

HARRY E. MURRAY: 1926-2012

Original Santa Cruz Surfing Club member dies

✓ Bio m
By CATHY KELLY

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SANTA CRUZ — Harry E. Murray, an original Santa Cruz Surf Club member who starred in many Plunge Water Carnivals at the Boardwalk, died Tuesday. He was 86.

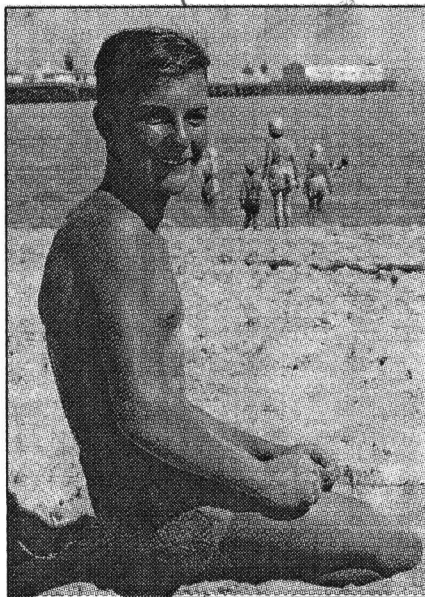
Murray died in Mesa, Ariz., where he had lived for more than 40 years, his son said.

Harry Mayo of Santa Cruz, also an original club member, said Murray was a skillful surfer who was often in the water carnival.

"Harry was in it every Saturday for years," he said. "And in the trapeze acts. They had synchronized swimming and high diving and fire diving and all kinds of acts OSHA would not approve of."

The Boardwalk's Plunge was filled with heated sea water and operated for years in Neptune's Kingdom, Mayo said.

Murray held onto the hand of the bigger Don Bosco Patterson as Patterson shot down a cable from the top of the Boardwalk Casino to the former



COURTESY GEORGE MURRAY

SEE MURRAY ON B2

Harry Murray on the beach.

MURRAY

Continued from B1

Pleasure Pier, Mayo said. Over the water, Murray would let go, free falling into the ocean, he said.

Murray is depicted standing beside Patterson in a locally famous 1941 black and white photograph of 11 early surfers standing in a line with their boards towering behind them. He is nicknamed "Little Harry" in the caption and is in other historic photographs on display at the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum, Mayo said.

"He was a nice, friendly guy and full of the devil," Mayo said. "I just got a phone call from a girl who got a Valentine from him on Valentine's Day when they were at Branciforte Junior High together."

Murray's son, George Murray, said his father had great memories of his time surfing with his buddies and being in the carnival.

He did not choose to leave Santa Cruz at age 17, but his father took action when he began ditching school to surf, he said.

One good surfing day, his dad drove up in his pickup and took his son straight to a Navy recruiting office, Murray said.

"Next thing he knew, he was in some island in the South Pacific," Murray said. "He always told us it was because of the surf club that he ended up in the Navy."

Murray's family was in Monterey when he finished his first tour of service, with his dad working as a plumber at Fort Ord and his mother working as a nurse in a cannery. Murray became a career Air Force man, retiring from Williams Air Force Base in Arizona as a chief master sergeant and then working for the Salt River Project utility company.

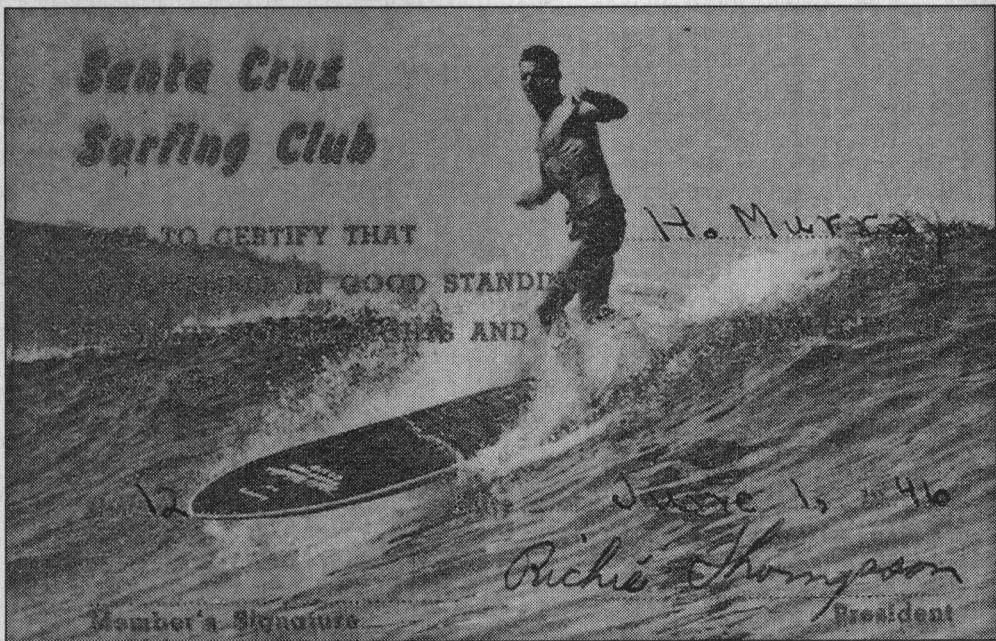
George Murray said he realized after his dad died how well-liked he was, as people who work in the drug store, at Costco and even at an auto repair shop cried when he told them his dad had died.

