

# THE LEGACY OF **WARREN BOLSTER**



MASTER OF SKATEBOARD PHOTOGRAPHY

# Publisher's Note

IN NOVEMBER OF 1976 I WAS ABLE TO PURCHASE MY FIRST ISSUE OF SKATEBOARDER MAGAZINE.

I had read about the magazine a year before, but to see it on the newsstand at our local convenience store was an incredible surprise. I quickly plunked down my \$1.25 and was transfixed. The photos and stories were just magical. The “magician” responsible for *SkateBoarder* was a man by the name of Warren Bolster. It was his vision and drive that created “the bible” of skateboarding. His commitment to document all types of skateboarding and skaters has stayed with me for close to thirty years. It is a vision that I try and capture as publisher and editor of *Concrete Wave Magazine*.

Warren's devotion to building and documenting skateboarding almost consumed him. By 1978, the editorial reigns were passed. However, the legacy of Warren's work within skateboarding has not been forgotten. Warren Bolster didn't just capture the rebirth of skateboarding, he captured its true soul.

My deepest thanks go to Kevin Harris of *Ultimate Skateboard Distributors*. His financial support and dedication to this project is overwhelming. We simply could not have done it without Kevin. Daniel Gesmer has done a tremendous job as editor and I'm grateful for all his efforts. My thanks also go to Blair Watson for assisting with editing duties. My designer, Mark Tzerelshtein aka Markintosh, has done a wonderful job of laying out the book. A thank you to Laura Thornhill-Caswell who first put in me contact with Warren. Finally, a huge amount of gratitude and respect to Warren Bolster, the man who created so much magic within the world of skateboarding. Thank you for inspiring me along with millions of other skateboarders worldwide. This book is a celebration of your incredible legacy.

*Michael Brooke*  
Publisher  
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# January 1975

BOB NEISHI SKATING ABOVE SAN CLEMENTE FOR AN INFINITY AD.

This was before safety gear became mandatory and before the 1970s re-birth of *SkateBoarder*, when *Surfer* magazine (in the same office) was picking up on the various moods of the gravity/downhill games. Wanting to keep *Surfer* for surfers, the magazine would introduce a new sport for one or two issues, until the publishers and owners decided whether it warranted a magazine of its own. *SailBoarder* and *Powder* started this way.

The Cadillac Wheel ads with Gregg Weaver definitely had a strong stylistic influence on skateboarding and fueled my own desire to shoot the basics with the best possible color values. It took some time to discourage people from showing up in Levi's and black t-shirts. And they wondered why they weren't getting into the magazine!

I really admired Craig Stecyk's use of black-and-white film. It gave the magazine contrast, and it gave Craig the freedom to shoot in poor lighting or poor color conditions. Many magazines use way too much color. They think to themselves, "It's a page designated for color, so we're going to use it!" — without reflecting on the opportunity for variety they're missing.



“WHAT DO PAIN, MONEY AND POWER MEAN WHEN ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS BE IN THE DANCE?”

I started skating in Virginia to keep the surfing blues away, but in the early 1970s I moved to Point Loma Avenue along Sunset Cliffs in San Diego. There I purloined old laminated water skis and put the new Cadillac Wheels on them to provide a cheap, surfboard-like alternative for the very few days lacking surf.

Soon Gordon & Smith came out with their famous FibreFlex slalom decks. As this picture by Ralph Starkweather shows, I adapted to it quickly in the days before *SkateBoarder* magazine, riding in front of my house along the ultra-wide street, which grew ever-steeper as it ran over the top of Point Loma. I hadn't yet been exposed to the full spectrum of skateboarding, and I just used the FibreFlex to do long Giant Slalom-style turns on the steep hills, well before the advent of organized races.

Ralph probably took this in '72 or '73, despite mild traffic and long before proper safety gear was available. Later on, I broke at least one wrist and had to wear a medical brace and then a fiberglass cast so I could surf. My heydays as a skateboarder were just before the start of the magazine. A rapid succession of additional injuries soon confined me to the sidelines.

La Costa had probably just been discovered at this time. The 30-minute trip there and the 75-minute commute to *Surfer* magazine (where I worked as Associate Editor and Staff Photographer) became too much, so I moved to Cardiff and eventually La Costa itself.

I often entered the office all buzzed about what I was witnessing. One particular day in late 1974, I rushed in and breathlessly described the sights and sounds at La Costa. In an hour, Publisher/Editor Steve Pezman and Associate Editor Don Thomas called me into their office and offered me the job of Editor. I guess it was my stoke on the atmosphere that sealed the deal.



## April 1975

THE KING OF THE NOSE WHEELIE, BRUCE LOGAN, DOES HIS THING AT THE FIRST DEL MAR CONTEST — ABOUT FIVE OR SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE MAGAZINE'S DEBUT.

