MALIBU

WORLD SURFING RESERVE

THE LAST BEST PLACE

BY BEN MARCUS

THE LAST, BEST PLACE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. The California Riviera. Call it what you will—Malibu rules. I'm from Santa Cruz originally and I'm not supposed to love L.A., but Malibu is hard to argue with. I spend a lot of time paddling around at First Point at Surfrider Beach, and every time I take to the water and look up into all those empty, desert hills and that relentless blue sky, then look down and see leopard sharks and stingrays gliding through kelp as thick and healthy as the hair on George Clooney's head, I feel the same way I feel when I am fishing the Lamar River in north Yellowstone: Somebody deserves a medal for not screwing this place up.

> Paddling out, I feel the same way I feel when I am fishing in Yellowstone: Somebody deserves a medal for not screwing this place up.

In Yellowstone it's Theodore Roosevelt. Carve his head into Mount Rushmore! It's already there? Carve it again! Around Malibu, the list of those who have fought to protect it go back as far as May Knight Rindge in the early 1900s. She inherited all of Rancho Malibu and a fortune from her husband Frederick Rindge. She could have cashed out and lived like a queen, but instead, she went forward with her husband's wish to preserve the land as a private domain to be enjoyed only by family and friends. Mrs. Rindge invested a great deal of that wealth in court in an attempt to block public access, ultimately taking the case to the United States Supreme Court. Yes, it's your private property, the Supreme Court ruled. No, the public doesn't really have a right to trespass with a highway. But, tough beans. Eminent domain. Go cry with the Native Americans.

More recently, Malibu has had a lot of backers public and private—from Barbra Streisand to Ozzie Silna to Jefferson "Zuma Jay" Wagner—who have had the respect and foresight to fight off the creep of urban and suburban gack, those "avenues of horror," as Victor Gruen put it in 1954, "flanked by the greatest collection of vulgarity—billboards, motels, gas stations, shanties, car lots, miscellaneous industrial equipment, hot dog stands, wayside stores—ever collected by mankind."

Oxnard to the northwest, the San Fernando Valley to the north, Santa Monica/Venice to the east—Malibu is beset on three sides by traffic, population density, delays, billboards, and vulgarity. Surfing at Malibu and looking east, you can see the edge of a landscape swarming with the legions of the unjazzed: 20 million souls crammed together at 2,500 people per square mile, all the way to Mexico. The population density of Malibu is 260 people per square mile, and it feels that way. It feels good.

Malibu has protectors but it needs all the help it can get. The World Surfing Reserve is another step toward man not tearing asunder what Creation so nicely put together.

PHOTOS: (TOP) **JOSH FARBEROW,** (ABOVE) **ALLEN SARLO,** COURTESY OF BILL PARR.

PHOTO: **JULIE COX ,** COURTESY OF BOB TORREZ.

WHAT IS A WORLD SURFING RESERVE?

WORLD SURFING RESERVES (WSR) IS AN EFFORT to identify and preserve the world's most outstanding surf zones and their surrounding habitats. Drawing upon models established by UNESCO's World Heritage Program and National Surfing Reserves Australia, WSR's board of international experts forges partnerships with local surfers and environmentalists to select, enshrine, and help protect valuable and historic surf spots.

Each WSR goes through four phases: nomination, selection, enshrinement, and management. Eligibility is based on a strict set of criteria: quality and consistency of the waves within the surf zone; the area's environmental richness and fragility; the spot's broader significance to surf culture and history; and local community support. Once a site has been selected and prioritized, the WSR board helps locals form a council to draft a management plan that will enable them to act as ongoing stewards of the reserve.

> World Surfing Reserves is first and foremost a public-awareness program

World Surfing Reserves is first and foremost a public-awareness program—a way to communicate the essential value of a surf break to its local community and the rest of the world. Each WSR is also designed to provide locals with a well-publicized tool they can use to protect their favorite surf spot for decades and centuries to come.

MALIBU WORLD SURFING RESERVE BOUNDARY

CARTOGRAPHER: GREG BENOIT.

WHY MALIBU?

MALIBU HAS BEEN SELECTED as the first World Surfing Reserve because of the stellar quality of its waves, the seminal role it played in the birth of modern surf culture, the rich biological characteristics of its besieged inland wetlands, and the protective galaxy of locals caught in its gravitational field.

The waves at Malibu represent California pointbreak surf at its finest. For decades, dating back to the 1920s, surfers worldwide regarded its long, peeling righthand walls as the very definition of a "perfect" wave. Soon after the sport of kings puddle-jumped from Hawaii to the West Coast, Malibu became Ground Zero for California's mushrooming surf culture. "Malibu is the exact spot on earth where ancient surfing became modern surfing," Paul Gross once wrote. *Gidget*, the book and movie that helped lure hordes of newcomers to the sport, was set here. The shapers who designed the first high-performance surfboards (Bob Simmons, Joe Quigg, and Matt Kivlin, among others) conceived their revolutionary prototypes here. Miki Dora, the mid-century icon who still stands as surfing's preeminent anti-establishment hero, learned to walk the nose here.

