

Freeline Surf Shop Historical Blue Plaque Installation on 10/06/2021



Randy Gray cleaning off wall area above entry door.



Randy with the Blue Plaque



Randy measuring for Blue Plaque above front door



Don Berkneimer, Ishtar Carter, and Diane Berkneimer with Blue Plaque



Diane and Don Berkneimer below the installed Blue Plaque



Close up view of the Blue Plaque



Group photo with Kim Stoner, Ishtar, Randy, Diane, Don Iglesias, and Don.



Front view of building



John Mel standing in front of his former Surf Shop below the Freeline Blue Plaque



Don Iglesias, Boots McGhee, and John Mel under the Freeline Blue Plaque

Freeline Design Surf Shop interview with John Mel - by Don Iglesias

I grew up in Southern California, in Torrance. I surfed Haggerty's, and Torrance Beach. I graduated from Palos Verdes High School. I started surfing at 15 because there was a cute girl who was a surfer and I wanted to get to know her. My dad was a college teacher and encouraged me to attend the university. After high school, I went to UCSB, but I flunked out because I was surfing the whole time. I remember finals week had great waves. It turned out that the guy I surfed with was a genius and didn't need to study. He ended up designing the sails for sailboards.

When I finished school, I was going to be a teacher, but I ended up making boards. First, I was shaping boards in my parent's garage for friends and then Kim's parents' garage. Then I began building boards in a little shack in San Diego. I'd shape the boards in the middle of the fields and shaped with hand tools. I ended up going to junior college and then San Diego State.

I got a job working for Gordon and Smith in 1968. I managed to get Kim to marry me. We were married in 1968 at 22 and 20 years old. We were young and thought we knew everything. I figured I had a real job with Larry Gordon. I learned to shape on my own and then I learned about manufacturing from Larry. He was a smart businessman. When I was in high school, everyone wanted a G&S Mike Hynson Model. I went from garage shaping to a major surfboard brand. There were certain models, like the Midget Farrelly Stringer less, that we made a lot. We would use a router to rough shape following a template. Skip Frye was there and Paul Bulgari. At the same time, I also had my own surf shop at the pier. There was a surprise at the end of summer, when Larry announced that he was cutting back on the number of shapers for the wintertime. There were no east coast orders in winter, so he no longer needed as many shapers. He gave me my walking papers, so then Kim and I moved to the Northshore of Oahu. Kim did the early logo design for my boards. I was building boards in Mokuleia. We used to live on brown rice and lobster back in those days.

We came up to Santa Cruz for our honeymoon in a VW Bus, after getting married in Kim's parents' backyard. Her parents were a little concerned about her marrying a semi-employed surfboard builder. We grew up in the South Bay, so we didn't really know much about Santa Cruz. We heard about it from the Irons family in Torrance.

We moved and lived in Hawaii for about a year. I was building boards and Kim was selling Avon products. Peter was conceived in Hawaii. We then decided to head back to Santa Cruz. We heard there wasn't a whole lot of board builders in Santa Cruz, so in August 1969, we opened a shop, where Blown Out Wetsuits is now located (3055 Portola Drive, S.C.). We rented Diane's place, and we lived in a funky old house called "Big Pink."

We moved the shop, building boards on Orchard Street. It's all about location, so we moved into a house on 41st Avenue, with a show room that was 10' x 20'. We stayed there for six or seven years until the location on 41st Avenue came open at 877 41st Avenue, currently Dave Adams Hair Salon. On the side of the building for years was a big logo which Dave Dalton did for us. He asked me if he could do a mural and I shaped him a board in exchange, and he paid for the materials.

Recently, someone gave me one of my old knee boards which I had shaped in the early 1970s. We used to hang a sheet of fiberglass with acetone and flick colors with a brush. It came out looking like stars. The board is in pretty good shape and had a dished-out deck like Greenough's designs.