No one knew what the judges were looking for, and it was a really screwed thing for a lot of very hot freestyle/freeform skaters, such as the Zephyr Team from Dogtown (who blew everyone away in spite of it all). It ended up being a bit precious, and the '60s legends got a raw deal, too. Bruce did well but didn't get the first-place title I thought he'd won. But you know what opinions are like — and everybody has one.



DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF POOL SKATING, GREGG WEAVER — AKA THE CADILLAC KID — DOES A BIRD-LIKE, BAREFOOT DANCE IN PERFECT LIGHT AT THE SAN MARCOS POOL, SHOWING THE EASY-GOING FLOW FROM THE NOW-FAMOUS ADS.

The pool was about ten miles inland, so the summer fog didn't have to burn off. Although backlit, the brightness of the hot summer day cast a perfect light on Weaver's natural grace as he negotiated the vertical re-entry point. It was no pose — Gregg's style went everywhere he did. The angle and lighting didn't matter.

*SkateBoarder* hadn't come out yet. The sponsors, possibly jealous of the Weaver images, were looking for fault, pressuring the publication for coverage, and soon demanding safety gear.

In those days, many kids just skated as they lived — barefoot and unprotected. By the second issue, safety gear was foisted on the magazine. The sport really did need such restraints to survive and grow, but we had to leave a lot of great photos unused to get to that point. Ultimately it made little visual difference and even created another market within the sport. Nonetheless, famous surfers Larry Bertleman and Glen "Buttons" Kaluhiokalani were later on allowed to skate the El Cajon Park barefoot, because they never wore shoes in Hawaii!

The Kid appeared in the first ads for Cadillac Wheels, which Frank Nasworthy introduced. Art Brewer's ad photos had me thinking that Weaver might already be too big to deal with. But he was the most down-to-earth human being. Having him around was not only mellow, but fun and a guarantee of good shots.

Gregg was also one of the only people I'd let inside my car. I'd take him everywhere, and if people didn't like it, well, too bad. He and my son, Little Warren, are so much alike that I call both of them my traveling buddies.

The Kid didn't have to trumpet himself — he could do it all. The number of fan letters — not just from girls — topped even Alva most weeks! And he was no poser — that was his natural style. To my surprise, he was also a hot surfer — he once got a two-page spread in *Surfer* magazine.







RANDY DAVILA TRIPS THE LIGHT FANTASTIC, WITH A VIEW TO THE SHALLOWS.

The San Marcos pool, eight feet deep, became the perfect lab for the daily spectrum of experimentation.

Longboards, roller skates, motorbikes — all were tried. The incredible heat of inner San Diego guaranteed that everyone got their turn. If any other pool sessions were happening, they weren't being documented.

Randy Davila was one of the main players — his skill and sureness of line made for creative photo-perspectives from nearly every angle of the pool's perfect kidney shape. Practitioners of all manner of gravity games would follow these lines and add ones of their own.

I still managed to balance all the excitement with my duties as a surf photographer. But with its many variations and guaranteed riding conditions (apart from occasional rain), skateboarding virtually took over daily activity within the year. It seemed that surfers were skating more than surfing. Everyone was racing to get a grip on this new, related sport, and the various industries took notice of the rapidly expanding marketplace.

Our debut magazine had just come out, and it sold an unprecedented 100%. So it quickly went from a one-shot to a quarterly to a bi-monthly. I took this photo in August of 1975, only two months after the first issue. Not only were skaters reaching the pool light (which therefore had to be covered), by then they were often going beyond it. The tiles and coping succumbed too quickly for the magazine to keep up with.



## July 1975

I WAS INTERESTED IN LONG SKATEBOARDS MADE FROM OLD, LAMINATED WATER SKIS, AND I CARRIED THAT INTEREST INTO THE PHOTOGRAPHY ARENA — ESPECIALLY AFTER SEEING WHAT A SKILLED LONGBOARDER LIKE TOM SIMS COULD DO AT THE DEL MAR CONTEST IN 1975!

Personally, I only switched to shorter FibreFlex boards because of my interest in giant slalom; they would torque to stick to the road better. I can't identify this skater because it was so long ago. He's decelerating on the flat bottom of Black Hill. You can see the houses on the other side of La Costa Blvd. that were then closest to the hill; this is the neighborhood that I eventually moved to.

I'm sure I was shooting something else at the bottom of the hill when this guy skated by. Longboards were so uncommon at the time, I just shot it because I liked the contrast. I never bothered to take the fins off my water-ski-boards, but he obviously did.





Steve Cathey  
La Costa, July 1975





MY SURFER'S-EYE-VIEW OF THE CADILLAC KID SLIDING PIPELINE IN LA JOLLA .