Surfrider Beach at Malibu and the surrounding area is part of a complex ecosystem that includes the Malibu Creek watershed and Malibu Lagoon—the sediment from which created the point that sculpts Malibu's machine-like waves. The entire area—from the surfline to the shore to the lagoon to the creek's inland reaches—is rich in flora and fauna. Dolphins romp in the surf. Pickleweed blossoms in the brackish wetlands. Black-necked stilts feed in the mudflats. Endangered southern steelhead spawn in the lagoon. Chaparral and sage scrub thrive upstream.

> Surfers regarded Malibu as the very definition of a "perfect" wave.

The community surrounding Malibu and the surf break is active and engaged, comprised of recreational and professional surfers, surf clubs, environmental groups, and other community organizations. The break is a source of pride and identity for locals, and the beach there serves as a de facto town hall for residents and visitors alike.

PHOTO: **BOB SIMMONS,** COURTESY OF RICHARD C. MILLER.

MALIBU: A HISTORY

ADAPTED FROM "THE HISTORY OF SURFING," BY MATT WARSHAW © 2010

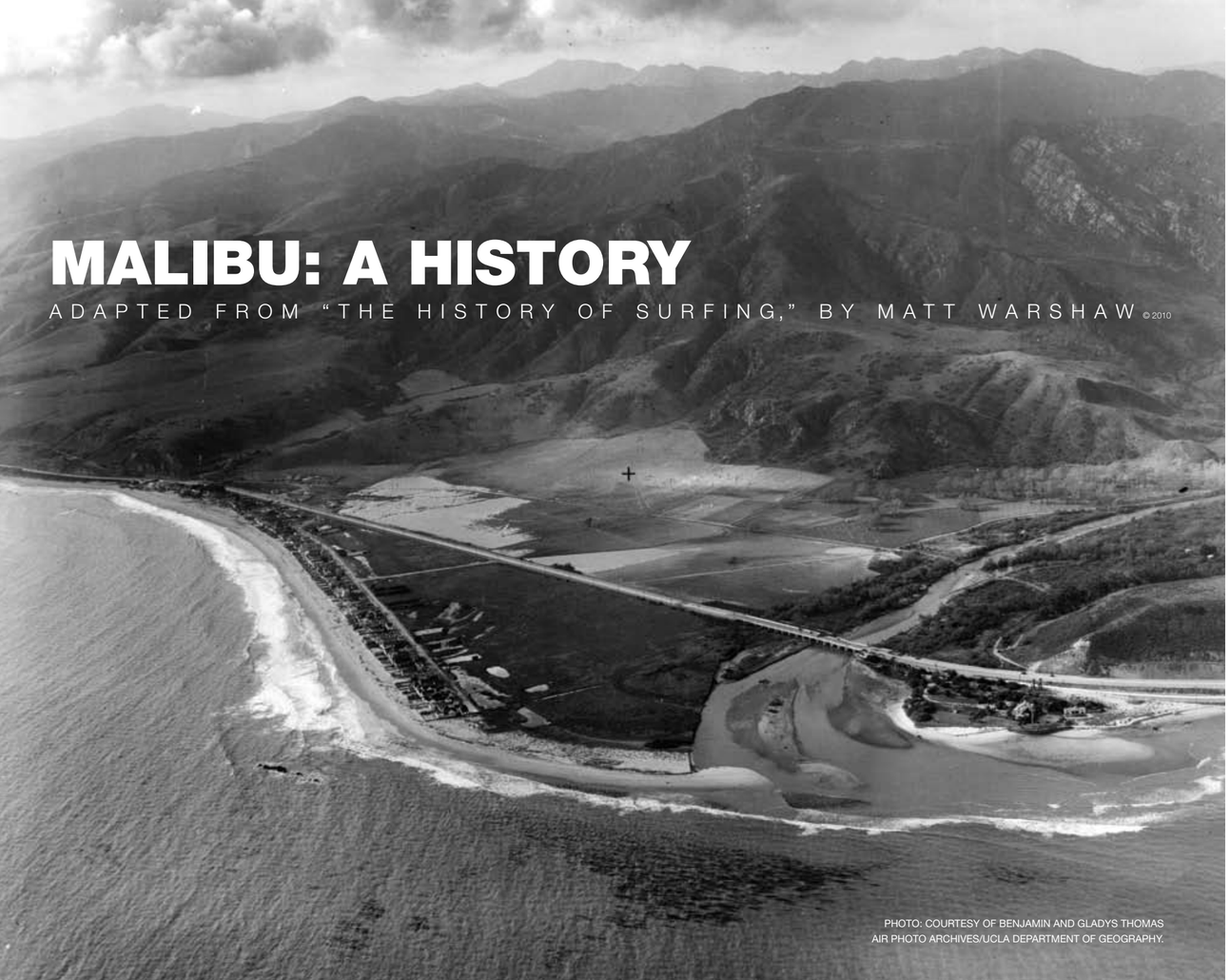

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BENJAMIN AND GLADYS THOMAS AIR PHOTO ARCHIVES/UCLA DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY.

