'[27] For nostalgia to be created, a valued personal experience must be first performed, which can then be reestablished during reflections on the past. By reexperiencing the past, the social bonds remain strong.

Surf shop nostalgia produced from earlier memories made during youthhood can be observed through surf journalist Nick Carroll. Carroll, who was born in 1959, never forgot his childhood experiences in his local surf shop, a small outlet in Newport Beach, Orange County. In *Australia's Surfing Life* magazine, he reflected back on his feelings towards this space with fond memories. After a surf session, he remembered congregating at the shop with his friends, 'with the saltwater that poured from our noses as we sat around and talked about the waves we thought we'd ripped that day.'[28] All the senses were ignited in the surf shop, from sitting on the 'ubiquitous seagrass floor matting,' to smelling a 'can of Mr. Sheen' as the surf shop employee cleaned their 'pawprints' off the surfboards.[29] The surf shop had everything for surfing youths, from labelled clothing to "The Boards." Carroll believes that every great surfer came 'to pay their 75 cents for a block of Sex Wax [surfing wax] and swap a bit of bullshit with Gene, the crusty old fuck behind the desk.'[30] Observed through his token memories of the surf shop in Newport Beach, Carroll highlights that the space is irreplaceable to him. It may not have been perfect, but for Carroll, it was a distinct clubhouse that defined his youth.

From the consumer's perspective, the human experience and Thirdspace nature of the surf shop allowed the outlet to be more than a commercial experience. The shop was a safe space for youths to navigate life and to not feel alone. This was particularly observed during the shortboard revolution, where older surfers longed for their childhood experiences that were no longer easy to recreate or be found. The traditional longboard surf shop may have been aesthetically flawed but it had been familiar and consistent. These experiences were deeply rooted within the surfer's core memories. Nostalgia for the 1950s and 1960s enabled the surf shop to become the most hallowed space that the sport produced.

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[26] Xinyue Zhou et al., 'Nostalgia: The Gift that Keeps on Giving,' *Journal of Consumer Research,* 39:1 (June 2012) pp.39-50 (p.39).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Nick Carroll, 'Drop Till You Shop: Why the Surf Shop is Sacred Ground,' *Australia's Surfing Life Magazine,* January 2000.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

The 1970s proved to be a test for the power of this nostalgia, as surf shops gravitated away from the traditions set by these clubhouses. Matt Warshaw experienced both the perspectives of someone whose 'younger self spent weeks, months, years in shops, either buying stuff or hanging out as a kid, then later as a frequently-hungover employee' in the 1970s.[31] The shortboard revolution had caused a decline in profits for Californian surfboard shapers, as surf shops scrambled to update their markets and the necessary skills needed. With limited surfers understanding the intricate skills of surfboard manufacturing and wave forecasts, shops were forced to employ young and inexperienced staff members to manage the stores. Surf shops were no longer information hubs owned by veteran shapers that spent time on mentoring youths and hosting social events. Instead, surf shop owners of the 1970s were focused on steady working hours, cheaper factory-produced goods, and cost-effective employee wages. Shop owners focused less on the shop's role as a cultural anchor. As a result of seeing both sides of the surf shop experience, Warshaw's relationship with the space was on 'shakier grounds' as he entered the decade, no longer a 'wide-eyed take-it-all-in gremmie-age absorption.'[32] Combined with the Great Inflation observed in the early 1970s, surf shops could not maintain the romanticized ideals set by predecessors, which created a devastating impact on these cultural hubs. Surf shops could no longer survive on minor profit margins, for the sake of a welcoming hub of leisurely hangouts, barbecues and film nights.

Turning to Unity Surfboards for employment, Warshaw saw this space as 'messy, funny, mean,' with long hours 'at minimum wage with bruised feelings instead of gore.'[33] It was a rough business for a teenager that was inexperienced in customer service. As traditional surfboard shapers resigned from their roles, new surf shops popped up to try and fill the gaps in an uncertain market. These spaces catered for all products, without the specialization that previous outlets honed in on. The 1970s saw such a turnover in shop ownership, an anecdote was produced; for every two shops that closed, three would pop up immediately after.[34] The impact of the Great Inflation and rising competition amongst new surf shops for customers,

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[31] Matt Warshaw, 'Surf Shops, Renny Yater, Gary Green,' *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online], 22 October 2017 <https://www.eos.surf/joint/sunday-joint-10-22-2017> [accessed May 2024].
[32] Matt Warshaw, 'Confessions of a South Bay Shop Boy,' *Encylopedia of Surfing* [online], 16 January 2022 <https://www.eos.surf/joint/sunday-joint-1-16-2022-confessions-of-a-south-bay-shop-boy> [accessed May 2024].
[33] Ibid.
[34] Davis Jones, 'History of Surfing: Houses of the Holy,' *Surfer* [online], 19 October 2017 <https://www.surfer.com/features/history-of-surfing-surf-shops-are-the-houses-of-the-holy> [accessed May 2024].

led to a quick turnover in business owners across the industry. This proved a vicious cycle, which observed the pop-up surf shops as a struggling and unfamiliar entity in the 1970s.

