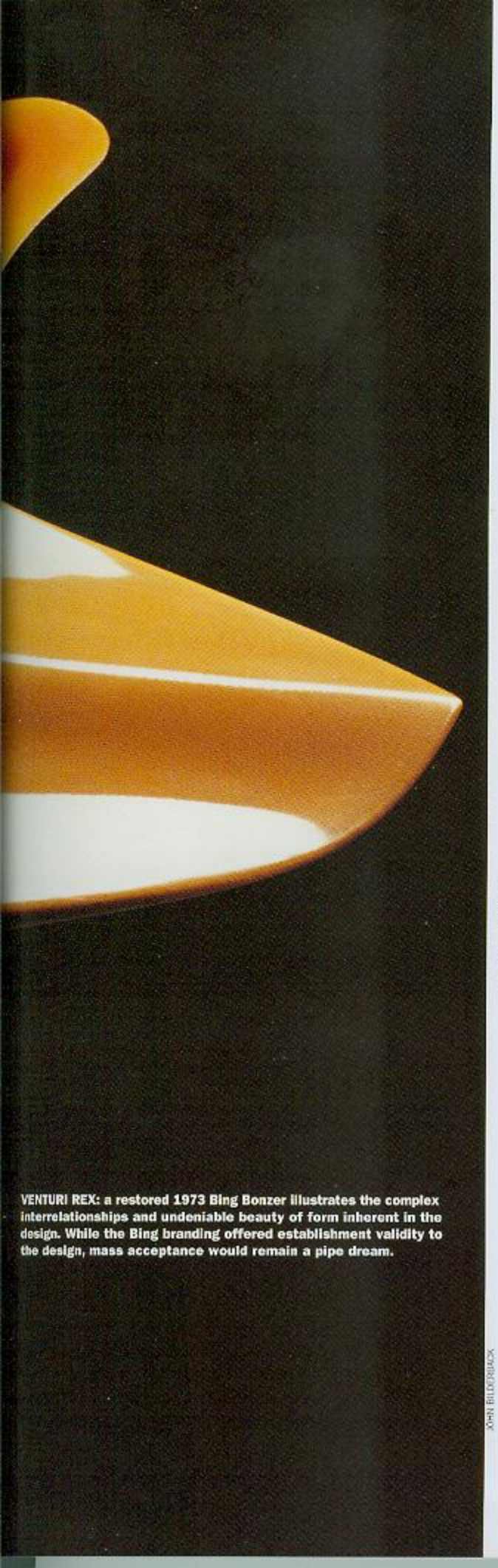
"Dare to be naïve."
— R. Buckminster Fuller

Belief System

The Long, Strange Saga of the Bonzer

By Steve Barilotti



VENTURI REX: a restored 1973 Bing Bonzer illustrates the complex interrelationships and undeniable beauty of form inherent in the design. While the Bing branding offered establishment validity to the design, mass acceptance would remain a pipe dream.

JOHN BILDERBACK

July 1996

Kelly Slater, three-time world champ and millennial surfing phenom, stood on the victory dais overlooking the frigid, smoking lines of Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa, and held aloft a huge championship trophy. Slater had just surfed a remarkable contest, generating blazing bursts of speed down what is considered one of the fastest right-hand waves in the world. Dripping wet and shivering from the cold offshores and a liberal dousing of salt water and champagne, Slater reels off a teeth-chattering litany of thanks to his coterie of sponsors. First on the list is famed shaper-surfer Simon Anderson, who had shaped and shipped a board to Slater last-minute after Kelly found none of his latest self-designed boards worked in J-Bay's long, relentless walls. The board, a yellow 6'3" double-concave thruster, turned out to be Slater's winning board. Slater profusely credited Anderson with "saving his life." Anderson, in turn, is generally lauded as the inventor of the modern tri-fin in 1980, the most popular and prolific surfboard design in modern surfing's history.

CAMPBELL COLLECTION

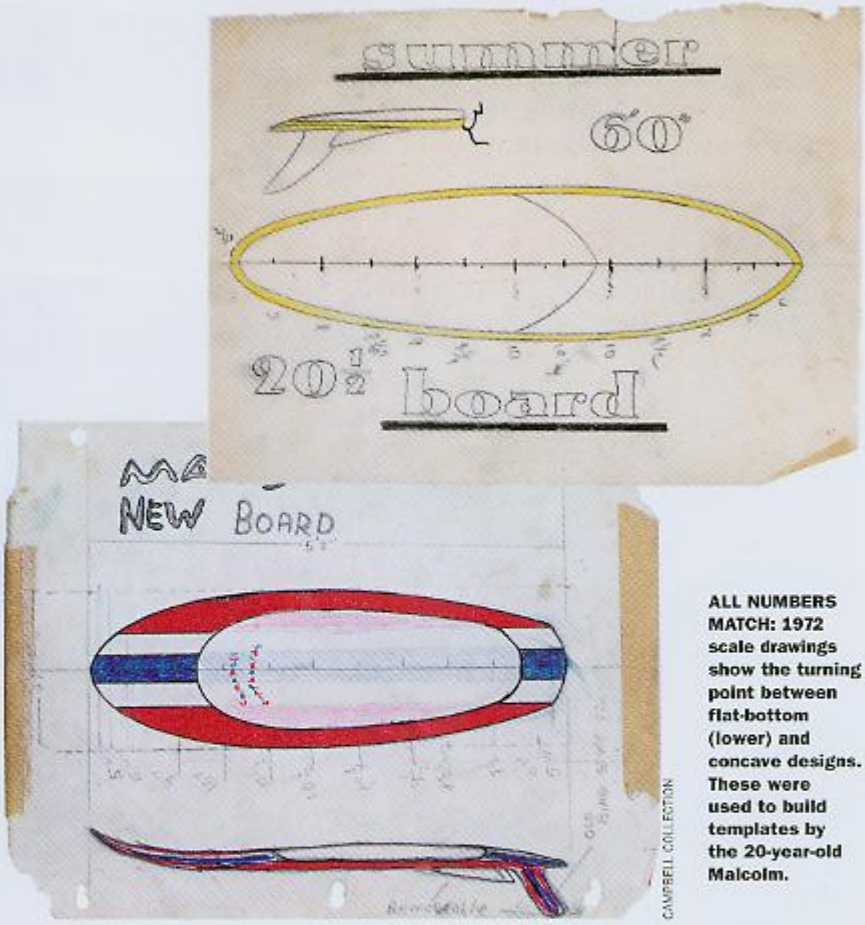
FAST AND BULBOUS: Malcolm Campbell on a stubby 6'4" square tail, Santa Paula Street, Silver Strand, Oxnard, 1977.

September 1971

Duncan and Malcolm Campbell, ages 16 and 19 respectively, tested their latest generation "Bonzer" in the steep, hollow waves of Oxnard Shores, California. The Bonzer is a six-foot rounded pintail featuring a unique double-concave tri-fin tail configuration based on raceboat hull theory. Within minutes of catching their first few waves, the brothers could feel unimagined gusts of speed and heightened directional stability, vastly surpassing their earlier flat-bottomed tri-fin prototypes. The Campbells returned to their Oxnard home that afternoon ecstatic and eager to share their brainchild with the surfing world. After a two-year R&D ramp-up, they were producing the new "Bing Bonzer" on a limited run through Bing Surfboards of Hermosa Beach. Over the next two decades the brothers showed dozens of

shapers worldwide how to shape Bonzers. In 2004, over 80 percent of the boards ridden by professional contest surfers are three-fin, single-to-double concave-bottom surfboards. For their efforts, however, the Campbells were languished in relative obscurity as the space-child inventors of an oddball, dead-end design.

"It was exciting at the time to see that we were ahead of the curve," recalls Duncan today. "Things could have been much different if this had caught on back in 1970 when we built our first Bonzer. It seemed bizarre that it took so long."



CAMPBELL COLLECTION

ALL NUMBERS MATCH: 1972 scale drawings show the turning point between flat-bottom (lower) and concave designs. These were used to build templates by the 20-year-old Malcolm.

For 21 years, seven days a week, Duncan Campbell has driven by Waimea Bay in the dark to open the Café Haleiwa. During big northwest winter swells he can hear the dull, distant artillery boom of massive waves impacting the giant submerged boulders lining the northern end of the bay.

