

A DOHENY LIFEGUARD REMEMBERS THE LATE 60S.

Nick Sopha

We'd enter opposite the Richfield sign on PCH, pay at the ranger house and park next to the sand. Waves were caught in groups of 4, 5 and even 6 with heavy boards and no leashes. When someone fell, it was everyone's problem. A loose board was a danger for everyone as it axed its way sideways to the beach. It was a public, common courtesy to protect the legs of children and the boards from the rocks.

A wave caught on the south side of the bay could be ridden past the Hammer on the end of the jetty and into the mouth of the creek. Working that lifeguard tower six days a week, I would watch hundreds of rides start in front of me to the right and end up in the creek behind me.



For me, it was a challenging tower to work. Often, I

DOHENY, 1967

would be the only guard between Boneyard and Hole in the Fence. There were so few rescues that it was not easy keeping a watchful edge. In 1967, I made only 9 rescues in the whole summer as compared to that many in one morning up north. But putting on butterfly bandages over open wounds caused by loose boards was common.



Guarding at SanO. Same rock problems

Rescues were doubly difficult because of Doheny itself. What do you do with the rocks? The paddle board was useful only at a higher tide or I'd risk busting off the fin. Do I wear tennis shoes to protect my feet from the rocks and sea urchins but inhibit my speed? Or throw caution to the wind and suffer the rocks and keep my speed? Then again, most of my 9 rescues that summer were in front of the campground so crossing the creek was a big problems logistically as well as losing sight of the person in need.

But working on the beach all day, jumping into the cove for dinner and staying in the campground was heaven. And daily, I talked to Pop Procter, watch Ron Drummond surf his canoe with his huge dog Bear, and occasionally wonder at Lauren Harrison's 6-man outrigger canoe team taking a few waves. Ron was his fourth seat. At that time, I had not a concept that one day I would be his replacement. Amazing times!!!!

