

CLAIRE CURRAN



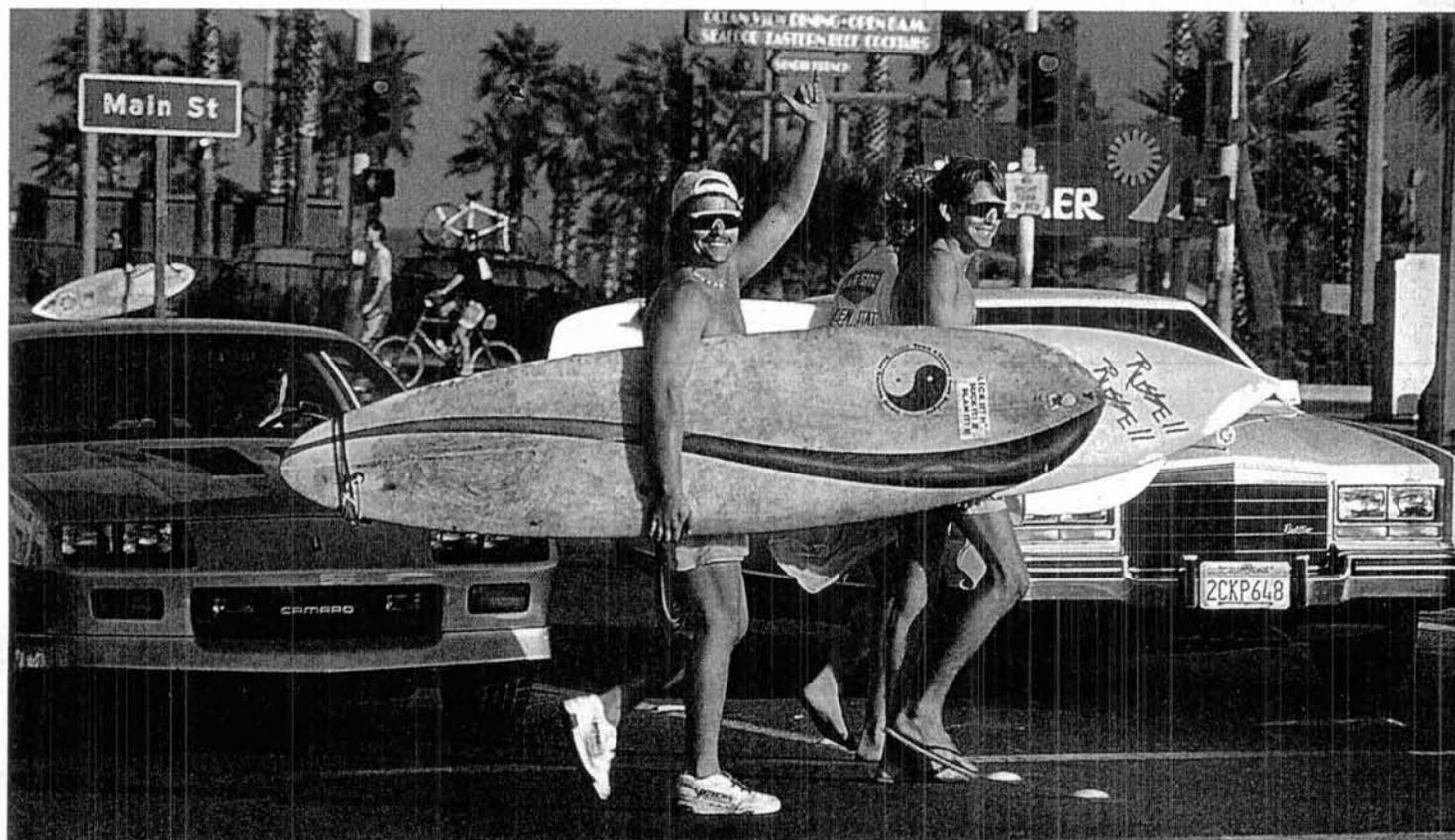
Past and future stand shoulder to shoulder. New Pierside Pavilion, behind surf shop, covers site of old-time Golden Bear restaurant

REFERENCE  
PAMPHLET  
H.B.--History  
News Clippings



CHAD SLATTERY

Sidewalk cafes on Main Street are busiest in morning, when surf crowd breaks for breakfast



Procession of surfers across Pacific Coast Highway to the waves at Bolsa Chica and Huntington state beaches begins at dawn

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## Surf City? It's hanging on in Huntington Beach

Like a swell off the horizon, progress is breaking over Surf City. As in other coastal Southern California towns, the pressure from escalating real estate values has crashed over Orange County's Huntington Beach. Its gonzo surfer scene—the good, the bad, and the rowdy—is disappearing in favor of homogenized pink Mediterranean-style redevelopment.

Many landmarks are already gone—including the famous pier, the Surf Theater, and the original Golden Bear restaurant where Bob Dylan, Arlo Guthrie, and Jimi Hendrix once played—but you can still plunge into the old Surf City, if

you hurry. Amid surfers lured by winter's big waves, you'll get a sense of how important this sport has been to Huntington Beach.