The need for quick employment in pop-up surf shops overshadowed the quality of customer service, which led to a less-than-friendly environment. During his time as an employee at Unity Surfboards in 1977, Warshaw remembered the shop being 'staffed with punk-ass local surfers,' including himself, and 'if I could, I would slap my 17-year-old self for the way I treated customers.'[35] Ironically, Unity Surfboards was built from Hap Jacobs' showroom, which he had sold a few years prior. Compared to the 'Cathedral-like' palace that Jacobs had built, which was known as the 'cleanest shop in creation,' these pop-up surf shops struggled to meet the prestige that had previously been created.[36] The promise of a magical human experience and local surf myths in these new outlets could not be obtained due to the short-lived and large quantity of surf shops in one area. Without the years to form logo prestige and personal anecdotes, such as Velzy's kingpin sport's car and the preserved thumb in Noll's shop, the surf shop became similar to that of a department store. The plethora of changes seen in the 1970s had incidentally caused the surf business to lose its role as a welcoming and social sanctity.

A Recovering Economy: Reviving The Surf Shop in the 1980s

The loyalty produced from nostalgia acted as a function to revive traditional surf shops across California in the 1980s, with the end of the Great Inflation and more economic freedom. Instead of forming a new blueprint, many owners returned to their predecessors' designs, wanting a return to the golden era of garage-style surf shops. Despite witnessing experimentations with the surfboard in the 1970s, the traditional surf shop aesthetic remained in the hearts of many surfers throughout this change. Surfers searched to restore their old clubhouses back into reality when the economy recovered in the 1980s.

For a handful of surf shops in Orange County, the traditional surf shop ethos did not succumb completely to the commercial blueprint changes of the 1970s. Nostalgia led to a desire to recreate the surfboard workshop in San Clemente, as several shapers opened traditional garage spaces amongst the factories of other local craftsmen. The desire to return back to

[35] Davis Jones, 'History of Surfing: Houses of the Holy.'
[36] Ibid.

tradition was revived in a small industrial park called Calle de Los Molinos, Street of the Mills, close to the bustling traffic artery of the Pacific Coast Highway. The unassuming industrial park was known by the more common colloquial name, the "Surf Ghetto," due to its array of surfboard workshops. Shapers in the ghetto created a fertile ground of traditional surfboard manufacturing throughout the late-1970s, with the aim of copying the founding fathers of the surf shop. Surfers wanting to step back in time visited the Ghetto in order to reminisce about their cultural heritage within these workshops.

Along the winding alleys of this park, a concoction of workshops could be found, with carpenters, engineers and craftspeople making a living from their art. One of these crafters was surfboard shaper Brad Basham, who opened his shop "Basham's Factory and Surf Shop" in the early 1970s. His workshop was loyal to the traditional, hand-carved longboard. Plus, he offered a board-building experience to anyone that entered under the building's corrugated shutter doorway, whether or not they had money in their pockets. Basham, alongside other local shapers, such as Chris McElroy, took young shapers under their wings and offered discounts to those that seemed genuinely interested in crafting. The Ghetto retained the ideology that surf shops should be a space that offered an inclusive radical clubhouse, that could provide invaluable knowledge to generations. It kept Velzy's humble roots of the surf shop alive, and for many surfers with nostalgia, it kept their youthhood alive.

These spaces remained loyal to the architecture of early surfboard workshops observed in the 1950s. The factories of the ghetto often featured windowless rooms, with scratched concrete floors and workhorses. As *Stab* magazine acknowledges, the walls of McElroy's 'shaping bay were famously plastered with photos ripped out from magazines,' with workshop areas similar to 'spaceships for all of the explorations.'[37] Inside this industrious space, there were several workhorses for surfers to learn the skill of surfboard shaping, under the guidance of experts. Supplying the shaping planes, resin, and materials necessary, the Ghetto was a place that promoted the power of education and mentorship. In McElroy's shop, one could find the 'Hydro Glass den of decadence,' where surfers could hang out on a social level.[38] Through these independent industrial workshops, the surf shop was rebirthed to a new generation wanting the past, minimalistic architectures to return.

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[37] 'The Undisputed King of San Clemente's Surf Ghetto, Chris McElroy has Died,' *Stab Magazine* [online], 14 August 2019 <https://stabmag.com/news/undisputed-king-of-san-clementes-surf-ghetto-chris-mcelroy-has-died-rip/> [accessed May 2024].
[38] Ibid.