WHY DID SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GIVE BIRTH to a national surfing craze? One simple, attractive, ahistorical, quasi-magical explanation is that modern surfing conjured itself into existence from the perfect air that hung over the perfect beach next to the perfect waves at Malibu. Surfing actually made Malibu, but never mind. From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, it often seemed to be the other way around.

In the aftermath of World War I, Waikiki remained the undisputed capital of surfing. But the Southern California surf scene developed quickly. The region had already gone car-crazy, and surfers were motoring up and down Highway One to ride an ever-expanding selection of breaks. Great adventure could be had with just an hour or two's worth of travel.

In the fall of 1927, Tom Blake and Sam Reid, both Santa Monica lifeguards, loaded their boards into the rumble seat of Blake's Essex roadster and drove a few miles north to look for what was rumored to be a good wave on a private track of land known as the Rancho Malibu. Everyone in Southern California at that time wanted access to Malibu. The Rancho itself, originally a 13,300-acre Spanish land grant, was owned by May Knight Rindge, the imperious "Queen of Malibu." For the better part of three decades, by means legal and extralegal, Rindge did everything possible to block public access.

When Blake and Reid arrived at the Rancho's south gate, it was locked, with a "No Trespassing" sign hammered into place. The two surfers stripped down to their trunks, unloaded the boards, picked their way across the rocky beach, hit the water, and stroked two miles up the coast toward a big sandy cobblestone-lined point.

Reid later recalled that the first ridden wave was a team effort. He claimed it was an eight-footer; Blake said it was less than three feet. "We caught it together," Reid said, "not a yard apart, and turned into a steep, parallel slide to try and beat the continuous wall rising ahead three hundred yards to the beach. That was the game!" The wave in fact was too racy for the finless wide-tail planks Reid and Blake had brought, and it was left to postwar generations to identify the break as the original "perfect wave." But Malibu was now on the surf-world map.

PHOTO: **MATT KIVLIN,** COURTESY OF JOE QUIGG.

Malibu wasn't so much a surfing location as it was a small, intimate, well-designed surfing theater. Its waves were focused and defined, and all but married to the beach. No surf break, then or now, has ever presented itself so well. The Pacific Coast Highway, opened to the public in 1929, hugs the coast roughly 20 feet above sea level, so that northbound travelers have a squared-up and slightly elevated view of the incoming waves. The Santa Monica Mountains slope down to the highway, and in the mornings, as offshore winds move through the canyons and across the beach, the lineup smells like sage. Malibu Pier frames the setting to the southeast, and the break is connected to Malibu Lagoon, a few hundred yards to the north, by a long sandy cove.

The point itself was formed by an ancient geologic burp that sent thousands of cobblestones spilling out of Malibu Creek into the ocean, where they formed a long, evenly curved alluvial fan. Waves here generally approach in smooth, even bands. A six-footer will start breaking north of the lagoon, run for awhile, section off, run again, section again, then move into a zone just down from the creek mouth, where the point bends almost due east. An impressive if somewhat temperamental wave so far, here it wraps itself into the cove (better known as "First Point") and becomes the faultless Malibu wave of legend—the curl unspooling for two hundred yards along a crest line so precise and well-tapered that it looks surveyed.

The Chumash Indians living on the rivermouth named their village *Humaliwo,* or "loud surf," but the Malibu surf isn't especially large. Two- to four-foot waves are common at Malibu, six- to eight-foot surf arrives just a handful of days each year, and twelve-foot surf is almost unheard of. Size, though, has never been the point at Malibu. Shape and form and elegance—these were the qualities that made it surfing's first truly revered break. Hawaii was still considered the surfer's paradise, but Malibu was the place surfers had in mind in the 1950s when they began talking about "the perfect wave."

Malibu wasn't so much a surfing location as it was a small, intimate, well-designed surfing theater.

POSTWAR TEST TRACK

A surf break becomes famous when it can advance the cause faster than any other break. Malibu wasn't the right spot for the 1920s or '30s, but it was made to order for the postwar progressives who first wanted to ride on a higher, faster line, and then wanted to swoop up and down across that line.