Steering a battered, mud-caked Ford pickup down the deserted Kam Highway, Duncan rolls through a slumbering Haleiwa past the venerable H. Miura dry goods store and Matsumoto's shave ice stand. He pulls to the back of the café, a ramshackle 90-year-old one-time pool hall, and sidles through the rear door past a family of mewing cats that he'll feed later.

Duncan is 48, with cropped brown hair and the arresting blue eyes of a tent-show charismatic. His standard work garb is walkshorts, tennis shoes, and a faded Café Haleiwa T-shirt. Entering the darkened kitchen, he switches on the light and dons a clean cook's apron over a compact, powerful frame. He flips on the quirky driving beats of Brian Eno's "Help Me Somebody," bobs his head appreciatively, then fires up the grill for the seven a.m. breakfast opening.

Frommers lists the Café Haleiwa as a "legendary breakfast joint" with Formica-style casual ambiance, and it is feted online as one of the Top-10 North Shore cultural experiences.

In fact, the café is the nearest thing surfing has to a 19th century Thames river pub, rife with intrigue and the day's maritime news. Each morning, over homefries and Off The Lip omelets, the North Shore pecking order is ruthlessly sorted out. Rides are ranked, casualties tallied, beefs settled or begun, parties dissected, wannabe Mr. (or Ms.) Pipelines lauded or written off. World champs and legends of varying degree sit elbow to elbow and share surf stories with a veritable UN of international traveling surfers. Duncan's two daughters, Noelle, 24, and Megan, 22, were raised pouring Lion coffee to three generations of local North Shore surfers and their families.

"Just like Bonzers, we must serve our comrades!" exhorts Duncan, sporting a dense three-day stubble from behind his espresso station. "An army travels on its stomach."

Duncan says he runs the café under the same set of ethical guidelines as the surfboard business. "I don't look at food and see money. I see the happiness of the customer, and out of this exchange the money comes. Foam and food are flexible, quality shouldn't be."

On one wall of the one-room café is a small gallery of Bonzer arcana, a small shrine to the Campbells' 34-year quest to take surfing out of the single-fin Dark Ages and into a shining high-speed future. There are framed magazine shots of Malcolm and Duncan ripping at Oxnard Shores; early Bonzer riders Peter Townend, Terry Richardson, and Ian Cairns; Bing Bonzer ads from *Surfer* magazine, circa 1974; Davey Miller, circa early 1990s, entombed on a Bonzer five-fin in a massive Backdoor barrel; a signed photo of Tom Blake, dated 1986, posing in front of his '40s-era twin-fin paddleboard with the inscription: "Aloha to Duncan Campbell, another early fin man."

Hanging over the diners' heads, like relic armory from the Holy Wars, are two sleek, vintage Bing Bonzers. These are some of the first production Bonzers, shaped by surfboard masters Bing Copeland and Mike Eaton in 1973. They are at once futuristic and retro looking, sporting the deep dual bottom contours and long trapezoidal tail fins a'la a George Jetson astrocruiser. These are the boards that opened the doors to the tri-fin future, a future that surfing has clung to for 23 years now.

"We championed the three-fin cause for 10 years before the world caught on with Simon's thruster," says Duncan. "But it came true. Nobody can say three-fins didn't become the best high-performance surfboards. You just can't do as much on a single-fin. Kelly Slater at his peak surfing ability couldn't have won the world championship on a single-fin surfboard. Someone on a thruster would have beat him."

FLASHING ON THE POTENTIAL: Duncan (left) and Malcolm with Bing Bonzer #1. "We weren't expecting to make money," says Malcolm, "but we knew the design had something to offer." This marked the transformation from crude, garage beginnings to finished, fined-out product.

©CAMPBELL COLLECTION

POSTER BOYS: The Campbells with first Bonzer in Duncan's bedroom, 12/7/70. The Bonzer's a 5'4"; The 5'2" twin-fin was patterned after Terry Fitzgerald's boards.

To the Campbells and their Bonzer disciples, however, the tri-fin thruster is an inherently flawed design. Originally a twin-fin with an added stabilizer, the Thruster, while capable of great maneuverability, has a start/stop accelerator that has to be constantly pumped and gets fluttery at high speeds. That the Thruster has enjoyed unprecedented success in the marketplace for over two decades can only be attributed by Bonzer devotees to the erratic trajectory of human nature following any major paradigm shift.

The Bonzer, in contrast evolved out of the single-fin by adding two side fins to achieve increasing pulses of down-the-line speed through deep-power carves. The Campbells see the Bonzer as an archetypal surfboard design, as essential to surfing as an airfoil is to flight.

"The boards not only work, they work as good as or better than anything on the planet," claims Malcolm. "Thousands and thousands of people, from kooks to experts, have ridden the boards and know they work. And one day a world championship will be won riding a five-fin Bonzer."

Some buy into the Campbells' rap. Many don't. Most surfers these days simply just don't want to take the time to deal with it. The surfing marketplace at large has a low tolerance for innovation, even ones that are 34 years old. New technology that veers more than five degrees from pro-driven media fashion is regarded with deep suspicion by a largely design-illiterate consumer. And board manufacturers have little patience for quirky, hard-to-make designs that might slow production and threaten a wafer-thin profit margin.

Over its 34-year-history, the Bonzer has left controversy in its speedy wake, enlisting a cadre of loyal followers and just as many detractors.

Malcolm, the older and huskier of the two brothers, still lives in Oxnard, but he and Duncan maintain a close fraternal working relationship. Together, Duncan and Malcolm are the classic good cop/bad cop combo: one fiery and in your face, the other disarming and diplomatic. When combined on a confirmed Bonzer skeptic, most people don't have a chance.

Malcolm is soft-spoken, hardworking, and meticulous in his craft. He exudes the quiet, good-humored zeal of a Congo missionary or a hip astrophysicist onto a previously overlooked quantum shift. Loves Captain Beefheart, Coen Brothers' movies, and the writings of Krishnamurti. In 1996, Malcolm was diagnosed with a rare form of kidney cancer. Throughout a two-year treatment, he continued surfboard shaping and coaching youth soccer and track. His wife, Lise, largely held things together during these tough years. He has two sons, twins Jacob and Ian, age 21, and a daughter, Oriana, age 17. All three surf, and the twins recently created the Campbell Brothers' website. The Campbell Clan motto translates as "Be Mindful." The word "Peace" is inscribed on the stringer of each board Malcolm shapes.

Duncan is intense, opinionated, and tends to stutter when hammering on about matters of right and wrong, justice and injustice, knowledge and plain mule-headed ignorance. He possesses a Scot's hard-headed stubbornness tempered by compassionate Jewish forbearance. Has a weakness for Hugh Masekela and the bombastic, surreal humor of the Firesign Theatre. An insomniac, he works until 3:00 a.m. each morning archiving Bonzer footage or creating content for the website. Duncan's Bonzer rhetoric veers toward hyperbole and utopian absolutes, evoking quantum leaps and Einsteinian physics. He's fiercely protective of Malcolm, three years his senior. Duncan in Scots Gaelic means "Brown Warrior."

Of course, they share a secret language on an almost telepathic Trekkie Binar level. Their logo is two identical alien TV blockheads: mute, logical, peaceful, disconcerting. "Interviewing them is an ample task, since both tend to speak at once, each finishing the previous one's sentence and adding further elaboration—which the other in turn completes," wrote Brian Ilford in *Surfer* magazine in 1977.

The Campbell Brothers, coming from a throwback outpost like Oxnard, were the epitome of the rebel garage shapers of the late '60s—the surfboard-design equivalent of a Dada art school band. They set their populist, anti-capitalist paradigm early on. Taking a cue from the Captain Beefheart credo "Love Over Gold," they never patented the Bonzer. "The copyright is for the world," stated Malcolm. "Anyone can use it; all you need is a protractor and a ruler."

Naturally, they were doomed. For all their good intentions they were first lauded, then ridiculed, then forgotten for over 10 years.