Working in tandem with the handful of workshops within surf communities that were actively attempting to recreate the traditional workshops that created California's surf culture, there was another significant trend that occurred in the 1980s: the return of the longboard. The return of the longboard not only propelled surfboard sales within ghetto spaces, but also changed the business trajectory of pop-up shops. It was evident, throughout the 1970s, that the shortboard was not designed for most of California's swells and tidal patterns. Despite a sudden influx of Californian surfers trialling a short surfboard in the 1970s, California did not have the same swell conditions and heights as Australia or Hawai'i, where the shortboard was founded. As Ventura surfer Tom Williams discovered in the shortboard boom, surfers found 'shortboards were very unstable,' which led to longboard defectors returning back to their original dimensions by the end of the 1970s.[39]

A move towards favouring longboards encouraged a boost in business for traditional shapers in the ghettos during the 1980s, as many surfers had already sold their longboards in garage sales or recycled them into shortboards during the shortboard revolution. During the shortboard trend, it was encouraged that longboards were seen as the surfboard of "old men" who could not adapt to the new age of surfing.[40] However, it was observed that longboards suited many Californian surf breaks, as the longer surfboard allowed slow rides on temperamental and small waves. Surf journalist Jeff Meyers states that surfers began to appreciate the elegance of a slow ride and the pleasures of sitting up out of the water' which saw 'some shortboarders converted [and] lapsed longboarders returned to the fold.'[41] With the resurgence of longboards, traditional surf shops were reborn and encouraged across grassroots surf communities, expanding the ghettos. As former senior editor of *Surfing* magazine Sam George stated in 1992, 'longboarders are the fastest-growing minority.'[42]

At the beginning of the 1980s, it was observed that for the surf shop to succeed, it was necessary to focus on local surf breaks, stylistic choices of surfers and cultural demands. With both shortboards and longboards being manufactured in this decade, the return of traditional shapers and workshops returned on a larger scale to the surf scene, after a decade-long break. This included the return of former big-label shapers, including Dewey Weber and Phil Edwards. Edwards, knowing that the 'baby boomer generation began yearning for surfing's

[39] Jeff Meyers, '"Old Logs" Rekindle a Flame,' *Los Angeles Times* [online], 1 May 1992 <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-05-01-sp-1232-story.html> [accessed August 2024].
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

roots,' started a business to replicate his old-style surfboards that he had learnt to shape during his years at Hobie Surfboards during the 1950s.[43] Instead of following international product trends, the surf shop had to focus on its Californian environment and cultures. Despite the economic bust of the 1970s, the surf shop proved that a successful model was inherently linked to its relationship with the consumer and the knowledge of its local community. Surf shop owners had to be educated in different surfboard types, surf breaks and forecasts, in order to make business. This return to the knowledgeable employee and the balsawood surfboard workshops, encouraged a feeling of nostalgia, loyalty and fondness in the consumers.

As of 2024, the Surf Ghetto remains a blossoming industrial space, with Basham's surfboards still a leader in Southern California's surfboard industry. The workshops hidden inside still house workhorses, surrounded by woodchips and blobs of resin.

Is the "Cultural Experience" the Future of the Surf Shop?

The future of the surf shop in California depends on the surf shop owner's recognition and understanding of the shop's historic cultural function. As surf company "C-Skins" understands, 'surf shops, since their inception, have held a place in surfing culture as gatekeepers of almost secret knowledge and insight […] the surf shop remains a critical part of surf culture.'[44] Since its loss of self in the 1970s, the surf shop's function has been better understood by its designers in its revival years. For the space to succeed, it must offer an exclusive experience that recreates a hub of nostalgia and community. The commercial space is an integral Thirdspace that has defined California's heritage for over 75 years. Through this lens, it is the craved familiarity by the surfer that allows the surf shop to conquer the societal changes around its bricks-and-mortar. This familiarity and want for stability in these hubs are observed through a surfer's loyalty to a specific shop, which, with the right number of regular consumers, allows the shop to remain in business.

Documentary filmmaker Joel Smith summarizes his loyalty to the surf shop in an essay titled "Surf Shops and the Surfing Experience," published in 2020. For over 30 years, Smith

[43] Jason Borte, 'Phil Edwards,' *Surfing* [online], 6th July 2018 <https://www.surfline.com/surf-news/phil-edwards/89812> [accessed August 2024].
[44] 'Why Surf Shops Matter,' *C-Skins* [online] <https://c-skins.com/blogs/news/why-surf-shops-matter> [accessed July 2024].

purchased surfboards exclusively from Phil Becker, a shaper in Hermosa Beach. He states, 'I could walk to his shaping room […] He knew how I surfed, what I liked, and more important, what I needed for both local and distant waves.'[45] His relationship with Becker was a 'key part of my surfing experience and not at all unusual. Virtually every surfer I know has had a personal connection with their shapers.'[46] For Smith, 'old school surf shops are doing quite well' as 'the relationship between surfer and shaper has, if anything, been revitalized.'[47]

With the majority of surf shop owners who began their businesses in the 1960s and 1970s surpassing retirement age, the local grassroots surf shop is nonetheless returning to old models to define itself. In 2021, Becker passed away, his knowledge of understanding the functionality and dimensions of custom surfboards now left to his successors. Thus, there is a generational shift occurring across Southern California, with plans of succession being drawn up for the next generation. What does this mean for the future of surf shops? In 2023, Maria Contino concludes that the surf shop business model is moving towards a return to a 'version of the genuine "surfer" consumer' with an expectation to see 'shelf space open up for smaller, breakout brands.'[48] A want to return to the small garage and local workshop has returned again to the surf industry.