The banks were very skateable, though the pipe was not. I shot this near the famous Black's Beach surf cliffs and hang-gliding area. Gregg helped me appreciate the aesthetics of the setting, but we never went back.



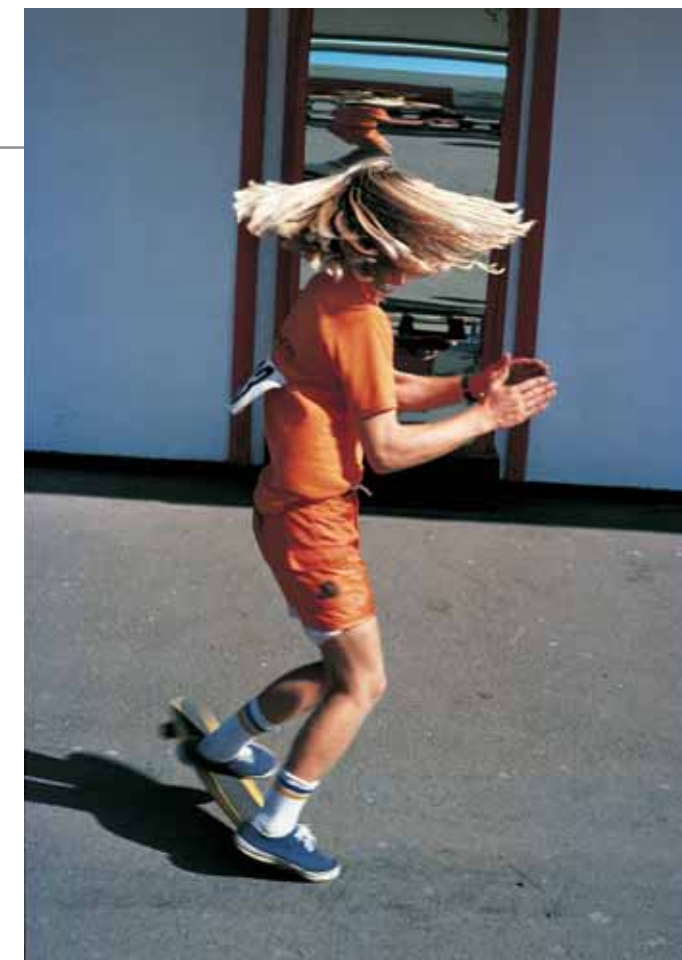
Gregg Weaver  
La Costa, October 1975

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STACY PERALTA WAS A DOGTOWN Z-BOY WHO MADE THE TRANSITION TO A LARGER MANUFACTURER WHEN FINANCIAL INCENTIVES SENT THE ZEPHYR SHOP TEAM SCATTERING.

He had long, perfectly-cut blonde hair and what I'd call, for lack of a better name, a "praying style" when doing 360s. It sent his hair flying around him like a twirling fan, perfectly accentuating the move. I often shot this from above, with insane results.

Jealous skaters teased him about his hair and his style, but Stacy was another guy who could tackle it all with class — bowls, pools, banks and freestyle. He also had the brains and acumen to succeed in business, first with Powell-Peralta and then with his film documentary, "Dogtown and Z-Boys," which won two awards at the Sundance Film Festival. I predict we'll see a lot more magic from him as years go by. I'm very proud to know him. A few years ago, he even told me that vintage issues of *SkateBoarder* are selling on Ebay for \$75 each!







Denis Shufeldt  
October 1975





## November 1975

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MIKE WEED PEAKS OUT IN THE SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO POOL (NEAR OUR OFFICES). IT WAS A DEEP, CLEAN, POOL — BUT WITH GNARLY COPING. MIKE TURNED ME ON TO THE SPOT AND NATURALLY GOT GREAT COVERAGE FOR HIMSELF, HIS SPONSOR HOBIE, AND THE SPORT.

Today, these guys would be jumping or bouldering, but in the '70s we took everything about as far as possible, aerials not excepted. I brought a group of folks from our office, including Publisher Steve Pezman, to check this out, and I knew they were impressed.

I was actually more impressed with the great cinematographer Jim Freeman of MacGillivray/Freeman Films. He passed away long ago, but back then he got on his knees where the guys descended to the flats and took a skateboard to the kneecap. He hardly moved, but you just knew that had to hurt!

Spyder Wills and partner Greg Weaver also shot photographs from inside the bowl. All these guys would call to find out where it was happening for me on a particular day. After watching for a while, they would either imitate my approach or use a variation more appropriate to movies. I didn't mind — I knew it was great for the sport!

Jim Freeman crashed while scouting a commercial in Bishop, California. Out of respect, it's still MacGillivray/Freeman Films. Great guy, and even greater with the movie camera. It was outstanding to watch him work — and pretend his kneecap didn't hurt!