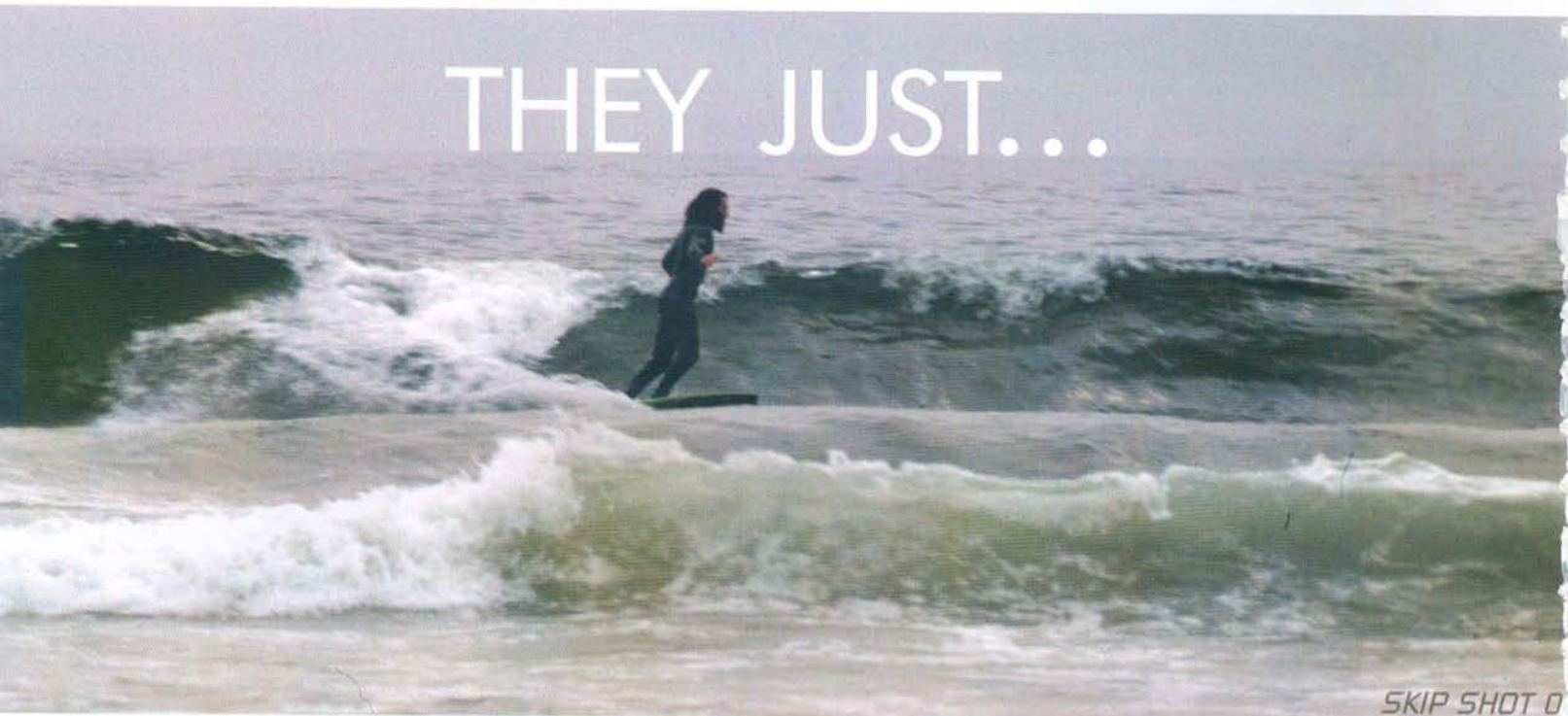


old surfers never die.

THEY JUST...



SKIP SHOT 0

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“How's that go?”

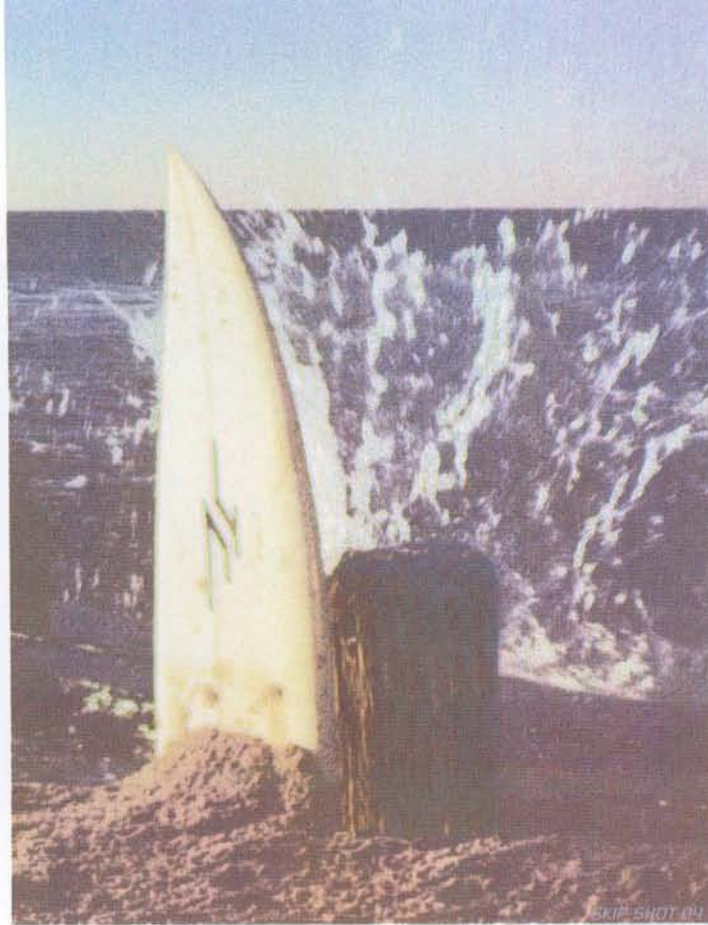
“If everybody had an ocean across the USA, then everybody'd be surfin' like Californ-i-a.”