An example of the modern and humble surf shop prototype can be found at "Catalyst Surf Shop," San Clemente, a place that I visited in 2022. The space was designed to recreate the same feeling as an active workshop, despite its polished showroom of goods. This can be observed through the clean, red-coloured floors, which had blobs of resin purposefully added onto the floor by the owner to make it look older. Although technologies have changed since 1950 – for example, the owner's laptop was used to display a local surf camera's live feed – the humble nature was still observed within this space. Posters of professional surfers, such as Mason Ho, were stuck to the windows, crudely at different heights; and the smell of surf wax filled the air. It was small but organized, with a purpose of showcasing the style of a personal garage-space, without it being a garage-space. This appealing compromise of tradition and modernity has engulfed the surf shop's aesthetic in the 21st century, with success. I left the store after an hour, after exchanging mobile phone numbers with an employee, looking at the live stream of waves at Doheny Beach – by their recommendation – and receiving a few free

[45] Joel Smith, 'Surf Shops & The Surfing Experience.'
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Maria Contino, 'Opinion: The Changing Tide in Surf,' *ShopEatSurf* [online], 24 October 2023 <https://shop-eat-surf.com/2023/10/opinion-the-changing-tide-in-surf/> [accessed July 2024].

surf stickers. This was my first glimpse of the modern surf shop in California, and I left feeling a strong sense of loyalty to the space I had only just entered.



Figure 10.1: Resin-covered floor, “Catalyst Surf Shop,” a photograph by Katherine Hunt, San Clemente, October 2022.

Although the first chapter of California’s surf history ended in 1972, the surf shop is reviving its original identity once again. Despite the future of the surf shop being unknown in this new century, being a clubhouse, information hub and sacred space have remained integral roles within these structures. The 1980s cemented the notion that the surf shop is a Californian design that must focus on local surfers, local beaches, and local heritage. As the surf shop surpasses 75 years of existence, these historic outlets may have seen multiple business owners pass through their doors, but the function of this space remains the same. The surf shop was, and still is, the cultural anchor of the surf community.

Conclusion

'I believe that your future will be even greater than your past.'[49]

- President Theodore Roosevelt addressing Californians, "Remarks at Surf," 1903.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt travelled to California with the hope of discovering a novel way of life that could heal the ailments and low physical and mental health of the American nation. Since the Gold Rush, California had promoted its golden way of life through its creeks with shimmering golden nuggets, and black gold found in the State's large oil farms. However, this golden wealth was not limited merely to physical objects; California also offered a golden way of life, as the State promised a fresh start and a life of prosperity to anyone willing to search for it. The ideology of "Golden California" was born, a myth that mirrored the beloved American Dream. Therefore, it was amongst this bountiful, frontier landscape that Roosevelt believed that outdoor leisure would encourage 'such qualities as courage, resolution and endurance.'[50] With a particular interest in Southern California, Roosevelt predicted that the ocean should be harnessed by the State as the next golden treasure. In particular, California should invest in ocean leisure. Thus, it is unsurprising that surfing was brought to these waters in 1907, by Hawaiian surfer George Freeth, as wave-riding was an act that combined outdoor leisure with unique exoticism, an antidote to the smog-filled industrialization occurring inland. Whilst watching Freeth dance along his surfboard on a curling wave, spectators gathered in crowds on California's sands, mesmerized by the connection between wave-rider and the ocean. As prophesized, the sport enabled the once rural ranchos and citrus groves to enter modernity with California promoting a shimmering and golden image of sun, sea and surf. As Kevin Starr summarizes, 'the dreams of California, in short, were the dreams of the nation, and vice versa.'[51]

These dreams, however, were not propagated to all Americans; the golden dreams of suburban living and beach leisure were constructed for and promoted exclusively to white, middle-class Americans, despite the mixing pot of racial and ethnic communities built from Southern California's frontier past. The environmental gold found amongst its landscapes, and the promise of leisure, were purposefully constructed for white Americans, to encourage

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[49] Theodore Roosevelt, 'Remarks at Surf,' 9th May 1903, *The American Presidency Project* [online] <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-surf-california> [May 2024].
[50] Theodore Roosevelt, '"Professionalism" in Sports,' *The North American Review,* 15:405 (August 1890), pp.187-191 (p.187-188).
[51] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (Oxford University Press: 2009), p.xi.

their migration. In the early 20th century, beach leisure was promoted to entice affluent, white Americans to relocate and invest in local community developments. Meanwhile, non-white businesses and resorts along the beach boulevards were forced to close, and de facto segregation was put in place across its shorelines. Replacing these structures, elegant bathhouses, Mission villas and colourful amusement piers were constructed, perpetuating a myth of middle-class whiteness and affluence to tourists. As Edward Soja summarized, Southern California was 'a fountainhead of imaginative fantasy, emitting a mesmerizing force that obscures reality by eroding the difference between the real and the imagined, fact and fiction.'[52] The State yearned for a landscape of early suburban ideals, which distinctly favoured the family unit, domestic realm and middle-class leisure consumption. As California sought to harness the Pacific Ocean as a leisure commodity, surfing was brought to its shores, promoting a mesmerizing exotic sport to its Californian audiences.