But they never gave up on their original design and continued to evolve it to the present day five-fin. Over three

decades later, after numerous heartbreaking false starts, the Bonzer has gained a small but ardent worldwide following that exists purely on its own enthusiasm and belief. In San Diego, Mike Eaton reckons he's shaped and sold over 35,000 Bonzers over the last three decades. Bill Hamilton, who builds and surfs his own five-fin Bonzers at 12-foot Hanalei Bay, claims they have a "Sacred Fourth Gear" with no top end. On the Columbia River, the Bonzer five-fin "Gorge Animal" has been used for over 10 years by sailboarders with great success. Darrick Doerner recently reported he'd successfully flight-tested the first Campbell five-fin tow-board at Teahupoo.

When asked how good they work, Peter St. Pierre, owner of Moonlight Glassing and a longtime Bonzer supporter, replied: "How good does ice cream taste?"

The Bonzer, it seems, is a surfboard design that is fully infused with the Campbells' philosophy. The Campbells truly believe that enlightened surfers can change the world—defeat ignorance, hate, poverty, and war—by manifesting the teachings of the great prophets through surfing. And the Bonzer, named for the Australian slang equivalent of "bitchin'," is simply one of the tools to achieve better surfing.

"With surfboards, what shaper, when he's talking to you about a design, ever mentions the word faith?" says Chris Malloy, who, with his two brothers, grew up surfing a Bonzer or two when they were kids in Ventura. "When Duncan talks to you about Bonzers you see complete and utter belief. Sometimes you ride Bonzers on faith and faith alone."

By 1970, the surf world at large was trying desperately to deal with the power vacuum left by the collapse of the shortboard revolution. Like a wobbly banana republic propped up after the pullout of a colonial overlord, the surfing world was rife with charlatan kings and fractious ad hoc revolutionary committees.

The era produced equal parts innovation and drug-fueled wackiness. A quick scan through the surf-mag archive reveals that stubby, hyper-kicked noses were a brief rage. W.A.V.E. of Ventura featured hollow boards and hollow fins. Plastic honeycomb cell technology promised to replace foam. Corky Carroll championed twin-fins on his "Space Sticks." Hansen boards possessed "Super Vibes." A Greek downrailer promised to "put you right on top." A cheeky Bob McTavish claimed that "surfers get laid" with his Power Dude fun shape. The Hendricks Omni, a tech-heavy kneeboard, featured a centerboard, handgrips, a rudder, and a speedometer. Finally, Chuck Dent laid down the law with his 1970 surfboard line designed by B.K. and Bill Hamilton: "Here's our program: it's 1-2-3, very heavy. I'm callin' for it. So dig it!"

In response, Greg Noll wrote an editorial screed in *Surfer* that year entitled: "The B.S.'ers" where he laid most of the blame on the surfboard manufacturers (including himself) attempting to out-do each other with gimmicks rather than making clean boards that work. "The major offenses committed in the name of the almighty dollar are too numerous to mention," blustered Noll, "...but the best are the BS ads which have finally gotten to the point that nobody can begin to believe what they're trying to say, including the manufacturer who's running the ad."

The shortboard revolution, which had begun only three years earlier on the beaches of New South Wales with the nine-foot McTavish V-bottom, lay in tatters. By mid-year, a Californian, Rolf Aurness, was the new world champ, using a pragmatic seven-foot pintail to take out the woefully under-gunned Australians at their home break in Johanna, Victoria. The Australians, who had taken the shorter-is-better mantra to absurd lengths, struggled vainly to make their diminutive "mind machines" perform in the fast, powerful Johanna barrels. The price for increased maneuverability was speed, and single-fin shortboards under six feet had proven an awkward chimera for all but an eccentric elite who had the skill and patience to make them work under specialized circumstances.

The backlash was profound. Afterward, competitive surfing was deemed irrelevant and downright injurious to one's karmic well-being by the surfing press and disillusioned gentry. California surfing retreated into acid-inspired, black-wetsuit fundamentalism that rejected anything not 100 percent "natural." A nasty strain of tire-slashing localism metastasized around isolated California strongholds like Point Loma, Palos Verdes, and Oxnard. Innovation was looked upon with deep suspicion and multi fins on a surfboard to the rank-and-file smacked of some sort of bastard miscegenation spawned out of the surfing industrial complex.

Meanwhile, back in Oxnard, the Campbell brothers studied the data, looked at the films, and attempted to balance the equation. For the last year, the Campbells had been building their own small twin fins and had encountered the same indomitable speed barrier as the Australians. "In the last few years, advances in surfboard design appear to have reached a plateau," wrote Malcolm later in his 1971 manifesto, "The Bonzer—A Space in Time." "While becoming shorter and lighter, they have sacrificed speed, which is an essential factor in handling big waves effectively."

But they weren't giving up on the shortboard.

"He (Rolf) slaughtered 'em on a seven-foot board," recalls Duncan. "But we're still thinking, the future of surfing is

CAMPBELL COLLECTION

SATICOY SESSIONS: Terry Foley (right) monitors the outline of his new board at Blinky's Bargain Basement, 1976. Malcolm still shapes off these vintage templates when an order for an old-school Bonzer comes over the desk.

six-foot and five-sixes, not these longboards. So that's when we took on this idea of, well, how do we make a five-six to six-foot board work like a seven-foot board? How do we get it to work in six- to eight-foot surf? What would be the dynamic? What would you do to give you projection out of your turns?"

At a time when Hawaiian big-wave performance and design still dominated the surf media's attention, the Campbells were getting their design cues smuggled into Oxnard direct from Australia. Through their friend, Robert Moynier, a 20-year-old expat American who had spent his childhood surfing in Australia, the Campbells were introduced to the Aussie design mindset via dog-eared copies of *Australian Surfing World Magazine*.

At the same time, a new breed of Australian filmmakers was producing mind-altering, if somewhat crude, imagery that fueled the Campbells' quest for speed. Paul Witzig's 1968 *Evolution*, which highlighted Wayne Lynch's revolutionary lip-to-base carving turns, had a profound effect on the brothers' thinking. In their surfing cosmology, Wayne Lynch and Nat Young became the new gods; George Greenough and Bob McTavish, the firebringers. The 15-year-old Duncan obsessively papered every square inch of his room with cut-up surf magazines and even glassed surf photos of Wayne Lynch on his twin-fins.

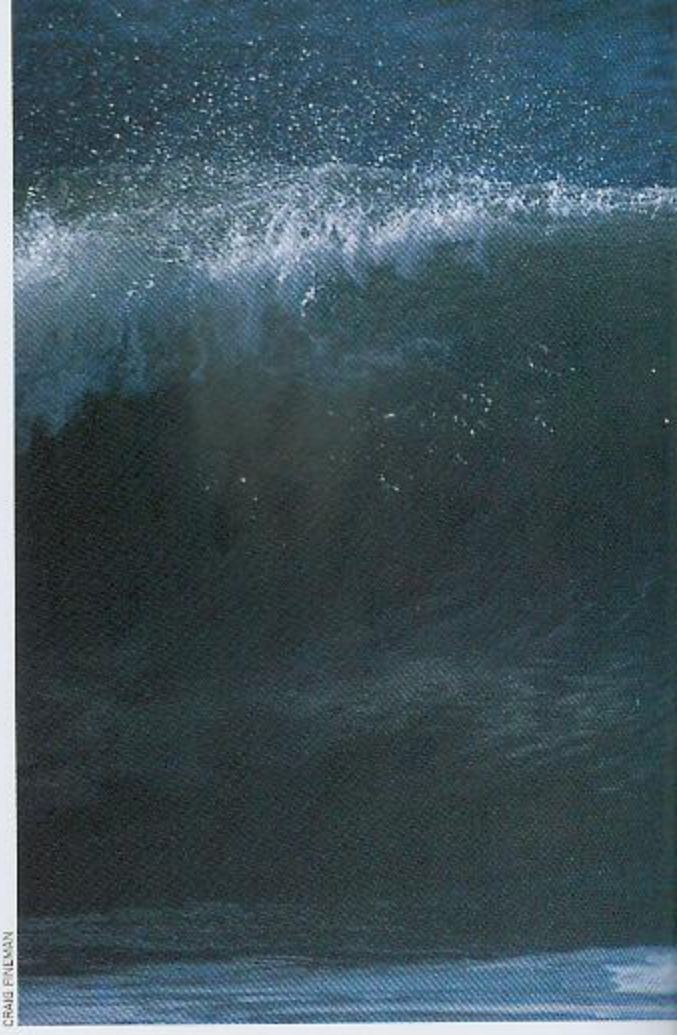
"The moves that needed to be replicated for performance surfing were Greenough," says Duncan. "Off the bottom, laying the rail down and not spinning out, coming up off the top, full roundhouse cutbacks into the soup. And then tube riding for as long as you wanted to. That was the future. We didn't see it as kneeboarders versus surfers. We're looking at maneuvers, and Greenough was completely right."