Bob Simmons, Joe Quigg, Matt Kivlin—the hot California shapers all made their boards with Malibu in mind. "Malibu was the test track," recalled boardmaker Dale Velzy. "I'd paddle out and see a guy on one of my boards just buried in the curl, and first of all it was just a beautiful sight, but also I could watch and see how the board was working. 'Look at that rail, it's really biting in,' that kind of thing."

Malibu changed the sport on the land as well as in the water. This sandy hook of beachfront would in fact be surf culture's last and greatest site-specific incubator. Loose-fitting clothes, bouncy slang, pride in the sport's detachment from other sports (and the insolence that

comes with that pride), a default wariness toward other surfers, brief public nudity and forms of mild social rebellion—much of the surfer stylebook was drafted at Malibu, beginning in 1945.

There were no lifeguards. There was no local police force; Malibu was decades away from incorporating as a city. It also helped that the break at Malibu was located within the established sphere of leisure that surrounded Malibu Colony, the famous Hollywood bedroom community just to the north. The whole point of Malibu was to put the Santa Monica Mountains between yourself and the rest of Los Angeles and to relax in style on the beach.

In a complete turnaround from the 1930s, surfers no longer showed any interest in organizing the sport through clubs or competitions. Wave-riding, along with endless association with fellow surfers, could stand up—could in fact flourish—without formal organizations. For a few dozen postwar Malibu regulars and hangers-on, the surfing experience was often pursued as if it were an extended vacation with friends and family: lots of beer and wine, parties and get-togethers, some horseplay, and the occasional brawl. They put surfing closer to the center of their existence than any group before them.

A PIG IS BORN

The Malibu of popular legend was mostly created by four surfers: Dale Velzy, Dewey Weber, Terry Tracy, and Miki Dora. All four were entertainers. All four, to varying degrees, were hustlers, and by 1953 they'd become First Point regulars, just as Quigg and Kivlin and the rest of the original postwar Malibu crew were ready to move on.

Dale Velzy would become the defining midfifties boardmaker. He was the oldest of the new group, a grinning tattooed former Merchant Marine and part-time pool shark from Hermosa Beach who loved hot rods and horses nearly as much as he loved to ride waves. When the mood struck, he was also a hard worker. Woodcraft was a family tradition, and Velzy earned enough money as a backyard boardmaker that he decided to make a vocation of it.

In 1952, after putting his business on hold for a year to live in Hawaii, Velzy opened his second shop on a beachfront lot just south of Malibu Pier. He'd been making Quigg-style chip boards for nearly five years, and one afternoon, weary at the thought of another, he instead shaped a board with a narrow nose, continuous rail curve, a lowered wide point, and a round tail. It was a funny-looking board, kind of homely, with its bulbous rear end—"a real pig," Velzy thought, smiling.

The pig turned out to be a killer, and the name stuck. It proved that board speed wasn't just a matter of improved planing (as Simmons believed), but also a function of how well the board handled in and around the pocket—the concave zone just below the curl. At Malibu, the Simmons gang on their wide straight-railed boards could make it from the top of the point all the way to the cove. But the young pig-riders were now covering half-again as much ground by riding up into the pocket, blasting back down, swinging around through the trough, then back up the face and down again—five or six times in a row before the wave finally gurgled up onto the beach. For good measure, while in trim, they also learned how to shuffle up to the front end, where they'd pose near the tip for a moment or two before retreating back to the sweet spot.

PHOTO: BY AL ROBBINS, COURTESY OF KEN SEINO AND CARY WEISS.

By the summer of 1955, the pig was the hottest board on the coast, and the Velzy-Jacobs shop in Venice was taking up to 30 orders a week. The Simmons chip was officially obsolete. Pig boards were about to become so commonplace that the name itself would disappear; by 1957, an American surfboard was a pig by default.

THE ART OF HOTDOGGING

The sport's performance standard was now being set and reset almost month to month at Malibu, and the surfer doing the most to push things along was a flashy half-pint peroxide-blond high school wrestling star named Dewey Weber. He was a natural in the water—three of his toes on each foot were webbed together—and began surfing at age nine.

After getting his driver's license at age 15, Weber all but lived at Malibu during the summer months. When Weber was seventeen, Velzy handed him a pig prototype, and Weber became the show. Surfers got out of the water to watch him ride, and he knew it. "People stood on the beach and pointed," Weber once said. "You could actually see them pointing."

As Kivlin had done a few years earlier, Weber viewed the Malibu beachgoers as an audience in want of entertainment. But where Kivlin got attention by riding the point like Sinatra finger-popping his way through *Witchcraft*, Weber pounded it out like Jerry Lee Lewis - hands and elbows chopping the air, feet blurred as he ran for the nose, stopped, and just as quickly backpedaled.