Since Freeth's first demonstration, the sport continued to develop along the coast through small pockets of surfers. Throughout the interwar years, prestigious surf clubs dominated the waters, including the Palos Verdes Surf Club. The clubs' ambitions were to compete in surf competitions for prizes, educate Californians on beach safety and act as seasonal lifeguards. The male-dominated surf clubs were stringently regulated through a hierarchy and strict codes, with clubs promoting good health, comradery and water safety.

The Second World War altered the cultural trajectory of this budding, fraternal sport. With many surf club members enlisting throughout the conflict's years, and a series of natural disasters hitting California's beachside communities, the shorelines became an unregulated and vacuous space. Without surf club leaders and a watchful authoritative eye on the sands, a differing surf culture began to develop through teenage "surf rats," such as Dale Velzy and Tom Rice, who dreamt of transforming surfing from a hobby into a way of life. The Second World War propelled this modern surf culture by offering the vacuous space, technologies, and booming economic industries to nurture and finance a commercial surf lifestyle. As Starr confirms, 'the story of World War II and the post-war period […] asserts once and for all the American dimension of California and the California dimension of America.'[53] Surfing veterans and teenage youths utilized the post-war decade to experiment with the potential of their sport, through new surfboard materials and shapes. The surfers' widespread fascination

[52] Edward Soja, *My Los Angeles: From Urban Restructuring to Regional Urbanization* (University of California Press, 2014), p.1.
[53] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963,* p.xi.

with creating, carving and experimenting on the beach soon became difficult on the public sands. The temperamental climates, regular public audience and litter from the manufacturing processes, forced surfboard shapers to locate to a more private workshop.

Surfing's mass exportation, propagation and manufacturing would not have been possible without its stable, indoor workshop space and clubhouse: the Californian surf shop. When Dale Velzy opened the first surf shop in 1950, the space observed a constant flow of activity, with young apprentices and local surfers watching the shaper fix surfboards, carve balsa and glass the final product. Other shapers began to tap into new technologies, made cheaply available by wartime industries. The discovery of polyurethane and neoprene, through these industries, enabled the creative minds of surfers to transfer these materials into novel surf items, such as the lighter foam surfboard and warm wetsuit. In tandem, balsa surfboard shapers experimented with new planshapes, which produced innovative surfboard designs, such as the "Velzy Pig" and "Da Cat" models, offering easier manoeuvrability and sleeker designs. Surfers trialled new tricks and stances on these surfboards, as they rode local waters. By selling these items to local surfers, customers offered the financial stability for shapers to experiment and better the art of wave-riding. With business booming, surf shops transformed from small workshops into state-of-the-art factory production lines, as observed through Hobie Surfboards and Greg Noll Surfboards, by 1970. The surf commercial market enabled a cohesive Californian surf culture and radical technological growth to blossom and flourish up and down the coast's highways.

Within these Southern California surf shops, shapers also designed a new wave-riding counterculture; surfers spoke a new language, refused to wear shoes, observed each other's behaviours, and read surf magazines instructing them on how to act in and out of the water. In the evenings, these spaces offered barbecues and beers. These local, male-dominated hubs functioned as a creative and social space for working-class wave-riders, exporting and importing local knowledge of surf conditions and surfboard designs to create a cohesive, Californian surfer identity. Thus, since Dale Velzy opened the first surf shop, this space has been a key Thirdspace for the sport; the space actively nurtured the modern surf lifestyle. Through the definition of Soja, the surf shop can be defined as a sacred Thirdspace, as it produced 'linkages between space, time and social being;' it assisted in the 'making of history and the composition of social relations or society.'[54] Throughout its first three

[54] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.7.

decades, the surf shop offered both function and familiarity, allowing a counterculture to be nurtured, dedicated to helping surfers to fulfil their rite of passage in the ocean.

By the 1960s, surfing had developed in California from an unfamiliar sport of Polynesia, into *the* exotic summer pastime for the State, attracting Americans across the US to consume and invest in this homegrown beach culture. Wave-riding attracted outsiders to learn, through its visual beauty and cultural peculiarities. Throughout the 1960s, Hollywood directors, musicians, and the State attempted to harness this culture as a commodity, one that could perpetuate the cultural liberties sold under the American Dream. Through fun surf flicks, the Beach Boy's romantic lyrics, and brightly-coloured beach fashions, the surf culture drifted away from the confines of the surf shop. This golden beach lifestyle even attracted presidential attention. For Father's Day in 1969, President Richard Nixon was gifted with a surfboard from his daughter, produced by a surfboard manufacturing team consisting of the three Patterson brothers. Robert, Ron and Raymond Patterson produced the presidential surfboard in Hobart "Hobie" Alter's surf shop in Dana Point, even joking that 'we'd make one for Khruschev, too.'[55]

