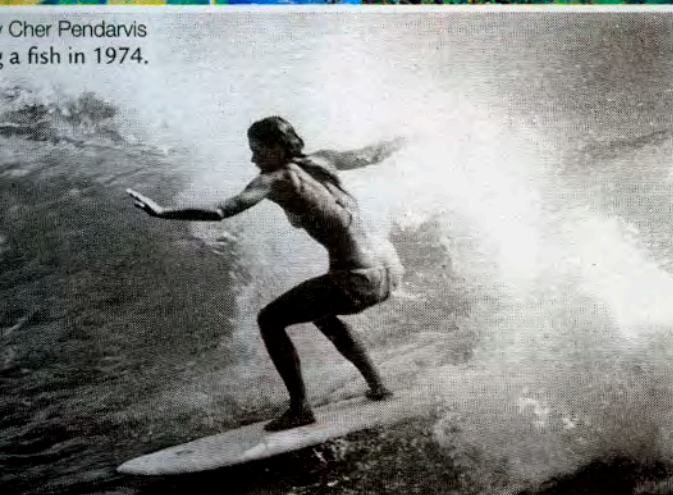


Photo: Brooke Johnson
Cher Pendarvis.



Cher Pendarvis
riding a fish in 1974.



Interview with Cher Pendarvis

Brooke Johnson

Cher Pendarvis lives in the epicenter of the fish design has befriended and surfed with some of the best fish shapers and riders in the world (in my opinion) including—but not limited to—Steve Pendarvis, Skip Frye, Steve Lis, Larry Gephart, Jeff Ching, Bunker Spreckels, Stan Pleskunas and Rich Pavel.

In addition, I don't think there's another woman in the world who has ridden more fish templates on a regular basis than she has. We met through mutual friends, and all flattery aside, my admiration swelled through the course of our initial phone conversations. I've never met another female surfer with more of a comprehensive handle on surfboard design than Pendarvis. Pendarvis is a talented surfer and artist, and I immediately thought of her as my first subject for this column.

DEEP: You worked out of Tony Channin's shop at one point right? What were your job responsibilities?

CP: Tony was my sponsor beginning in 1974. I surfed on the Channin team for over 15 years and we did a lot of creative R & D with boards. Mike Casey was head-shaper at Channin for most of those years. I also designed logos for Channin and Tony's other brands. During a few busy summers, I also assisted Sam Cody with color work and helped out around the shop.

DEEP: Your husband, Steve, is a brilliant shaper and I've been lucky enough to visit your home and studio workspace and peep the boards that encompass your collective quiver. What board out of that lot have you been riding most lately?

CP: Lately I have been riding my new 5'10" Biofoam keel fin PendoFlex fish. Steve and I had fun designing the board and its special wood fins. I painted a juvenile Garibaldi on the bottom.

DEEP: You're an accomplished artist and have written several books (nine) on the topic. I've seen some of your paintings, on canvas and foam, as well as some of your photographs. What is your favorite medium?

CP: I love working in pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, pastels and acrylics and various surfaces. When painting boards I prefer to paint on the foam using acrylics. I also love digital painting and illustration and enjoy photography.

DEEP: You're actively participating in some really interesting projects. Can you tell me about your involvement in the Groundswell Society and/or Hydrodynamica?

CP: I worked on the Groundswell Society SASIC (Surfing Arts, Science and Issues Conference) at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in 2007 and 2008. I was event chair in 2008 and this year's topic was "Surfers and the Southern Ocean." It was an honor to work with the esteemed oceanographer Dr. Walter Munk, Groundswell director Glenn Hening and other wonderful people at these conferences.

With Hydrodynamica, I assisted RK with production, facilitated many interviews, did photography and researched history, archival footage and archival photography.

DEEP: Do you enjoy riding new boards and different templates?

Yes, all kinds of shapes, anything we can dream up! Right now my go-to quiver is the 5'10" PendoFlex keel fin fish (Baby Garibaldi), 6'0" Stevie Lis fish (Little Sunflower), 5'4" chambered balsa keel fin fish built with Mike Casey (Firecracker), 6'5" high aspect fish (Angelfish), 6'8" Skipper keel fish (Mama Garibaldi), 6'10" chambered balsa high aspect fish built with Mike Casey (Leopard Spots, homage to Geppy), 7'0" swallowtail tri-fin PendoFlex (Aeoteroa Ulua Southern Hemi), 7'5" swallowtail tri-fin PendoFlex (Ulua California gun), and 7'7" Skipper fish Simmons high aspect twin (LT Peliglide).

In the mid-60s, I rode longboards. Faves were a Weber Standard Speed and later a Surfboards Hawaii Model A, then, with groups of friends in O.B. and P.L. in the late '60s we began experimenting, making and riding our own boards ... for instance mini-guns, eggs and Bunker-inspired edge boards.

It was a very creative time and design was changing rapidly. I remember Stevie riding his first fish kneeboards and the insane accelerating speed and big carving cutties he was doing. Jeff Ching inspired me with his speed and flowing style when he first stood up on Stevie's kneeboard. This was circa 1969-1970 and friends began building standup fish.

Inspired by Jeff and Larry's surfing, I was passionate to have my own fish, so Thomas Threinen and I had fun designing a down-railed 5'2" edge board fish and Thomas shaped it. The little board was extremely fast, fun and free. This was the first board that I built fins for and glassed myself. What a speedy little board it was! There are many more stories about early fish surfing that we can share later. For more on Pendarvis visit

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