The term "hotdog" originated on the ski slopes, but Weber embodied the word so thoroughly that he came to own it—for better and worse. By the end of the decade, he was far and away the sport's most camera-ready star, and as a dedicated surf media emerged, Weber became the celebrated "little man on wheels." But there were plenty of unimpressed surfers who thought he'd done nothing but burn rubber across the finer points of style and form. Weber didn't care. He loved the theatrics of surfing Malibu on a hot summer afternoon; the control he had over his board and the beach audience. For the rest of the fifties Weber's turns got sharper and his feet moved faster.

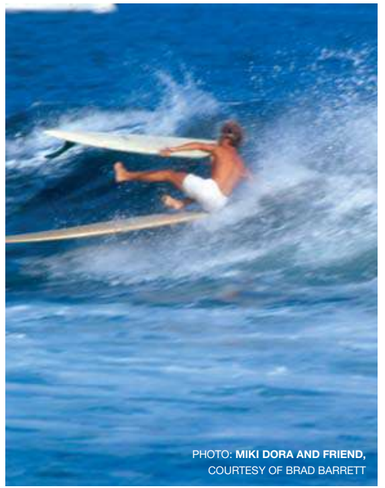

PHOTO: **MIKI DORA AND FRIEND,** COURTESY OF BRAD BARRETT

A NICKNAME FOR THE AGES

In 1950s America, conformity was the rule—but it was a big, rich, freedom-worshipping nation, confident to a fault, and there was a new cachet in not doing what everybody was doing. Nonconformity, of course, had been a hallmark of modern surfing ever since Tom Blake, who sailed as far from the shores of convention as Dora or Tracy. Blake, though, was a surfing proselytizer who wanted everyone to enjoy what he enjoyed. From their Malibu vantage point, Dora and Tracy viewed the rest of the world as real or potential invaders, there to be ignored, mocked, hustled, and repelled.

> "I ruled the beach," Tubesteak later explained with a shrug, "Miki ruled the water."

"I ruled the beach," Tracy later explained with a shrug, "Miki ruled the water." And because Malibu set the tone for the sport up and down the coast, surfers elsewhere also began to view the rest of the world as something to be dodged or pranked, and to line up behind their own rebel surf leaders.

Tracy had blond curls and a beer gut, and while on the beach he kept a lit cigarette wedged between the first two fingers of his right hand. He was bright and funny, louche without being gross, and an excellent storyteller. Nobody at Malibu used his given name. He was "Tubesteak"—a nickname of such pitch-perfect raunchiness that it defined the sport's midfifties departure from respectability all by itself. In the summer of 1956, using driftwood and palm fronds, Tracy built a 12-by-12-foot shack halfway up First Point, just to have a shaded place to drink beer in the afternoon. Not long after it was completed, he installed a cot, decorated the interior with empty wine bottles and pennants, and began spending the night.

This was a new kind of surfing eminence. Wave-riding was great, Tracy thought, but the important thing

was superabundant leisure, midlevel hedonism, and occasional displays of public showmanship that were intended to mock the squares. It couldn't last. And Tracy, to his credit, didn't overplay his hand. After two summers, he gave up the shack, and by 1959, he was married and the father of a newborn. That spring he lit a small fire on the beach at First Point, melted half a bar of paraffin wax in a coffee can, and was about to pour the wax onto the deck of a new board for traction, when, he said, "all of a sudden this lifeguard runs up out of nowhere, kicks my coffee can over and screams, 'No fires on the beach!'"

> "Every surfer," Bruce Brown said in *The Endless Summer*, "dreams of finding a place as good as Malibu."

The Los Angeles County Lifeguards had arrived at Malibu. New rules were in place, and they would be enforced. Tracy used the lifeguard incident as the punctuation mark on his surfing career—he left the beach and got on with the rest of his life.

DORA + MALIBU = A TRAGIC LOVE STORY

Dora was just as theatrical as Tracy and could be equally comedic. For the Malibu morning surf check, he'd step out of his car in tennis whites, or a smoking jacket, or a black leather Nazi trenchcoat. Finishing a ride, he'd walk back up the point holding his board by the fin, letting the nose drag over the sand and rocks. "Nobody did that," fellow Malibu surfer Bob Cooper recalled. "You treated this weapon with respect. You put it under your arm or on your head."

Despite these lighter moments, Dora's outlook was relentlessly, even apocalyptically grim. He wouldn't come into full bloom for another few years, when he perfectly rode surf media's opening wave to become the sport's first and greatest antihero. But by the late 1950s it was already an article of faith with Dora that surfing, and Southern California, and the world in general, were all being dismantled by a vast and conspiratorial range of forces, and that Malibu—"my perfect wave," site of "my cherished days," as Dora put it in a rare noncombative moment of reflection—had been the first place to fall.