The characters, artefacts and experiences within the surf shop distinctively belong to Southern California. The culture grown within these walls was part of a regional phenomenon, relying on surf pioneers and external factors to assist in surfing's progression. The surf shop and the State are complexly intertwined, suggesting that neither should be separate from the other within California's wider histories of race, gender, war and economics. Moving away from surf studies' micro-focus on singular biographies of locations and surfers, this thesis emphasizes the importance of wider relationships within the surf shop's story. In order to create a more recognized academic field, the use of comparative stories and macro histories within the surf story encourages surf studies to distance itself from the exclusive surfer penmanship and readership. Consequently, the cultural value of the surf shop can be appreciated by new audiences.

[55] Lael Morgan, 'Tricia, Would You Tell Your Dad His Surfboard Is Ready?' *Los Angeles Times,* 8 August 1969, p.B1.

A History Formed by a Community

By following multiple narratives, with a focus on a series of contemporary and reflective interviews of surfers and surfboard shapers, this thesis offers that surf studies should reduce its focus on a single person or narrative. This work has focused on returning the relationships between multiple surfers and communities back into the surf shop narrative, as its blueprint was designed by a host of individuals. For example, this project has included the analysis of surf shop pioneers Dale Velzy, Hobie, Gordon Clark, Greg Noll, John Severson, Bruce Brown, Kathy Kohner, Miki Dora, Jack O'Neill, Minouri Nii, and Nancy Katin – all contributing to the creation of a novel surf culture. California's surf culture is one built from and preserved by its community of pioneers.

The number of individuals in the surf shop's history is demonstrated by *Surfing Magazine's* "Shaper's: Family Tree," an extensive and interconnected family tree showing the mentorship of surfboard manufacturers. Due to its large-scale nature, a snippet of the connections has been recreated below, with a focus on the surfboard shapers mentioned throughout this thesis. Although Velzy is credited as the first surf shop owner, this story cannot be credited to one individual. Each surf shop owner and shaper has inherited knowledge from another through interactions and guidance, illustrating the value of these hubs as educational outlets. What began as a handful of shapers trying to pioneer something that could assist the fledgling surfing industry, has resulted in thousands of shapers keeping traditions alive. As observed on the original shaper family tree, which is also displayed at the California Surf Museum, Velzy alone mentored at least 20 notable surfboard manufacturers; and these individuals went on to begin their own companies, allowing several generations of shapers to expand the tree. Each name on this tree is intertwined with another's story, illustrating that no single name can be selected as the surf culture's sole creator. Each name has left a piece of themselves on the surf shop's blueprint.