I bought a '34 wagon, and we call it a Woody . . .

Consistent as the tides, prosperity from oil riches washed over Huntington Beach from 1920 into the '50s. But after the last big strike here in 1953, oil money ebbed and so did business.

In rolled the surfer scene with bikini and T-shirt shops, music stores, and surfers themselves, drawn to low-rent apartments and big surf. Alongside its pier, the city hosted the U.S. Surfing Championships from 1959 through 1972 and billed itself "Surf City"—immortalized in Jan and Dean's surf anthem.

It's not very cherry, it's an oldie but a goodie

A two-block walk up Main Street, beginning at Pacific Coast Highway, juxtaposes remaining surfing haunts with the new upscale shopping and restaurant complexes. This route takes you through the heart of the area being fought over by preservationists and redevelopers.

Park in the old pier lot in front of Maxwell's restaurant, or in the new parking garage two blocks inland at Main and Olive, where your walk will end.



Jammed in summer, beach shops afford leisurely browsing in winter

It ain't got a backseat or a rear window . . .

One of the oldest and best-known surf shops, Jack's (101 Main) dominates a 1920s brick building on the west side of the street. Outside, the beach-culture billboard art, selling suntan lotions and

swimsuits, looks much as it did in the '60s, though the neon-colored French-cut bikinis sold inside aren't at all like the polka-dot suits Gidget and Annette wore in movies during those years.

Several other surf shops are on this block, including the Electric Chair (127 Main).

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This 1930s pharmacy dispenses a secret sticky substance called Sex Wax (used by surfers to improve traction on boards), as well as wet suits and swimsuits.

In the next block is Terry's Coffee Shop (201 Main). Signage on this old diner boasts of authentic Chinese and traditional American food. Try the Pro Surfer's Breakfast—two eggs, Polish sausage, and steamed rice. A chalkboard in the window offers a running commentary on contemporary life ("Elvis was recently spotted surfing at the end of the pier").

**... but it still takes me where I want to go**

Behind the diner is Mazzotti's Italian restaurant and evening gathering spot for the surf scene (412 Walnut Avenue). Everything is cooked to order. Pizza and calzone (house specialties) may take a while, but they're worth the wait. The floor above the restaurant was the town's courthouse in the '20s. Felons walked down the alley to an old brick jailhouse still standing behind 218 Fifth Street.

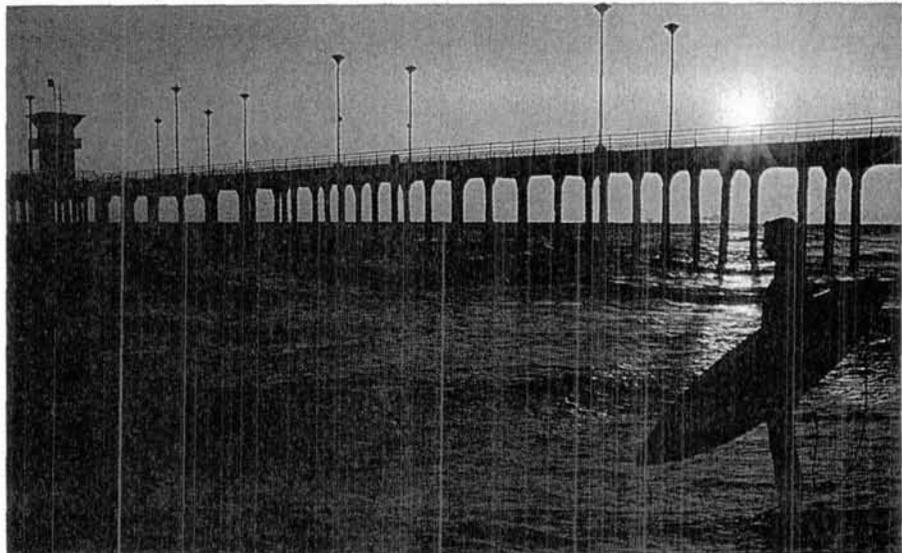
Back on Main, continue along the 200 block, where a mixture of old surf shops and sidewalk eateries on the west side contrasts with the block-long, five-level parking and retail project that opened last November across the street (replacing an early hotel and the town's original bank).

The Sugar Shack (215 Main) and Bread Crumb (217) serve breakfast and lunch under the shade of ficus trees. Next door is downtown's second-oldest building—the Pioneer Feed and Fuel Co. Pioneer's owner, Doug Langevin, is trying to restore the building to its original board-and-

batten style but is finding attempts at preservation difficult.

Just around the corner, at 411 Olive Street, you can see more about Huntington Beach at the International Surfing Museum (see page 8 of the November 1990 *Sunset*). □

CLAIRE CURRAN



*Gone but not forgotten, Huntington Beach Pier was heart of the surf scene until torn down last October; its replacement, probably heavily built up with businesses, will rise in 1992. Fate of historic pier buildings, moved by city before demolition, is undecided*



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