He arrived at Malibu just as Kivlin and Quigg rolled out their maneuverable Malibu chips. Kivlin was Dora's favorite surfer, and he copied the older surfer's stance directly: lowered arms, back knee bent in toward the front, a casual slouch while trimming. Dora's surfing consisted mostly of bright staccato grace notes, strung together as quickly and unexpectedly as a John Coltrane solo, with move-to-move transitions so smooth as to be invisible. Dora worked hard at his surfing. He rode constantly, drove the coast seeking out new breaks, and kept a watchful if secretive eye on all the other hot surfers. Yet Dora, like so much else in surfing during the 1940s and '50s, seemed to be very much a creation of Malibu itself.

On the beach or in the banquet room, Dora was a smart and witty conversationalist, with expressive long-fingered hands that often floated up in vaguely Continental gestures; his tone of voice was often mocking, derisive, or world-weary. By the mid-1950s he'd become an icon to a growing number of California surfers. The Malibu crew in particular were soon copying it all—the grin and the hand movements; the evasive, gentlemanly voice; the slouched but jittering riding style.

Even those who regarded Dora as little more than a charismatic sociopath felt a kinship with him. Few played the rebel with Dora's commitment, but nearly all surfers embraced the concept and lived the part in smaller ways. For a few extra hours in the surf they'd ditch class or leave work early; or lie to their parents, their boss, their wife; or speed through red lights just to get to the beach two minutes quicker. Dora's transgressions were everyone's, writ large. By championing him, surfers championed themselves.

UTOPIA LOST

Surfers felt connected to Miki Dora for another reason: collective anger over Malibu's decline. By the late 1950s, the original perfect wave was fast becoming the sport's original lost utopia. Even if mainstream society still regarded wave-riding as a borderline cult activity, the surfer population had grown continuously since the end of World War II. Malibu, both accessible and well-known, was drawing overflow crowds. In 1950, Dora might arrive to find a dozen surfers in the lineup. Six or seven years later, on a hot summer afternoon with a decent south swell running, up to 75 surfers were there, rotating from the Coast Highway to the beach to the lineup.

In his better moods, Dora was able to turn the whole thing into a black comedy. He threatened to bring his lawyer to the beach. He came up with long sing-songy lists to describe the forces arrayed against him: the "senile surf freaks" and "Mussolini property owners," the "Valley cowboys," the "goose-stepping inland slave-mentality imbeciles," and the "nurses from New Jersey going tandem with Encino proctologists."

But humor, as a coping mechanism, had limits. Surfing was the best thing in Dora's life, Malibu was the best thing in surfing, and from 1955 onward, mostly what he felt was loss, frustration, and anger. Years passed before he was able to quit fighting what was plainly an unwinnable fight and seek out other places, other breaks.

Given that Malibu was the conceptual starting point for the perfect wave, its decline and fall helped give birth to an impulse that proved nearly as important to the sport: the search for the perfect wave. Right away, wave-riding became a lot more interesting. Thousands of surfers looking for the next perfect wave set out by car, plane, or boat, and returned with a litany of road stories: hotel hijinks, strange meals, sexual conquest, engine repairs in the middle of nowhere, drunken afternoons on the esplanade. The objective was clear and unchanging. Surfers wanted what Dora had in the mid-1950s. "Every surfer," as filmmaker Bruce Brown said in his 1966 travel classic *The Endless Summer*, "dreams of finding a place as good as Malibu."

As it turned out, the world contained a hundred or more breaks—from Sumatra to El Salvador, Durban to the Bay of Biscay—that were just as good or better. But none of them would occupy the sport's vital center the way Malibu did for two decades after the war. Not even close.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF GRANT ELLIS.

ENVIRONMENTAL

CHARACTERISTICS OF MALIBU

THE FAMOUS MALIBU SURFRIDER BEACH is a south-facing, cobble-and-sand pointbreak roughly seven miles east of the city of Malibu. The natural beauty of the area is well documented. It sits at the base of 8,000-acre Malibu Creek State Park (part of the 150,000-acre Santa Monica National Recreation Area), and the 22-acre Malibu Lagoon State Beach, which includes the historic, recently restored Malibu Pier. These are part of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a state agency that acquires land in the Santa Monica Mountains to preserve as open space for recreation and wildlife protection.

The surf break is located at the mouth of Malibu Creek, outflow of the second largest watershed in Santa Monica Bay. While development and other actions have severely impaired the function and health of many watersheds that drain into the Southern California Bight, Malibu has faired relatively well against the onslaught, thanks to the massive tracts of nearby land controlled by the conservation-minded interests mentioned above.

Malibu and all its beauty was formed from the sediment (sand, gravel, cobble, etc.) flowing out of the Malibu Creek watershed during periods of heavy runoff. The influx of new sediment replaces sediment eroded due to wave action and coastal currents, helping to maintain the wave-sculpting bottom contours. The scouring of runoff and influx of sediment created the estuary known as the Malibu Lagoon.