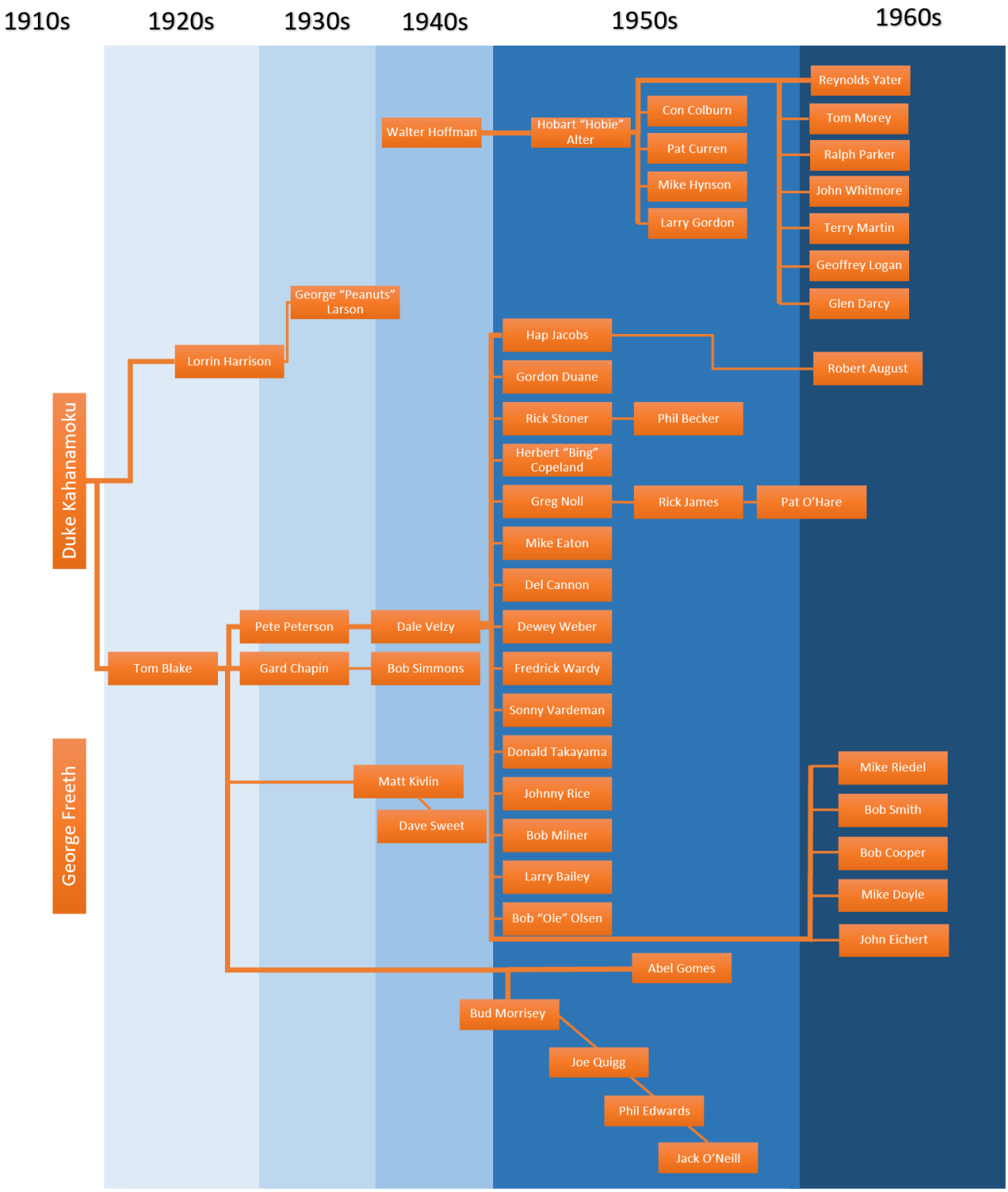


Figure 11.1: 'California's Surfboard Shaper Tree,' a diagram, by Katherine Hunt, 2025; inspired by "Shapers: A Family Tree," *Surfing Magazine,* January 2007.

This thesis approaches spatial understanding through the analysis of personal relationships formed within and outside of the surf shop. Sociologists Philip Blumstein and Peter Kollock observe that 'relationships – as a coherent subject matter – have recently been neglected […] it is assumed that the individual is the more useful way.'[56] For 'the understanding of both society-to-person and person-to-society,' one needs to observe the 'interaction[s] within personal relationships.'[57] By reducing the biographical narrative of surf studies, shapers can be identified as a "family," similar to *Surfing Magazine's* tree, as the behaviours of surfers affected the outcomes of the surf shop, its consumers and the surfer identity.

As a Thirdspace, the surf shop's value is based upon the human experience felt inside its walls. Personal relationships are part of this unique experience, whether between surf shop owner-and-consumer, or surfer-and-surfer. These integral relationships have been preserved within these spaces, through personal collections found throughout commercial outlets. In San Clemente, Timmy Patterson, son of Ronald Patterson, has a display of personal photographs pinned on a wall in his surf shop "T.Patterson Surfboards." Amongst the array of photographs from his childhood include several with Velzy, candidly smiling as he sits with other local surfers during a social event with the Pattersons. This is not the only place to observe memories of the founding surf shop owner, Velzy, in San Clemente. "Hobie Surf Shop" showcased a mural dedicated to Velzy in 2023, with photographs accompanied by a written history reminding the consumer of his role in the business. By using the surf shop as a guide for this research, this project acts to preserve the relationships formed within these spaces, as it is at the forefront of the shop's own identity.

[56] Philip Blumstein and Peter Kollock, 'Personal Relationships,' *Annual Review of Sociology,* Vol.14 (1988), pp.467-490 (p.467).
[57] Ibid., p.468.



Figure 11.2: 'T.Patterson Surfboards,' a collection of photographs, a photograph by Katherine Hunt, San Clemente, October 2022.

In recent years, a handful of Southern Californian surf shops have worked on presenting their histories in a museum-style format, to bring to life each shop's impact on history. For example, in Dana Point, "Hobie Surf Shop" has a room dedicated to its origin years, with information labels to describe the items preserved. Featured in this room are old stringer shavings, restored resin pigments, and traditional Hobie surfboards hanging from the ceiling. There is also a handmade model of the first Hobie Surfboards, with painted surfboards standing proudly in the window, and the Googie-style architecture Hobie propagated in his business plan. All of these items have helped to create the modern surf shop. However, these artefacts and testimonies have remained stored within shop walls, evading scholarly examination, unless these spaces are visited.



Figure 11.3: A jar of stringer shavings and pigmented resin, on display at "Hobie Surf Shop," a photograph by Katherine Hunt, Dana Point, October 2022.

This thesis acknowledges that the surf shop is an integral Thirdspace in California's history; it is a grassroots space of heritage, community and outlawish counterculture. At a glance, it is merely a commercial outlet that sells the necessary products for wave-riding. However, the surf shop was the very root that grew not only California's surf culture, but California's identity. Inside these brick-and-mortar buildings, a modern surf culture was born in Southern California, through a series of pioneering ideas and experiments by local surfers. Between 1950 and 1972, the golden years of the surf shop, these spaces were the cultural anchors of surfing, creating a global enterprise from a handful of innovative brains that propagated the State's wants of beach leisure in its affluent decades. The surf shop is not only a space of sacrality for surfers, but a space that is sacred to Californians. Thus, this thesis promotes further exploration of other cultural anchors nestled along highstreets and highways, to allow more urban Thirdspaces and grassroots pioneers to enter wider histories for scholarly recognition.