In late November 1970, after huddling with their dad, the Campbells decided to try a radical three-fin design. The first board was an adapted 5'4" kneeboard shaped in their garage from a $12 Clark reject blank. The center fin was a large, boxy, aircraft-style fin placed close to a wide, truncated squashtail. The two side fins were long, blade-like plastic runners sited well forward of the center fin near the rails and canted-in approximately seven degrees. On the bottom, they glassed on a poster of a R. Crumb-styled Felix the Cat trucking merrily along.

A week later, the two brothers and their friend, Cliff Collinge, took the new board, as yet unnamed, down to the deserted beachbreaks along the old Highway 1 north of Ventura. Overhead on an overcast, offshore morning. Recent heavy rains had flushed tons of river silt and debris out into the ocean, turning the waves a sickly chocolate color. Hundreds of oranges, washed down from a nearby orchard, bobbed in the lineup. But the storm had also sent a freak winter south windswell that lined up auspiciously on the sandbanks. Hollow three- to five-foot brown lefts charged north toward Solimar Beach. The teenagers scrambled down the large riprap boulders and suited up.

Echoing the first flight at Kitty Hawk, two brothers on the beach chose who would be the first to test their invention. Malcolm, despite being a regular-foot, paddled out first.

Malcolm dropped in backside on his first wave and was immediately stunned at the way the little board bolted out of the gate. "The speed out of the turns and the control in the steep, hollow areas of the wave was unimagined," recalled Malcolm overlooking the same beach in 1999. "Just overall increased natural speed and amazing positive cutbacks."



CRAIG FINLMAN

Duncan remembers when Malcolm finally came in raving about the board. "He (Malcolm) was completely shaken. The ability to go down the line with that kind of speed and hold the rail on a board that short, a five-four, was something we never felt before. It just wasn't there on single-fin boards. And it wasn't there on a twin-fin board for sure. So we just said, 'Hey, this is it. This is the future.'"

When interviewed, the Campbells are always quick to give full credit to their father, Jack Campbell, for the Bonzer's initial inspiration and name.

Although he never surfed, Jack had an innate scholarly understanding of what made things go fast. He approached his sons' surf project from a pure design vantage, unencumbered by the shaper cults and voodoo hydrodynamics that plague surfboard design.

Malcolm was born in Los Angeles in 1952, to Jack and Gloria Campbell. Jack, originally from Philadelphia, was a genteel, pipe-smoking automotive photojournalist who'd honed his camera skills as a Navy photographer during WW II. Gloria, a vivacious brunette, was a graphic artist and abstract painter from New York who came west and met Jack through the thriving

BUTTER IN A TEFLON PAN: Russ Short moved from Huntington Beach to Port Hueneme and, through the lens of Craig Fineman, became the surfing face of the Bonzer program. "Because of Fineman and the Oxnard test tubes, Malcolm says, "People thought the boards only worked in perfect waves."

post-war L.A. bohemian arts scene. Both were intellectual, far left of center, and very politically active. "They were essentially beatniks with jobs," recalls Duncan, born in 1955 in Santa Monica.

Besides a taste for West Coast jazz, the boys had a strong sense of New Deal social justice drummed into them at an early age. "My mom was the classic bleeding-heart liberal," laughs Duncan ruefully. Gloria campaigned tirelessly for Eugene McCarthy in the 1968 presidential campaign and once gave Duncan a detailed account of being trampled and tear-gassed by riot-police while protesting the Vietnam War in Century City.

Jack's passion, however, was esoteric handcrafted speed machines. Through his job reviewing cars for *Motor Trend* magazine, Jack, a skilled amateur road racer, was given entrée to test drive some of the fastest production sports cars in the world, including the Shelby Cobra and the Gran Turismo Hawk. He was one of the world's foremost experts on the Bugatti and produced a now-collectible 1963 folio on the famous Italian-French racing cars. Often Jack would bring the latest gleaming prototype home and take the boys for a thrilling spin up one of Malibu's tortuous canyon roads.

"Jack Campbell was into speed," says Robert Moynier, the brothers' lifelong friend and counsel. "He knew a lot about cars, a lot about aerodynamics. Jack was like the font. He was the final arbiter of a lot of their style and integrity. He understood elegance of design."

The Campbell brothers grew up in Pacific Palisades near Santa Monica and first surfed on rented longboards at Santa Monica pier in 1965. Their sister, Ann, was born in 1957.

In 1966, however, Jack took a job with the Port Hueneme navel base newspaper. The Campbells bought a house two blocks off the ocean on Seabreeze Drive at Oxnard Shores, at the time, a half-filled suburban housing tract built on miles of sand dunes stretching to the north of the Channel Islands marina. Jack was an avid sailor and studied boat design diligently in his spare time.

In the 1970s, Oxnard was, and to a great deal still is, a coastal farm town with a decidedly Mexican soul. Most of the signage along Highway 101 is in Spanish, and the little corner *cocinas* feature some of the best menudo and *tacos de birria* north of Oaxaca. To the west, the U.S. Navy controls a large chunk of the coastal real estate, which is heavily armored with harbors and weapons depots. Nearby Pt. Mugu conducts top-secret missile testing just offshore. Over the years, Oxnard gained a reputation as a rough, dead-end sailor's dive, its desolate beaches infested with switchblade-wielding *vatos* and drunken biker gangs.

Which was just fine with the local surfers. Wedged between Port Hueneme harbor and Channel Islands harbor is Silver Strand, a mile-long beach that produces some of the best waves in California. An underwater canyon allows open-ocean swells to focus and jack heavily over a series of sandbars accreting next to the jetty. It creates a fierce, heavy tube with locals to match.

ENABLERS, ACOLYTES, AND CONSTITUENTS: (left) Mike Eaton, 1973. Fineman's photos and the Campbell family's Super Eight movies convinced the master shaper of the three-fin's viability. (right) Peter Townend and Ian Cairns, early members of the Pyramid (a common Bonzer refrain referring to the three-fin pattern) sect.

On any given swell, a tight, surly pack jostles around the two main breaks, The Bowl and The Ship. The Ship, a wedgy left sandbar zipper favored these days by limber young aerialists, was created in 1970 when a decrepit cruise liner, *La Janelle*, broke her moorings during a howling gale outside of Port Hueneme and ran aground just north of the Silver Strand jetty. The Bowl is a heavy, two-way peak that throws out a thick menacing vortex reminiscent of Puerto Escondido on a big northwest swell. The Strand bred tough working-class locals who jealously protected their prize from outsiders through verbal terrorism, vandalism, and occasional punch-ups.

Russ Short, an extraordinary goofy-footer and perhaps Oxnard's most famed surfer until Tim Curran came along, remembers how fine the lines were drawn between those who belonged and those who didn't.

"It was crazy," recalls Short, 48, these days a contractor who still surfs Silver Strand frequently. "Even guys that came from the south side of Port Hueneme, which is just the other side of the jetty, would get in fights with the Strand guys. It was that brutal."

Given this, Oxnard seems an unlikely breeding ground for innovation. But without the fast hollow beachbreaks of the Silver Strand and Oxnard Shores, the need for a drivey, highly responsive pocket rocket such as the Bonzer would not have been imperative. And, ironically, without Oxnard's tough territorial reputation sheltering the Campbells from the L.A. hordes, they would never have gotten enough quality waves to adequately test their new invention.

"We were anti-violence and we actually quit making boards for anybody who was participating in violent acts," says Duncan. "Although we didn't stop surfing the waves because the bullies were beating people up and making it uncrowded. So, you know, it's definitely hypocritical in the larger sense."