"A fellow at Costco told me he sees thousands of people every day and that dad just lit the place up," Murray said. "He always thought of everyone else first, how they were. He really had an impact on some people and I feel honored by that."

Murray loved to hunt and fish and golf. And if he had to be inside, he liked to play poker, his son said.

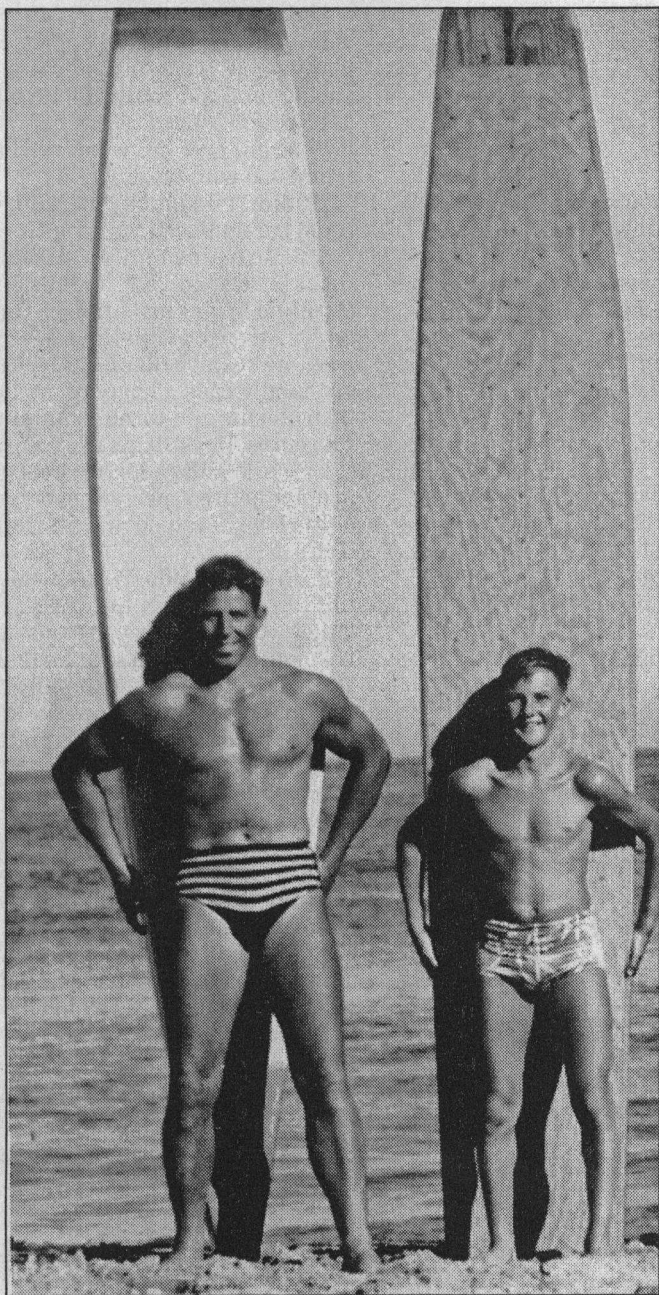
Murray said he was surprised to see his dad's perilous-looking plunge photographs in a scrap book.

"There he was doing this acrobatic thing, 'the slide of death,' and he was such a con-



COURTESY GEORGE MURRAY

Harry Murray's Santa Cruz Surf Club card.



COURTESY GEORGE MURRAY

Don Bosco Patterson and Harry Murray with their surfboards.

servative fellow," he said. "But it was quite a deal for him to be in that and to be surfing out there with his friends. They were his world and I think he really felt at the time that was all he needed, to go out surfing with his friends."

Per the Santa Cruz Library website, elaborate water car-

nivals with flower-adorned boats and other entertainment began in the 1890s along a created lagoon on the San Lorenzo River, continuing until 1927, when "the spirit of the carnivals was kept alive" by Skip Littlefield's "Plunge Water Carnivals" of the 1930s. The last of those shows was

AT A GLANCE

HARRY E. MURRAY

BORN: Jan. 1, 1926, in San Jose

DIED: Aug. 28, 2012, in Mesa, Ariz.

SURVIVORS: His wife of 65 years, Jackie Murray; sister, Florence Newton of Monterey; brother, Rixford Murray of Santa Maria; children, George Murray of Mesa, Ariz., Trudy Besoiu of Tempe, Ariz., Lori Honea of Queen Creek, Ariz., Sheila Peden of Gilbert, Ariz. and Bill Murray of Chandler, Ariz.; 12 grandchildren; and 19 great-grandchildren.

SERVICES: Private services will be held Sept. 14.

on Labor Day in 1945, per the Boardwalk website.

The Plunge was opened in 1907, along with a new Santa Cruz Casino and Boardwalk, and it closed in 1963.

Murray's Santa Cruz stories included ways the group found to stay warm in those pre-wetsuit days, his son said. His father told him he would buy wool long johns from a thrift store and wear those.

Other surfers wore wool sweaters with cut-off the sleeves, said Mayo, the former surfing buddy.

"I didn't like them," Mayo said. "I just tried not to get wet."

Mayo said the group made their own boards and that there was nothing but long boards in those days. His first board was made out of redwood, marine plywood and pine, he said.

Mayo confirmed they had a tendency to cut school if the surf was good.

"Because the surf is not up every day," he explained.

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