The surf shop was and is a sacred space to surfers; it is the space where surfers migrate to, learn about themselves, and reminisce about past memories. It was never just a shop; it was a watering hole, a museum, an information point, and a home. As Greg Noll concludes, surfing is 'not a sport. It's really more of a lifestyle. It's really more of a lifestyle [repeated]. That board that allows you to do what you do, comes from somebody that's gonna [*sic*] shape it.'[58] California's surf culture was built, nurtured and made accessible by the surf shop, which makes the space and its pioneers worthy of historical recognition.

[58] *Boardroom: Legends of Surfing Shaping,* dir. by Markus Davids (FiveSix Productions, 2012) [Documentary].

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Media

12 Months North: The Nick Gabaldon Story, dir. by Richard Yelland (Curtis Birch, 2012) [Documentary]

Between the Lines, dir. by Scott Bass, Troy Page and Ty Ponder, (Pure Frustration, 2008) [Documentary]

BoardRoom: Legends of Surfboard Shaping, dir. by Markus Davids (Studio FiveSix, 2012) [Documentary]

Endless Summer, dir. by Bruce Brown (Columbia Pictures, 1966) [Motion Picture]

Fifty Years of Surfing on Film: John Severson, dir. by Ira Opper (Opper Sports Productions, 2008) [Documentary]

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Shank, Bud, *Slippery When Wet,* prod. by Richard Bock (World Pacific, 1959) [Audio]

Slippery When Wet, dir. by Bruce Brown (Bruce Brown Films, 1958) [Moving Picture]

The Beach Boys, ‘Noble Surfer,’ *Surfin’ USA* (Capitol Records, 1963) [Audio]

The Beach Boys, ‘Surfin’ USA,’ *Surfin’ USA,* (Capitol Records, 1963) [Audio]

The Surfer’s Journal Filmmakers: Greg Noll, dir. by The Surfer’s Journal (1996) [Documentary]

A List of Figures

Figure 1.1. South Bay in the 'Maps of California,' a map, 1928-1930, retrieved from the *Library of Congress* [online], <www.loc.gov/item/2022589244/> [accessed April 2025]

Figure 2.1. 'Bel Air Bay Club,' a photograph, 1938, in Don James, *Surfing San Onofre to Point Dume, 1936-1942: Photographs by Don James* (Santa Barbara: T. Adler Books, 1996), p.22

Figure 3.1. "Mahbu [*sic*] Pt." in the 'Maps of California,' a map, 1928-1930, retrieved from the *Library of Congress* [online], <www.loc.gov/item/2022589244/> [accessed April 2025]

Figure 4.1. Don Guild, 'Dale Velzy in front of Velzy Surfboards,' a photograph, 1952, courtesy of The Manhattan Beach Historical Society <https://manhattanbeachhistorical.org/photographs/> [accessed November 2021]

Figure 5.1: A model of the first Hobie surf shop, a sculpture, on display at "Hobie Surf Shop," a photograph by Katherine Hunt, Dana Point, October 2022

Figure 5.2: "Orange County," in the 'Maps of California,' a map, 1930, Drawer 11, Folder 9, Item 2, retrieved from the *Library of Congress* [online], <https://www.loc.gov/resource/gmdtitlecolmaps.ca-011/?sp=7&r=0.407,1.08,0.151,0.098,0> [Accessed May 2025]

Figure 7.1: John Severson, *The Surfer,* 1:1, 1960, p.34

Figure 7.2: 'Da Cat's Theory of Evolution,' *SURFER,* an advertisement, July 1967

Figure 8.1: '1966 Hall of Fame Inductees,' a photograph taken by LeRoy Grannis, featured in "1966 International Surfing Hall of Fame Awards," *Encyclopedia of Surfing* [online] <https://www.eos.surf/contest/1966-international-surfing-hall-of-fame-awards> [accessed January 2024]

Figure 9.1: 'The O'Neill's Factory,' an advertisement illustrated by Jim Phillips, *SURFER,* 1974

Figure 10.1: Resin-covered floor, "Catalyst Surf Shop," a photograph by Katherine Hunt, San Clemente, October 2022

Figure 11.1: 'California's Surfboard Shaper Tree,' a diagram, by Katherine Hunt, 2025; inspired by "Shapers: A Family Tree," *Surfing Magazine,* January 2007

Figure 11.2: 'T.Patterson Surfboards,' a collection of photographs, a photograph by Katherine Hunt, San Clemente, October 2022

Figure 11.3: A jar of stringer shavings and pigmented resin, on display at "Hobie Surf Shop," a photograph by Katherine Hunt, Dana Point, October 2022