



As an enthusiastic waterman, Bob Gardner is a pretty good judge of body surfers. And when he isn't checking breaks like The Wedge and Trestle, Bob's also active as another type of judge—the Honorable Robert Gardner, Judge of the Superior Court at Santa Ana, California. And here now, Bob talks about one of his favorite sports and . . .



Body surfer, Seal Beach, California. Photo by Gary Ruble.

The Unsung Body Surfer



The board surfer? Colorful, dramatic, visible—and thus, photogenic.

The body surfer? Unheralded, unsung, and almost completely invisible, a smeared blur in a wall of crashing water—and thus, not photogenic. Oh, perhaps an occasional glimpse of an unidentifiable head, arm or shoulder; but the body surfer simply cannot compete, photographically, with the board surfer. Thus, generally speaking, he remains anonymous.

Just who are the greats of body surfing—the Phil Edwards, the Joey Cabells, the Mike Doyles of this great art—the anonymous heroes of Makapuu, the Wedge, Trafalger Street, La Jolla?

Usually, lacking the publicity available to the board surfer, the body surfer is known only to his fellow body surfers at his own local beach. How-

ever, a select few of the older body surfers have attained at least some general recognition.

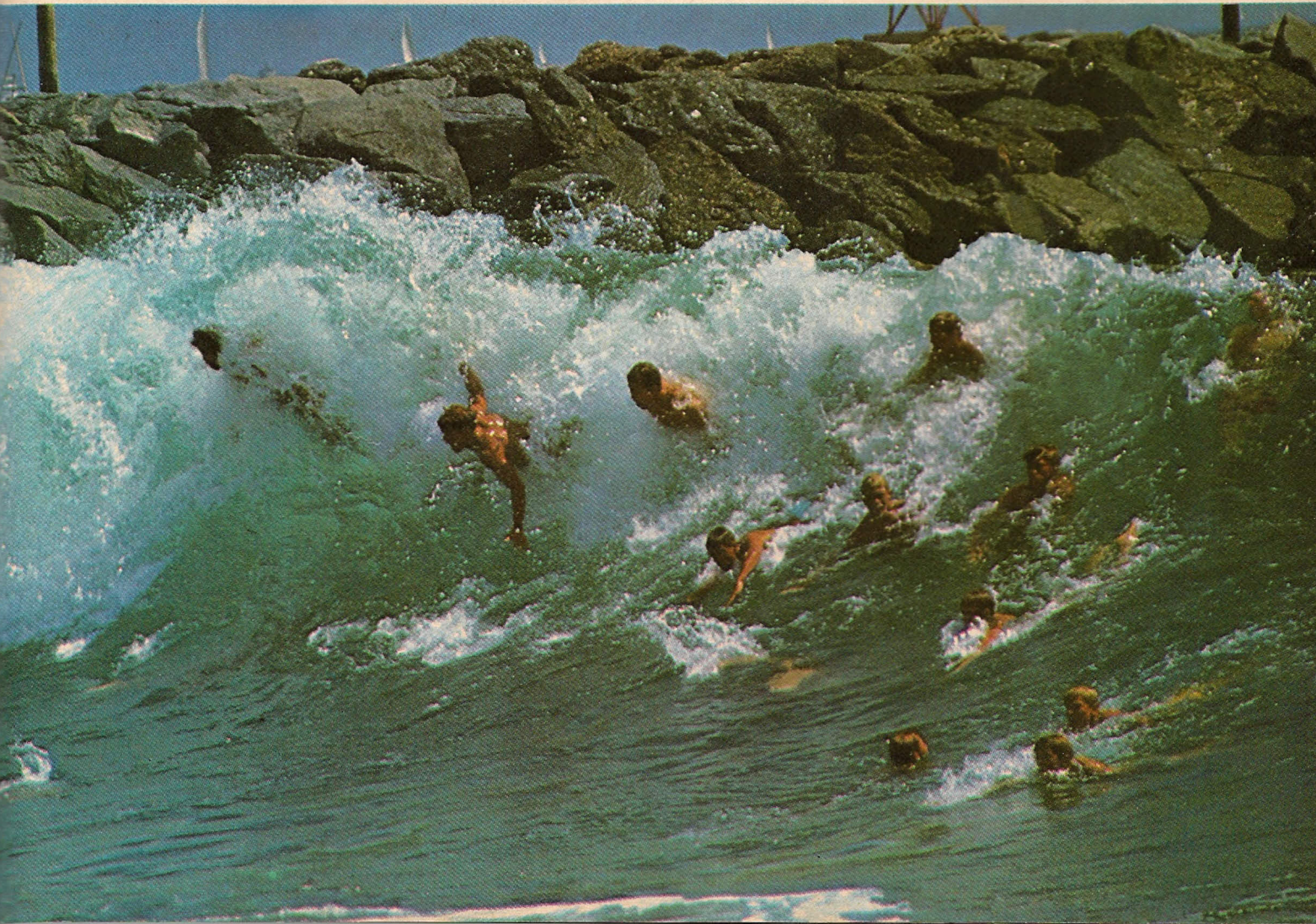
One of the unquestioned greats is Mickey Munoz. This small, compact bundle of driving energy and fierce determination, Mickey has probably done more to develop new techniques and skills in the art of body surfing than anyone surfing today. As a creator and innovator, Mickey is unsurpassed.