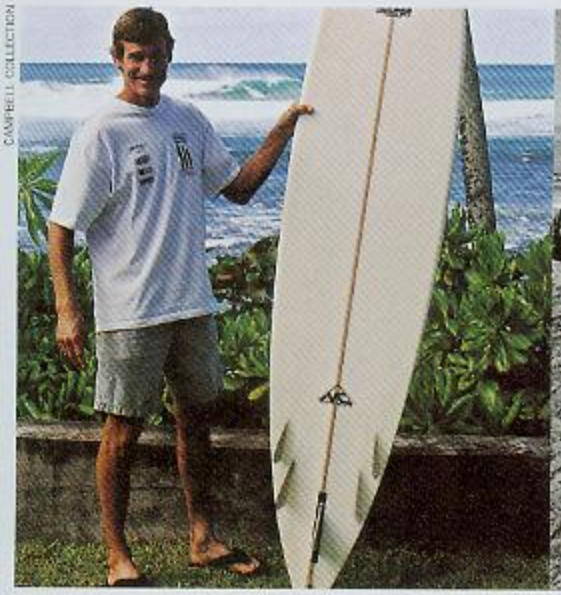
The brother's brainy brand of rebellion also put them at a cultural distance from most of the blue-collar kids they went to school with, as did their bushy, shoulder-length hippie hair they wore as defiantly as their odd trapezoidal fins. "My dad was a lifer Navy guy, and he was brutal on Duncan," recalls Russ Short. Duncan would come by my house and he'd go, "Hey, Princess, how's it going."

"We truly were set apart even then," says Duncan. "When you came to our garage, you were subject to pyramids, Keys of Enoch, Buckminster Fuller, and Alan Watts. The music was in that genre, too—Brian Eno, Captain Beefheart, Lou Reed, David Bowie—really just meaty stuff. There was no Eagles or Foghat. We just weren't running on the same current as the rest of Oxnard."

Through Russ's military connection, however, Russ and the Campbells were able to get day passes to surf the heavily guarded sandbar tubes of Pt. Mugu base. In a short time, the Campbell brothers developed into excellent surfers, winning several contests in local WSA contests. "Malcolm is an unbelievable backside surfer," says Short. "In their movies, you can see he's leaning forward on the nose with hands on the board grabbing his rail and his knees down on the board just sucking it in. Years ago, backside surfers getting in the tube was pretty unheard of, and Malcolm was doing it."

Jack supported his sons' growing surf addiction, but after buying them their first boards off the rack, he insisted they start making their own. Using blank seconds, hand planes, and a Sureform, the boys were able to produce a crude but functional board for about $40.

By mid-1971, after the initial success of their first tri-fins, Jack introduced the boys to Bernoulli's principle, which in turn led them to tinkering with ways to channel the water under a surfboard more efficiently. By hand shaping concaves into an hourglass shape and placing long runners on the side to deflect water into a narrowed "throat," the brothers hoped to jet water out the rear using the Venturi effect. Their friend Tommy


CAMPBELL COLLECTION


STEVE BARILOTTI

(above) Bonzer aficionado Jock Sutherland, with son Gavin visible in the background pocket. (right) Perpetually open-minded Donovan Frankenreiter at the Rusty "Anything But Three" event.

Kimbrell financed the prototype Bonzer.

By this time the brothers had dialed in the fin placement as well, canting and angling the side fins for maximum directional ability. Dick Brewer had been working on his own version of a tri-fin at the same time, or prior to the Campbells, but his system placed two half-moon "disks" aft of the center fin. The Campbells' triangulated fin system roughly mirrors the fin placement of the modern three-fin.

The Bonzer system worked beyond their wildest expectations, enabling the Campbells to scoot around deep, previously unmakeable sections and pump the board for increased speed within the tube. When they excitedly told Jack about their findings, he went to his thesaurus and delivered them a name: "Bonzer" adj.: (Australian) "remarkable or wonderful."

Over the next year, more Bonzers were made and distributed to friends for testing and feedback. A small cadre of Bonzer believers soon formed around the Campbells. The first riders included Russ Short, Mike Short, Robert Moynier, Cliff Collinge, Mike Kimbrell, Charlie Womack, and Craig Fineman, a talented WSA surfer and budding surf photographer newly arrived from Huntington Beach.

By late 1972, the Campbells felt they were ready to take their invention public. Jack, however, saw that as premature.

"So, he challenged us," says Duncan. "He said, 'make sense of it, develop a language for it—because if you're right and you don't record it, who's going to believe you?' We took on the challenge very young simply because he was our dad and we respected him that he knew what he was talking about. So it became a mission."

The Seabreeze house quickly became a bustling skunkworks of cutting-edge surfboard design. A real esprit developed among the Bonzer crew. New versions of the Bonzer were constructed weekly, and Fineman was pressed into service as the official Bonzer archivist. Shots of the Campbells and Russ Short getting slotted at Oxnard spots with heavily encrypted names began appearing in the surf magazines. The brothers invested in an expensive Beaulieu Super-8 film camera, and the crew would spend hours on the couch analyzing their performances.

"The Sea Breeze house became kind of a flop house for wayward people," recalls Duncan. "Russ moved in, Craig moved in, and soon everybody was living at the house. We had a darkroom and I was processing Craig's black-and-white stuff at night. We literally had boards drying in our rooms and the whole house smelled like resin and chemicals. My dad would go to the fridge and yell, 'For Christ's sake. The ice cream tastes like resin!...and who left the wax on the stove? It's burning.'"

October 1972 saw the World Contest come to Ocean Beach, San Diego. The board creating the most media buzz that year was the Steve Lis-designed twin-fin Fish. By this time, however, the Campbells had written the twin fin off as an obsolete design and were focused solely on their tri-fin creation.

That fall, an epic south swell bypassed the contest and aimed auspiciously at Oxnard and Point Mugu. While the world's best surfers struggled in three-foot mush, epic double overhead left barrels spun off Oxnard Shores. The Bonzer brethren scored. By now, both the Bonzers and their riders had come to a critical point. The riders' breakthrough performances were heavily documented by Fineman (who later became a *Surfer* staff photographer) and more photos appeared in the mags. As word of the Bonzer started drawing attention to Oxnard, however, it also drew the ire of the hard-core locals. Duncan and the others would often walk down the beach with their fins pointed away from watchers to avoid drawing jeers or the occasional rock. The Campbells, apparently, had come up with the surfing equivalent of Esperanto—logical, well designed, functional, and totally incomprehensible to the masses.

"So we knew it was going to be an uphill battle," says Malcolm. "But we also knew that this was it, that three fins

were going to revolutionize surfboards. We just had to figure out how we were going to go about it.

By early 1973, the brothers had honed their pitch and took their brainchild to the South Bay board cartels. They went first to Dewey Weber in Hermosa Beach who seemed enthused at first, but showed them the backdoor on their second meeting. Crestfallen but undaunted, they went next to Bing Copeland's shop down the street.

At Bing's, they found a receptive ear in Bing's lead shaper, Mike Eaton, who had a deep background in boat construction and was excited about the Campbell's use of hull theory on surfboards. He was with the young brothers' earnest presentation that they backed up with compelling footage.

"So Bing and I each made one," recalls Eaton. "I made a little mini-noserider—about six-six—and Bing made a board about the same size—a more pointed-nose thing. We had a fairly good-sized shop team at that time, and they rotated the new boards around. Everybody came back and said, 'Hey, these things work pretty good.'"

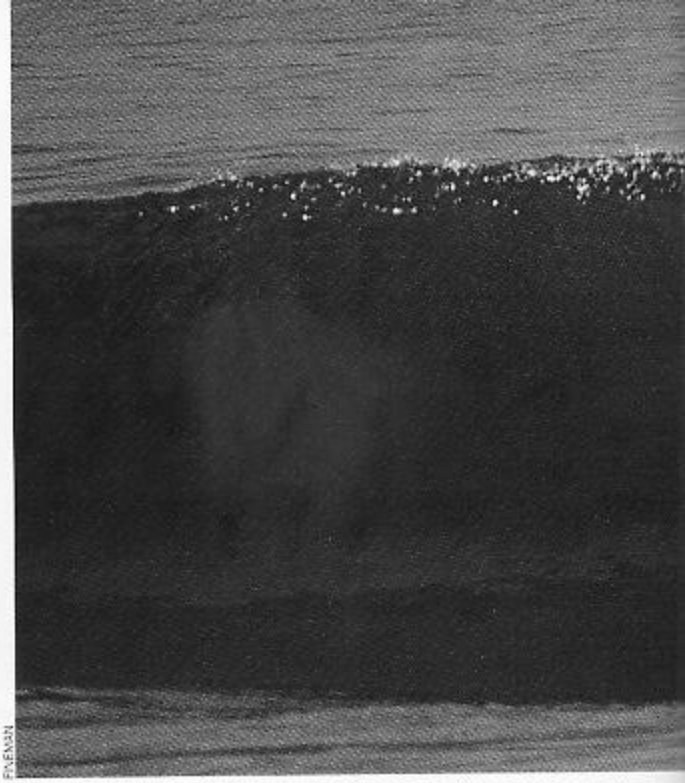
Within a week, Bing and the Campbells had inked a $2.00-a-board royalty deal. Bing licensed the Bonzer name and Eaton began parsing out ways to mass produce the newly-christened "Bing Bonzer." Bing, a savvy surf-industry veteran with a rock-solid reputation and a stellar cast of riders that included Dru Harrison and Rolf Aurness, saw the Bonzer's futuristic design as a way to capture back some of the shortboard market that had been seriously eroded by underground shapers like the Campbells.