A friend of mine lost a board at pleasure point on a big day. Months later a girl came into the shop and said, "My dad is a fisherman, and he found this board floating out in the ocean."

My factory burned down about five years ago. I currently shape at the old Westcliff Surfboards shop. It's off Highway 1, as you leave town. It used to be Westcliff Surfboards and Bobby Katz and Michel Junod worked there. Currently, Joey Thomas and Vince Broglio shape there. I also have a shaping room, and it is five minutes from my house. Broglio does glassing for me. Presently, I split my time between Santa Cruz and Hanalei, as I have a condo there.

Freeline Design Surf Shop located in Santa Cruz County since 1969

Now entering its 54th year in business, Freeling Design Surf Shop first opened on July 4th, 1969 in a spot (3055 Portola Dr.) now occupied by Blown Out Wetsuits and Surf Shack. After several locations, the Freeline Shop finally settled at 821 41st Ave. A family owned business since the beginning, Freeline was run by husband-and-wife team, John and Kim Mel. In 2017, the next generation, son Peter and wife, Tara, took over operations. His grandson, John Jr., is an upcoming young surfer following in his fathers and grandfathers surfing legacy.

Interview and History edits by Don Iglesias and Kim Stoner



Freeline

Santa Cruz

Early Freeline Surf Shop Logo



Freeline 2nd Shop location on 41st Ave. business card



FREELINE DESIGN
santa cruz

effective 10-15-77

FREELINE DESIGN SURFBOARDS
877 41 st. AAVE.
SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA
(408) 476-2950
OPEN 10-5 DAILY

SHOP
476-9972

PRICE LIST

SURFBOARDS: 6'0 to 7'0.....	\$130.00	
7'1" to 8'0.....	\$140.00	<i>\$150.00</i>
8'1" to 9'0.....	\$150.00	<i>4.00</i>
9'1" to 10'.....	\$160.00	<i>5.00</i>
<i>8'10" + DOUBLE 8 OZ TOP & BOTTOM CLEAR TOP - LIGHT GREEN BOTTOM</i>		
<i>SQUARE TAIL FULL ROSE CONCAVE BOTTOM 3 DECKS + STONOR</i>		
KNEEBOARDS: Up to 5'6".....	\$110.00	
5'6" to 6'0.....	\$120.00	

Base price includes a clear layup on both sides, a glass-on fin made from glass, wood, or foam, Lite or Superlite Clark foam blank with either a spruce or redwood stringer, double glass lamination on the deck, single on the bottom in any combination of 4 oz., 6 oz., or 8 oz. cloth. Stock or Custom.

AVAILABLE EXTRAS: Fin box and fin.....	\$5.00
Leash loop or plug.....	\$4.00
Twin fins.....	\$5.00
Extra stringers.....	\$5.00 ea.
COLOR WORK: One side color and pinline.....	\$5.00
Two sides color and pinline.....	\$8.00
Extra colors or pinline.....	\$2.00 ea.
Airbrush spray designs.....	\$10.00

Freeline Design Price List - 1977

Freeline Design

Sold By Kim Date 9-10-78 1978

Name Kim

Address Stoner

REG. NO.	AMT. REC'D	ACCT. FWD.
1	8'10" custom	
2	Freeline leashboard	150.00
3	2 color film	8.00
4	leash loop	4.00
5	2 straps 5'	10.00
6		
7		172.00
8	tax	10.32
9		
10		182.32
11	dep	20.32
12		
13		
14	Bal.	162.00

58201 Rediform

Sold By Kim Date 9/15 1978

Name KIM STONER

Address _____

REG. NO.	AMT. REC'D	ACCT. FWD.
1	Received	
2		
3		
4	162.00	
5		9/9/78
6	Towards	
7	new stick	
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14	40	

58201 Rediform

1978 Freeline Design receipts for Kim Stoner's new 8' 10 surfboard from 1977 Price list notes.

Photos and image credits from Kim Stoner, Don Iglesias, John Mel, and Boots McGhee.