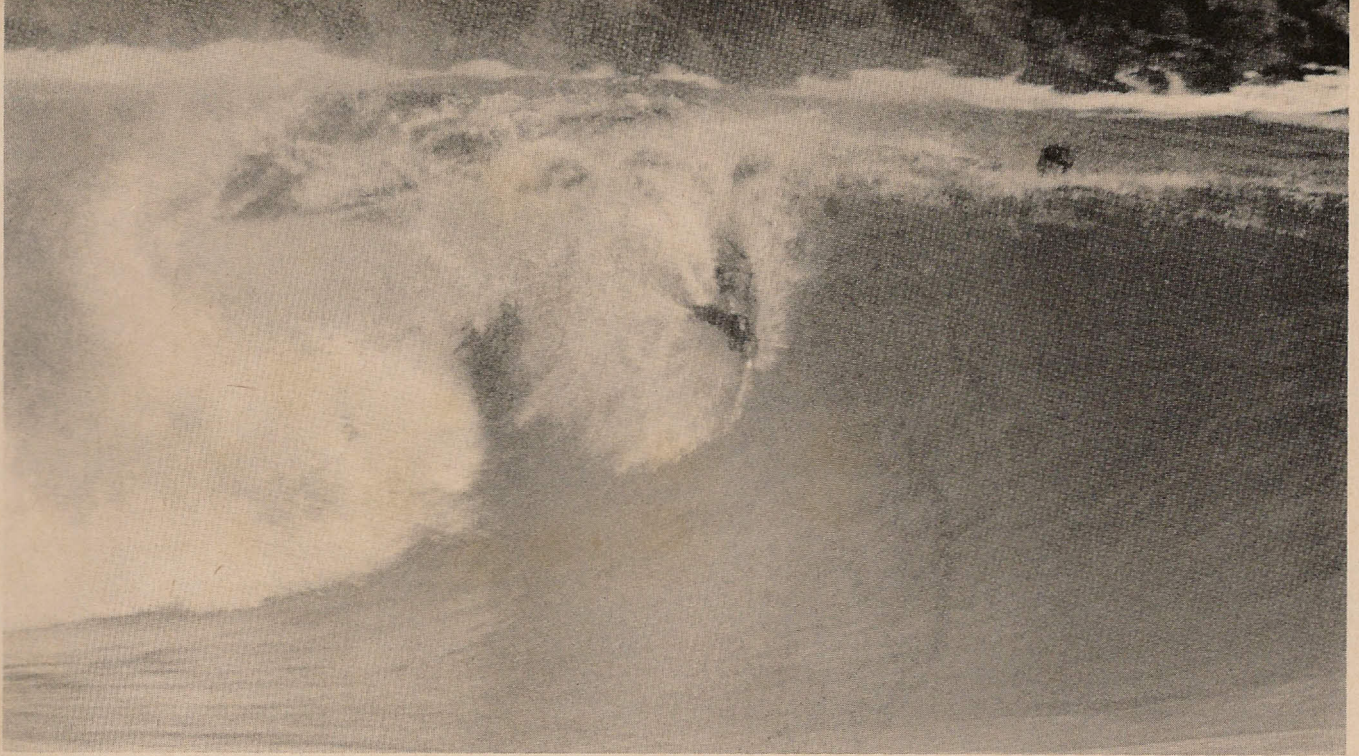
In Hawaii, the mighty Buffalo Keaulana, graceful in the water as a great brown seal, remains the leader, with a host of talented young surfers snapping at his heels.

Also a legend in body surfing circles is quiet Joe Quigg, who, in sincere modesty, asserts that there are dozens of youngsters better than he. Still, when the word gets out that Joe is



(Left) Bill Sinner drives out of the curl on a rare Wedge right. Photo by Ron Dahlquist. (Above) The impressive Wedge layout on a good summer day. The lines bank off the jetty and wedge together before pounding over. Photo: Stoner. (Below) A mob of nameless body surfers compete for the pocket on a crowded Sunday at the Wedge. Photo: Dahlquist.





Jim Scanlon in beautiful position at the Wedge. Photo by Dan Starr.

surfing, the beach is lined with youngsters—youngsters who still think Joe is the greatest.


Then there is Pete Hallworth of Rincon, who, in that beach's famous thin waves, is said to be able to do anything with his body that a man can do on a board except stay dry.

Probably no discussion of body surfing ever strays far from Balboa's famous Wedge and the man who has this break wired, the "Great White Whale," ex-University of Southern California's swimming star, Don Redington. Don's a powerful swimmer and surfer who has come as close as anyone to taming the Wedge's awesome surf. Incidentally, last summer the Wedge confirmed its menacing reputation when it claimed the life of nineteen-year-old Paul Sonnerberg, an experienced local surfer. Makapuu claimed a life, too, with the drowning of Thomas Brogan, promising University of Santa Clara baseball player.

On the distaff side, only two women have attained wide recognition as big-wave riders—Candy Calhoun and Nancy Corfman. Devotees of the art still talk about "Big Tuesday" of August, 1962, when both girls rode the huge surf pounding at the Wedge.

Candy and Nancy had surfed but a few minutes when, by unspoken agreement, most of the good body surfers left the water to watch the two girls. Estimates vary as to the size of the surf that day—some say fifteen feet, some say eighteen. (There **was** common agreement that Nancy took one free fall of at least ten feet). But whatever the size of the surf, the girls rode the biggest the Wedge had to offer—to the cheers of an all-male audience.

Unquestionably there are other great body surfers than those named—but not many. There is no sport at which more participants are less proficient than body surfing. It has been said that anyone who can ski can ride a board. It is true that there are hundreds of excellent board surfers. But of the uncounted thousands of enthusiastic but maladroit body surfers, how many are great? They could probably be listed on the fingers of both hands. And, with poor visibility, few contests and little recognition, the great body surfers will, with a few exceptions, probably remain anonymous.

Who knows, perhaps even J. J. Moon is a great body surfer. 



(Above) A group of body surfers pass up this Wedge monster, floating through the back like men suspended in outer space. Photo by Kevin Egan. (Below) This typical Wedge takeoff will end in a typical freefall and the usual crushing wipe-out. Photo: Egan.