"It became the in thing to have a no-name or garage-built board for the 'in group,'" says Bing, now retired in Baja California. "This made it difficult for the major manufacturers to compete due to the fact that the backyard builders could buy blanks and all the materials needed at basically the same cost as we paid, and they had no overhead."

That May, Eaton brought a small quiver of Bonzers over to the North Shore and took a 6'6" out in solid eight-foot Sunset. He found that after some initial difficulties paddling the small board into the waves, the board came alive with the increased Hawaiian juice. "...It went down the face with real nice control, real positive, and it had a lot of speed," said Eaton in *Surfer* shortly afterward. "You could really feel it over there."

Eaton, now converted, went up to his friend Jeff Hakman's house and pumped him on the design. The next day, the surf was still up and a skeptical Hakman reluctantly traded his 7'4" with Eaton. Eaton reports that Hakman was soon turning heads and drawing comments from the lineup gallery. "He was...hitting his turns really hard and getting a lot of drive out of the turns right up into the lip with the wave coming over him and going extremely fast. It was amazing on such a little board." After a three-hour session, Hakman announced he wanted one.

Based on the positive pro feedback, Bing and Eaton went public. Two major articles touting the design and the Campbells came out that fall in *Surfer* and *Surfing*. Full-page ads came out featuring The Bonzer and its makers. The Campbells enjoyed a brief stint as media stars, even though it brought them increased pressure from the locals back at home.



FOREMAN

The design gained momentum and the boards began to sell slowly. A major breakthrough came when Ian Cairns picked up the Bonzer design and won the 1973 Smirnoff contest in 10-foot Laniakea against Hakman. A few months earlier, Eaton sent the Bonzer specs down to Peter Townend, who was shaping for Good Time Surfboards on the Gold Coast along with Michael Peterson. MP was nonplussed with the double-barreled design.

"I was in the process of scooping out the concaves in the back when MP walked in," recalls Townend. "He looked across the shaping bay and he goes, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I'm making this board?' and he goes, 'You been smoking something?'"

The next year, however, Townend beat Peterson and Bruce Raymond on his self-shaped "Bonza" at the Newcastle Open Surf Titles (now the Mark Richards Newcastle Pro), at the time one of the three major Australian contests before the advent of the pro tour in 1976.

Shaun Tomson also rode a Bonzer briefly back in 1973 while completing his compulsory national service in the South African Defense Force. He won an Army surfing competition at Nahoon Reef in East London. "It was the first multi-fin board I owned that had speed and drive," says Tomson.

It's easy to veer toward conspiracy theories when charting out the rise and sudden fall of surfing's one-time design darling. Does the Bonzer fall under the category of government-suppressed technology, along with anti-gravity devices, solar energy, miracle cancer cures, and a car that will run on a glass of water? The *desaparecidos* of an organized surf-industry cartel purge of garage rebels? Or was it simply a case of as Duncan only half-jokingly calls, "The Campbell Curse?"

Probably not. More likely, it seems a combination of bad timing, hubris, and inertia of the surfboard industry that sent the Bonzer on a long, slow spiral toward popular irrelevancy.

STUBBING IT: Duncan Campbell on his 5'6", Point Mugu, 1973. "We were looking for shortboards that worked, that didn't bog."

Things went off course almost from the start with production issues. The Campbells have always maintained the Bonzer is a simple design, but that any deviation from a strict formula will create an inferior board. Fin placement is critical, as is the blending of the bottom concaves. Before Bing, Malcolm had always hand shaped each Bonzer bottom, and Mike Eaton's mechanized techniques produced much deeper concaves than the Campbells preferred. Still, Mike was stoked on the design and left the shaping bay open for discussion.

But when Bing sold out to G&S Surfboards of San Diego in late 1974, things went downhill quickly. After Bing left, the Campbells were subtly but firmly frozen out of the loop.

"There was no relationship with Larry Gordon or any real care of Bonzer quality control," says Duncan. "To G&S, Bonzers were just another line of boards that were being offered. They had no real understanding of how they worked."

And there was resistance growing from the shaping pits as well. Many G&S shop workers didn't ride the Bonzer and refused to put in the time and care needed to make them work properly. Inferior Bonzers were being released to the public under the Bing logo.

"They're hard to make, plain and simple," states Eaton, who went on to base a great deal of his business around the Bonzer configuration. "Not only are they harder to shape, they take more time. Every step along the way is more difficult. It's more difficult to laminate. It's more difficult to hot coat, right down the line, so they get put back to the end of the line."

Peter St. Pierre and the Moonlight Glassing Crew, however, believed in the Bonzer enough to work through the production problems in the late '80s. The Campbells credit Moonlight's high-quality for greatly increasing the credibility of the design.

The Campbells left G&S in 1975 under rancorous circumstances. In a pique of self-righteous bravado, they told Larry Gordon to keep the royalty checks. "We were sitting there watching our design being turned into a total popout," says Duncan. "If we took money from a design that was being made wrong and called a Bonzer, in our eyes it was dirty money."

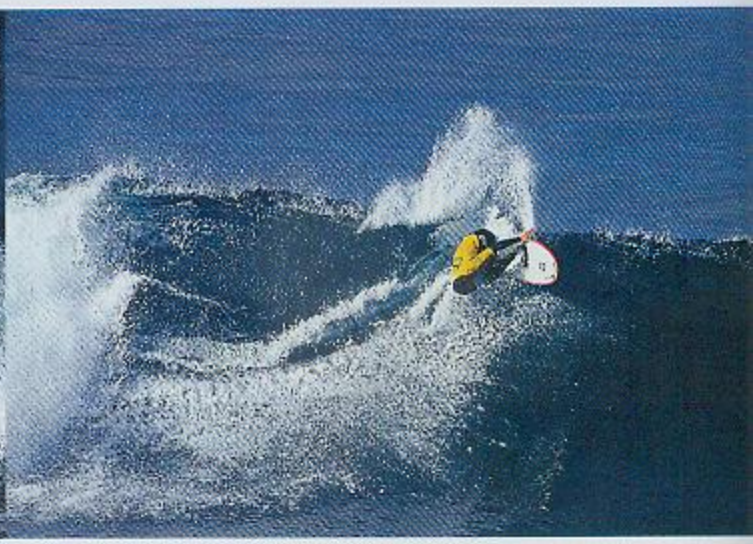
G&S, however, still had a legal license to the Bonzer name.

The word spread that the Bonzers were mostly hype. In an era still in the grip of self-conscious anti-commercialism, the Bonzer was quickly written off as a gimmick.

"The rap I got almost everywhere I went, including Australia in 1980, was: 'Yeah, those things really go fast down the line, but, you know, they just don't come off the top,' says Robert Moynier, who remains a Bonzer aficionado to this day. "Really fast down the line but they're just not loose enough—that kind of thing."

The Campbells, bolstered by their brief stint in the mainstream surfboard business, decided to keep making Bonzers, first with Mike Kelly of Emotion Surfboards and later under their own logo: Campbell Brothers and Bonzer Vehicles. They set up shop under Bill "Blinky" Hubina in the old Morey/Pope factory in Saticoy and cultivated a small but growing clientele of local Ventura-area surfers.