Numerous plants and animals depend on the Malibu watershed and lagoon for their continued survival. Its Mediterranean climate–mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers—supports several plant communities. Coastal oaks, California buckwheat, black sage, California sagebrush, and the giant coreopsis are just few examples of more than 500 species of plants that make up the coastal plant communities found in the upper watershed. The estuary contains its own set of plant species. Pickle weed (a salt-tolerant plant), bulrush, and several species of saltbush exist in this wetland environment.

Malibu Creek is considered one of the last bastions of survival for the Southern California Coast steelhead trout. The population has dropped from an estimated historic high of 30,000 to 40,000 to roughly 500 individuals, many of them spawning in Malibu Creek. Despite the relative health of the upper watershed, the fish are now restricted by the Rindge Dam to the lower 2 miles of what was once a 70-mile spawning habitat. This 100-foot dam, built in the 1930s, is an impassable wall for incoming steelhead as well as for sediment flowing downstream. The reservoir is currently filled to capacity with sediment that would otherwise reach the ocean. Efforts are currently being made to have the Rindge Dam removed.

The Malibu Lagoon provides vital habitat for more than 200 species of birds, including several endangered and threatened species. Like more than 90 percent of California's historical coastal wetlands that have been filled or drained, Malibu Lagoon's remaining 30 acres are a fraction of what it once was. This extensive loss makes what remains of the lagoon even more valuable as wildlife habitat.

A sand island in the lagoon provides area where California brown pelicans, California least and elegant terns, snowy plovers, gulls, and other shorebird species can rest relatively unaffected by the large number of beachgoers nearby. The rare salt marsh and shallow mudflats provide important feeding grounds for such migrating and resident shorebirds as black-necked stilts, American avocet, and lesser yellowlegs. Vegetation surrounding the lagoon provides nesting and roosting habitat to willow flycatchers, phoebes, and western scrub-jays.

There are parts of the lagoon that consistently have open water. It is here that smolt (young fish) of the federally endangered southern steelhead trout feed during their transition to saltwater. The smolt depend on the lagoon to sustain them until the lagoon's sandbar barrier, which blocks their access to the ocean, is breached.

Offshore, sand and mud from the creek provides habitat for clams and other creatures in addition to maintaining the smooth bottom contour of the break. Kelp forests to the west and south provide homes for garibaldi (California's state fish), green moray eels, horn sharks, octopus, lobsters, and numerous other species, many with commercial importance. Kelp also acts as a wind-wave blocker, smoothing out the water's surface to help maintain the incredible shape of Malibu's waves.

Our understanding of the role natural processes played in creating and maintaining the conditions that allow all this natural beauty and harmony have grown significantly. This knowledge has led to continual restoration efforts by surfers and other watershed users. More than 2,000 cubic yards of old fill were removed from the lagoon in 1996.

Poor water quality leading to beach closures or warnings often causes potential visitors to change their plans and go elsewhere, even if the risks downcoast are the same. In effect, a healthy watershed that contributes to better water quality is an economic resource for service-oriented business.

Now that Malibu has been named the first World Surfing Reserve, the Local Stewardship Council will keep its focus on watching out for threats to this historic surf spot.

— SHANE ANDERSON

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TOM BOYD.

SAVING THE WORLD, ONE WAVE AT A TIME

BY DREW KAMPION

IF SURFERS WON'T SAVE THE WORLD, who will? Obama? The G20? The United Nations?

Is there some other global network of alert, persistent, environmentally aware individuals who are similarly trained in the art of navigating variables, overcoming adversity, and appreciating the rarities of perfection? Who else will do the work? Who else will uphold the vision?

It's pretty ironic. Surfing is all about getting away from the constraints of society, of breaking free and committing to the rule of natural law—the physics of wave form, the glide. Surfers are conversant with the wild, in touch with the natural world at a time when the natural world is increasingly remote from most people on the planet.

And yet here we are, using words like "criteria" and "nomination" and "enshrinement" and "stewardship."

Creating a chain of World Surfing Reserves may not in itself save the world, but it's a step in that direction. By acknowledging the worth of a wave and its environs, we open communication between disparate parties that might not otherwise become engaged. And once communication begins, who knows where it will lead?

A WSR says that the global community hereby values this place, right here, and intends to hold it sacred for as long as the waves break and the tides cycle.

A WSR that is fully embraced at the local, national, and global levels—where it becomes an asset not merely for surfers and beach-lovers, but for the bioregional community of which it is a part—improves the quality of life of the whole.

The bubble provided by the WSR designation should act as a semi-permeable membrane, enabling sustainable activities while resisting the intrusion of the grosser monoliths of unchecked development, such as landfills, breakwaters and mining operations. The mere existence of the WSR will act as a tactical wedge that inserts itself into every future discussion concerning the destiny of the reserve area.