That was then, and it was a grand old time, even stoked cool, with walls and tubes and hanging five on your 9-8 Hawaii. Jersey was happening. The best white sand beaches and respectably consistent waves were opened to a culture that migrated from Hawaii, via sunny California. And it was here. Hair got longer and had that sunbleached streak. Bathing suits were replaced by 'cutoffs' and, more formal,

'baggies'. As an aside, then, the longer and baggier attire was to help prevent chafing on your thighs caused by the wax on your board. It was not designed to show that you never learned how to dress.

At the time it was sometimes a challenge to gain beach access - sound familiar. Boros and Hamlets were slow to accept an unfamiliar culture. A couple of towns that will

remain nameless did have an occasional police escort - out of town - for a rag tag group of gnarly dudes in a VW microbus. But places to surf slowly appeared on the Jersey shore. The more forward-looking communities did take the adventure into surfing contests as more and more kids took up the growing sport. It should be noted that participants were almost exclusively guys. 'Beach bunnies' wore little bikinis, had long hair, and made a summer of looking great. That was enough. They did not even have to get wet. Today? That 'chick' on line-up next to you may surf your doors off!



But this is not the case with all old surfers. Occasionally you will see a grainy senior, his dings all yellowed, hauling his board out of a newer sport utility vehicle. He waited. It is probably September. The Bennies have departed and the guards have all returned to college. The water remains delightfully warm and it is still light after work. The waves are now occupied by the locals. It is a different scene. Most everyone is an accomplished surfer and courtesy has returned to the lineup. You will see a 'sit back' as one surfer lets another have the wall to him - or her - self. It is the

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Our music reflected this sport with the likes of the venerable Beach Boys, Jan and Dean and others. Even instrumentals became popular like the kick-butt "Wipe Out", by the Safaris. If it captured the feel of careening down a glassy wall, held up by the westerlies, and feeling the whoosh as the tube wanted to push you out - it was a hit. Locked in and hanging five, grazing your fingers down that shiny blue heaven. Surf's up, man.

The sixties did accelerate onward. Hot cars, muscle cars, more surfboard design changes, like noseriders and pintails. Then, it may have been Dusty Rhoades, with his 6 foot "Love" board, that pioneered short board wave antics. The change was on. Shorter and faster, screaming up and down a wave face, just milking that wall to the max. Catch some air, slip and rollercoaster, kick back up the wall and bail out.

And, this is now. With a bit of sadness your writer recalls just one too many times that his Hansen fell in the garage. A hair-line crack in the skeg socket. Another little ding in the dropped elliptical rails. This thing is gonna become trash soon. Living inland, working almost sixty hours a week, hair graying at the temples and one massive chest slowly sinking down to the belt buckle. Six-pack abs miraculously multiply to become a case. One yard sale later and a lifestyle has become history. Maybe someday, not today.

fundamental relationship of human and nature, a very internal and private one. The wave is where that relationship is shared. It is the art of surfing that is mastered, not the wave.

For the 'old timers' there are storms to remember. With the old time surfers it is the days leading up to the storm that bring tales of glory, and damnation. It was a huge rolling and boiling surf. Getting out to the lineup was an exhausting task, turning turtle to the breaking onslaught. The ride was fast and furious with the wall building and tubing in the wink of an eye. Nail it - or Approaching eight to ten feet, here they come, a huge set. Wait, wait. Up and flying, hurtling down the wall, crank that bottom turn and - a closeout! Bail! Down and down, too huge, up and over the falls. Surfer smashing down, board coming up. Lights out.

Coming to in the boiling wash. Blood everywhere. Where's my board? Wow, nice ding. Lifeguards running, diving into the surf. Man, crap, there's a hole in my jaw. Wave to guards, I'm okay. So, eight stitches later. Cool. Should have seen that closeout coming. Sometimes you eat the wave - and sometimes the wave eats you.

So, old surfers don't die. Sometimes they only just... *Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha - wipeout.* ☼