Things might have settled out over the next few years, but the Campbells hadn't counted on the twin-fin making an unexpected resurrection in the late '70s via Mark Richards. By 1978, *Surfer* magazine announced "The Attack Was Back," and Richards took surfing down a strange, squirrelly path for the next four years. By the time Simon Anderson appeared at the 1981 Sydney Coke Classic with his newly developed three-fin "Thruster," the Bonzer was well on the way to becoming surfing's premier footnote. Ironically the Bonzer, once championed as the Rosetta stone of the short-board revolution, was now considered a big, rigid dinosaur.



LAZARUS RISING: (left) Donovan on an early five-fin Bonzer, Blacks Beach, 2000. (right) Taylor Knox, more than intrigued with the holding power of the design.

"When twin-fins came in, board sizes dropped very radically," says Duncan. "People didn't take into consideration that twin-fins were being ridden in the five-ten to six-three range and that Bonzers were in the six-three to six-eight range. Immediately the comparison was made that twin fins were loose and Bonzers were stiff. That's what really killed the Bonzer."

With Simon Anderson winning three major contests in 1981 (Coke Surfabout, Bells, and The Pipeline Masters), the groundwork was laid for a tri-fin revolution. The Thruster was simple enough, basically a twin fin with a trailing fin attached for stability. No single fin could match it for speed or holding power. Further, it was being vetted by a champion professional surfer who had staked his career on it.

Simon was a potent package. Tall, ruggedly handsome, a shit-hot champion surfer, and a design innovator, Anderson possessed all the critical elements needed for the mainstream to finally get their heads around pro surfing. The novelty of Simon and his Thruster was packing some serious media heat.

The surfing press had a field day, and after some initial resistance, the surfing world quickly embraced the Thruster, to the Bonzer's discredit.

"...He [Simon] didn't need to point out that he was the one laughing now and that the three-finned surfboard (as opposed to that red herring, the Bonzer) was inevitably to be a design that would take its place alongside the twin fin as a legitimate progression in high-performance surfboard construction," wrote Paul Holmes in his 1981 *Surfer* profile of Anderson.

The Campbells quickly retorted via a letter to the editor ("He [Holmes] has neither the knowledge, experience, nor the understanding of the Bonzer past, present, or future to make the judgment he has.") Holmes' statement, however, set up a 15-year pattern of being subtly revised out of surfing's design timeline.

When Nat Young wrote his highly personalized, Aussie-centric *History of Surfing* in 1983, he included the Bonzer but credited Mike Eaton with its invention. The Campbell Brothers threatened suit to correct the error. They were included in the 1987 revised edition. But in 1996, Sam George neglected to include the Bonzer in his comprehensive *Surfer Magazine* "Evolution of Soul" surfboard timeline. The Campbells went ballistic. George published an extensive apology in the next issue, but the Campbells felt the damage was irreparable. "This became some sort of cosmic joke," says Duncan. "I felt like I'd died and gone to hell."

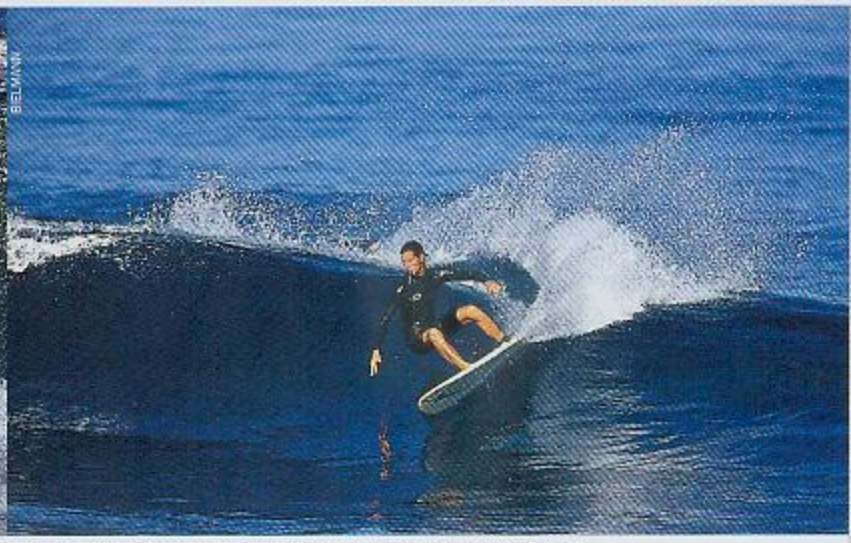
The Campbells developed the five-fin Bonzer in 1982. Their Oxnard childhood friend, Charlie Womack, who had evolved into a noted North Shore big-wave surfer, is credited with the five-fin's initial inspiration.

"We looked at how the board would release off the top and how we would modify our design to not only visually be new, but also be condusive to the Thruster approach, while maintaining the best characteristics of our original Bonzer," says Malcolm. "The five-fin was the result of solving problems through 'form following function.'"

Duncan, who had moved to the North Shore and opened the Café Haleiwa in 1982, realized he was living in ready-made surfboard testing range. Through the café connection, he lobbied several top-level pros to try the five-fin. Duncan himself spent the '80s surfing big Pipeline exclusively on Bonzers.

Response was good. Over the next six years, the Campbells garnered feedback from top-ranked pros like Cheyne Horan and Barton Lynch. The Campbells methodically dialed in the five-fin's envelope. Horan, in particular, absolutely destroyed Backdoor on a borrowed 5'11" five-fin in the winter of 1988. "Suddenly, there was a pro-driven vindication of the five-fin to give us the torch to say, 'Let's pursue this,'" says Duncan.

In 1988, they hooked up with top North Shore shaper Pat Rawson to commercially produce a hybrid Bonzer Thruster, thruster fins with Bonzer concaves, and the five-fin. Rawson (at that time voted "the best shaper in the world") gave them access to an impressive roster of riders, which included Tom Carroll, Bobby Owens, Richard Schmidt, Gary Elkerton, and Marty Thomas. Schmidt helped the cause by winning the Xcel Pro on a "Thruster Bonzer." Davey Miller, a Backdoor specialist,



(left) Davey Miller, setting up an inside tube at Backdoor. (right) Joel "I want to surf like Russ Short" Tudor, Rocky Point. (Compare to page 101.)

became a five-fin fanatic. Around this time, Mitch Thorsen became the first highly-ranked pro to seriously ride the five-fin.

"Thrusters, they're like training wheels. Once you start surfing on them, it's hard to break free from them because you train yourself to constantly pump the surfboard," says Miller, who grew up in Ventura and tried his first Bonzer at age 13. "I wasn't happy with Thrusters, and I remembered the first time I tried a five-fin. It just blasted through these sections and it felt like a renewal of power. All of a sudden the board took off by itself, and I felt like somebody was pulling me out of the tube. So I ordered a board from Malcolm."

Media interest in the Bonzer crept back and the Campbells readied themselves for a five-fin push via the September 1989 Action Sports Retailer show. Their ads, done in a bluff mock socialist-heroic tone, announced: "This time around, The Revolution will definitely be televised!!" The slogan, taken from a Captain Beefheart song, was "Grow Fins!"

Malcolm also teamed with shaper Max McDonald to incorporate McDonald's unique "Elevated Wing" rail design into the five-fin to produce the new "EB5" ("Elevated-Wing Bonzer Five-Fin"). The EB5 reportedly radically increased turning performance on larger boards. Interest was keen and the Campbells returned from the ASR show flush with new orders and a flurry of write-ups lauding "Design's Forgotten Men."

In the end, however, the Campbells were once again shunted into a corner. After initial support, Rawson began inexplicably pulling back from the five-fin. That alone wasn't enough to stall the five-fin revolution, but bad luck stepped in in 1991 in the form of Robert Kelly Slater. Slater's extraterrestrial North Shore performances that year on Al Merrick's Thrusters left everyone, including Duncan, absolutely stunned. Duncan did the math and called Malcolm.

"I said: 'We've got a long way to go. The way this kid rides Thrusters, there is no chance we could ever say these boards have any flaws. Nobody is ever going to believe that we have something better than this. It's over for quite a long time, so dig in. We've got a long haul.'"

By the mid-'90s, Duncan had returned to cooking and washing dishes full time at the café ("When you're a Campbell, you dig your share of ditches...") while maintaining a sideline graphic design business for surf-industry clients like Life's a Beach and Local Motion.