A WSR increases the chances of environmental synergy, integrating the principles of preservation, sustainability, stewardship, and cultural celebration. It permanently vests a surf spot with an intrinsic (and globally acknowledged) importance that locals already understand but may not be able to articulate.

The WSR says that these people—representing a global community of like-minded individuals—hereby value this place, right here, and intend to hold it sacred for as long as the waves break and the tides cycle. In other words, each local monument is a symbol for the greater monument that is the worldwide network of World Surfing Reserves, dedicated forward for the benefit of present and future generations.

Over time threats will come, one by one, to all of the world's great surf spots, and over time, again and again, they will be compromised. And in the end, the enshrinements we make now may be the deciding factor that saves a beach or a surf spot or a park ... or just a jewel of the natural world.

World Surfing Reserves is about surfers saving the world, one wave at a time. And while it may not guarantee that a beach or a wave will be saved, it does forever commemorate the global surfing community's demand that it must be.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BILL PARR.

PHOTO: BY RON STONER,
COURTESY OF SURFER MAGAZINE.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WORLD SURFING RESERVES AND SAVE THE WAVES COALITION EXTEND THEIR SINCEREST THANKS TO ALL OF THOSE WHO HELPED MAKE THE MALIBU WORLD SURFING RESERVE AND THIS BOOK A REALITY.

Blue Ocean Supporters:

Green Wave Supporters: Jim Beam, Primo, Clif Bar, Ocean Vodka, Rosenthal Winery, The Malibu Motel, Surfline, Patagonia, Peligroso Tequila, Volcom, Ron Herman Boutique, and Steven Lippman.

Malibu World Surfing Reserve Partners: California Coastal Commission, Santa Monica Baykeeper, Surfrider West LA/Malibu, County of Los Angeles, City of Malibu (and Mayor Jefferson "Zuma Jay" Wagner), Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, Project Save Our Surf, Eco Hero Kids Foundation, Malibu Surfing Association, Surfing Heritage Foundation, and NativeCalifornia.com.

World Surfing Reserves Program Partners: National Surfing Reserves, International Surfing Association, and Center for Responsible Travel.

Special thanks to the Malibu Local Stewardship Council for their ongoing support: Michael Blum, Steven Lippman, Allen Sarlo, Bill Parr, Andy Lyon, Julie Cox, Dillon Perillo, and Josh Farberow.

Thanks to the World Surfing Reserves Vision Council, for their overall guidance: Fernando Aguerre, Will Henry, Jim Moriarty, Len Materman, Tony Butt, Terry Gibson, Tiago Pires, Greg Long, Steve Hawk, Chad Nelsen, Wallace J. Nichols, Chris LaFranchi, Brad Farmer, Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew, Mark Massara, Neil Lazarow, Alan Atkins, Drew Kampion, Manolo Lozano, Juca De Barros, Miles Walsh, Professor Andy Short, and Professor Ben Finney.

Thanks to Save The Waves Coalition staff who helped make the Malibu World Surfing Reserve enshrinement possible: Dean LaTourrette, Josh Berry, João De Macedo, Lindsey Davis, Austin Vest, Shane Anderson, and Lindsey Graham Jones.

Thanks to the photographers, publishers, and researchers who generously contributed their time and i mages for this book: Brad Barrett; Greg Benoit; Tom Boyd and Santa Monica Baykeeper; Grant Ellis; Richard C. Miller; Bill Parr; Joe Quigg; Al Robbins; Ken Seino; Ron Stoner; Surfer magazine; Benjamin and Gladys Thomas Air Photo Archives/UCLA Department of Geography; Bob Torrez; Cary Weiss; Steve Wilkings and the Surfing Heritage Foundation.

Huge thanks to: Matt Warshaw for use of excerpts from *The History of Surfing* (© 2010), used with permission from Chronicle Books LLC, San Francisco. Thanks also to Ben Marcus, Drew Kampion, and Shane Anderson for their powerful words.

For more information on World Surfing Reserves and to support the WSR initiative, please visit worldsurfingreserves.org or contact Save The Waves Coalition at info@savethewaves.org.

Editor: Steve Hawk

Art Director: Joni Casimiro

Copy Editor: Sophie Matson

Front cover: Photo courtesy of Bill Parr.
Back cover: Miki Dora. Photo by Ron Stoner, courtesy of *Surfer* magazine.

Published by Save The Waves Coalition © 2010

PRINTED ON NEW LEAF REINCARNATION - 50% RECYCLED CONTENT, 30% POST-CONSUMER WASTE, PROCESSED CHLORINE-FREE PAPER.

WORLD SURFING RESERVES

SAVE THE WAVES COALITION
PROTECTING OUR COASTAL HERITAGE