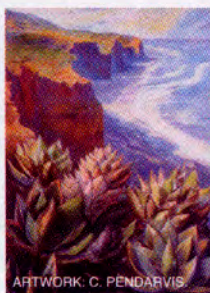




# CHER THREINEN-PENDARVIS, 50

OCEAN BEACH, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



**Cher Threinen-Pendarvis stands on her tippy toes to look through her window and over the houses that fragment her ocean view.** Instead of the typical “we can see the ocean from here” narration, she launches into remarkable observations about swells, tidal flows and seasonal patterns, learned statements that would make Sean Collins proud and make me kick myself for not having a tape recorder rolling.

horizon and escaped sets of 10 to 15 “really big” waves. Figuring she had to get far enough in to catch a “small one” between sets, Cher dug in. She picked up by an overhead wall, held the drop and then safely proned out to the sand. Sitting on a pile of kelp collecting her thoughts, she surveyed the scene: “It was whitewater to the horizon. I couldn’t see any blue from the beach.”

The determination and individualism Cher

ally showcase Cher on its press release.

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If you weren’t around to experience it firsthand, then surely you’ve run across rumors, myths and legendary stories surrounding the Swell of ‘69. You’ve probably heard about Greg Noll at Makaha or Ricky Grigg at La Jolla Cove. But a lesser-known tale ensued that same winter not far from Griggs’ famed conquests. If you were scanning the horizon on the Ocean Beach pier in San Diego, only one human speck could be spotted. Beyond both the pier and the jetty, 18-year-old Cher had made it past the impact zone, alone, and wondered how she’d make it back in alive.

When the swell dropped to an apparently manageable 4 to 5 feet, she threw on the only suit she had, a spring, and waxed up her 7’ 6”. Paddling out by the jetty, things started out well enough. But quickly, the size of the waves multiplied. The second pulse in the swell had filled in, sunset was encroaching; she had no leash and no watch to time the sets. Fear and panic being useless, “You’ve just got to go to work,” she remembers.

Far enough out in the ocean that she could look into the harbor entrance, Cher could also see the sets blasting on Pacific Beach Point, about eight miles north. She paddled in as far as she could before sensing a set looming, then turned, scratched for the

showed that day was there from the beginning. At age 6, Cher first witnessed surfing at Waikiki and immediately knew it was for her. Her parents, however, had already decided on ballet. Cher respectfully did the ballet thing, but in the summer of ‘66, she also diligently fixed dings at the local surf shop and finally earned her first board.

While she studied art at San Diego State University and competed on the women’s pro circuit in the mid-’70s, Cher also dedicated herself to surf exploration. For 15 years, she spent all her vacation time on the Baja California coast, eventually surfing every single spot except Mag Bay, which she attempted twice.

Hawaii became another favorite destination, where Cher spent months at a time each year through the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, often with her dear friend, the late Rell Sunn. The two surfer girls from very different worlds met while waxing up their boards for a heat in a WISA [Women’s International Surfing Association] contest in 1975, and they started chatting. It was the first time Rell had been to the mainland surfing, and this was the final contest to earn entry points for the first women’s pro event in September. Rell stayed with Cher later that summer so they could train together for the pro contest that would eventu-

ally showcase Cher on its press release. Taking trips up to Malibu in Cher’s Jeepster Commando, they embarked on a long and cherished friendship. Just as Cher opened her San Diego home to Rell, Rell invited Cher to her beloved Makaha. “Rell showed me the true aloha,” Cher recalls. In the ‘80s, Cher’s art career was directed toward a novel new medium: the computer. After working extensively in the field, she

authored the *Painter 6 Wow!* book, fourth edition, the authoritative text on the Painter program. Becoming an industry leader in painting on the computer has provided her not only a very enjoyable occupation but also opportunities to travel around the world teaching others. But still, when she’s got a three-day workshop at Dynamic Graphics in Illinois, Cher schedules a late flight in order to squeeze in a morning surf.

Legendary San Diego surfer and shaper Skip Frye calls Cher and her husband Steve “the most artistically creative [couple] in the history of the sport.” Cher paints all her boards, and each one has a name. There’s the Queen Angelfish, the Ulua, the Wahoo and, of course, the Sunn Fish named in memory of her friend.

Expressions of gratitude are always found intertwined with Cher’s stories. She often caps a story with, “Surfing’s such a gift.” And passing the spirit of that gift on to peers and youngsters thrills her. Cher produces a newsletter and coaches the women on the Sunset Cliffs Surf Team.

When you first encounter Cher, it’s like meeting a happy teenager inside a woman’s body. And this attitude is no accident. Explains longtime friend Michelle Jacquin: “She’s made a conscious choice to be happy.”

— Greg Alder