Malcolm, meanwhile, had taken a job as a production shaper for Al Merrick. Merrick respected Malcolm's achievements and opened doors for Malcolm's shaping career. Malcolm continued to shape Bonzers for a core clientele and showed other shapers such as Rusty and Merrick how to make the five-fin. The Bonzer's grassroots growth continued, with isolated cells of devoted Bonzer-heads thriving in California, Australia, and the UK.

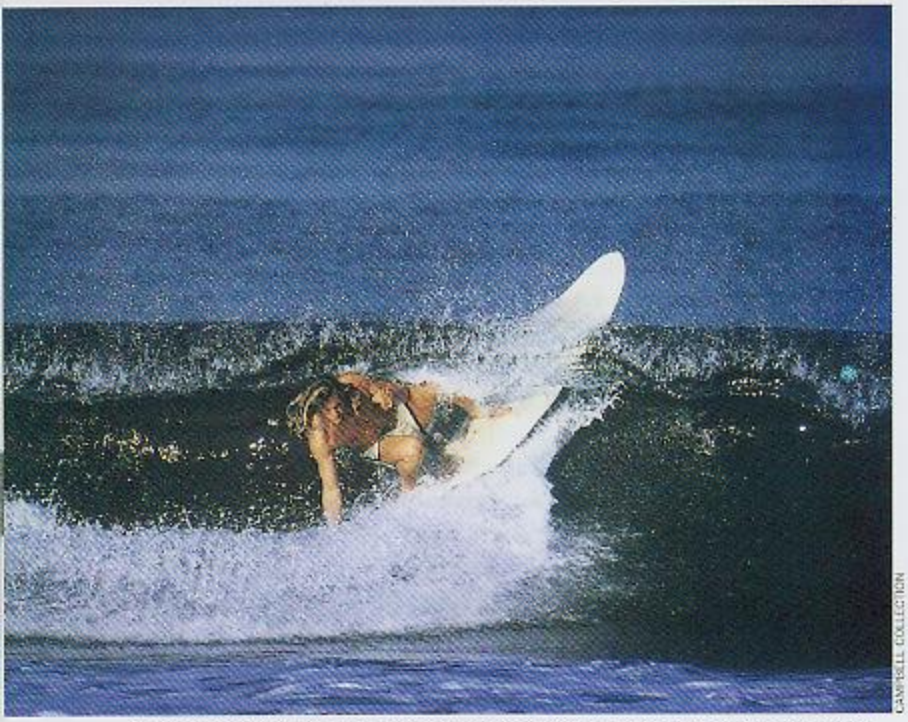
Over the years, Duncan struck up a friendship with ASP journeyman Brad Gerlach. Gerlach, the gregarious one-time Top-16 pro, tried a few of the five-fins but mostly just liked hanging out at Duncan's Sunset Point house with his family. He stayed with the Campbells for several North Shore winters, surviving on café food and Jacqie's homecooking during the lean, sponsor-thin years following his defection from the World Tour in 1991.

Gerlach in turn brought over a steady stream of hot, young California pros, which included Taylor Knox and the Malloys, all of whom had grown up in and around Oxnard with the Campbells as part of their local surfing folklore. Most of the others knew Duncan from the café but had no real understanding of the Campbell brothers' legacy. Duncan broke out the films and filled them in. Interest spiked.

"I think it's amazing that these guys developed this in 1971 and have all this documentation," says Knox, who includes a Bonzer in his repertoire and rents a room from Duncan each North Shore winter. Knox and Duncan have become good friends and enjoy a sardonic, ongoing banter: Taylor's pragmatic Pancho Sanza to Duncan's idealistic, grandiose Don Quixote: "I think they were just too mellow. They weren't out there beating their chest. They weren't in with the right cool people. I've seen shapers come in vogue with my circle of friends. Like,

this guy's so hot right now, and then a year later nobody's riding his boards, but everybody ordered one because one guy said it was hot. It's kind of strange and funny, and that's the way surfing is sometimes."

These days Duncan relishes a certain guarded optimism, and it shows in his manner. His often-vitriolic tirades against an incompetent surf press and *soi-disant* shaping gurus have abated considerably in the last few years. He senses an impending polar shift in the surfing world again. Diversity of the surfing demographic is at an unprecedented high, and everybody seems to be surfing everything these days. The café has proven a great success and has financed a comfortable North Shore lifestyle and his daughters' college education. His health is good, his marriage to his wife Jacqie strong, and he still surfs Laniakea on a regular basis. And with the Bonzer's inclusion in the newly published *Encyclopedia of Surfing*, the Bonzer appears to be vindicated—again.



CAMPBELL COLLECTION

BRING THE 'NARD: Malcolm, Oxnard Shores, 1976, on a Wayne Lynch template 6'4" egg. "We were never inspired by California surfboard design. All of our prompts came from Australia."

But beyond that he detects a certain balance in his personal cosmos. In spring 2001, while on location at Angourie for the filming of Chris Malloy's new film, *Shelter*, Duncan suddenly found himself standing in the doorway of a seamless two-way portal that connected the beginning, end, and future of the Campbells' 30-year saga in an instant.

The *Shelter* crew, consisting of Joel Tudor, Brad Gerlach, Mike Todd, Donovan Frankenreiter, Rob Machado, and others, had pitched up in a 100-year-old Byron Bay farmhouse to recreate an unabashed tribute to the spirit of Alby Falzon's idyllic 1971 *Morning of the Earth*. The Malloys invited Duncan to come down for the filming of the movie. Duncan being the restaurateur, was designated cook and in-house historian. It was his first trip. He saw the trip as a pilgrimage to the Campbells' "surfing spiritual" homeland, and he brought a "green" Bonzer Five to be used in the film.

But it was at Angourie that circumstance, myth, and vindication collided like random asteroids. Two years later, on the screened verandah of his house, Duncan relates his epiphany in one long, ecstatic rush.

"I remember coming up to Angourie. I got on the cell phone and just said, 'Taylor, the waves are good; get down here!' Taylor jammed two-and-a-half hours from the Gold Coast, non-stop, 100 miles an hour. He's flipping off the speed cameras—I'm sure he has warrants for his arrest—it's like he's Hunter S. Thompson. I look over the cliff from the parking lot and the first wave I see is Nat Young surfing Angourie. I can't believe this. This is the dream. It's *Morning of the Earth*, 1970. This is the mystical thing where past, present, and future all converge. So, Taylor is surfing Bonzers at Angourie. Rob is surfing five-fin eggs at Angourie. And Nat is out. My god, the whole thing is going down right in front of my eyes. They get the camera gear ready and we go down the cliff and Chris Malloy and I are setting the cameras up in an angle. I know the angle of Angourie and the whole *Morning of the Earth* thing, because we lived and breathed it. And you remember in *Morning of the Earth* when David Treloar shapes that board and he cuts down that path going through the trees to the jump-off rock? I'm watching this thing unfold. Taylor's running down the path. The angle is there. I'm going insane. I'm yelling, 'Roll the camera!' And just then, out of nowhere, David-Baddy-Treloar jumps out of the freakin' bushes, runs down with Taylor, and there it is. Neither one knows who the other is, so Treloar and Taylor are running on the same path, standing on that rock, jumping in the water together to ride. Taylor's got the five-fin, Treloar's got his classic David Treloar single-fin, and there it is. It's happening. oh...my...god!

"And they sat there by themselves and surfed pristine overhead Angourie. And I'm just living in this...dream...."

Duncan looks up, takes a long breath, puffs out his cheeks, and does an involuntary shudder at the memory. He looks out to the street and notes that the palms aren't moving. Sunset could be good if he foregoes his ritual afternoon nap.

"You know, it was my dad's understanding—because of his knowledge of not only historical design but in terms of just how things work—that the process is the journey. It's about learning about process, learning about commitment. If it matters—if it's truly good—is it good for that moment or is it good for all time? Which is it? You'd better find out, because why waste time?

"The thing is, like Malcolm once said, it's what we do. It's just what we do. Whether we get a break or not, it's what we do. It's bigger than surfing. We're not going to stop, because this is who and what we are. It's bigger than surfing, it's about being the dream." ✲

THE BROTHERS BONZER, 2004: "Interest seems to be on an upswing, but I don't get excited about it. We've seen all the ups and downs, and been through all of this before."