

Surfer tells his Vietnam story in new documentary

By WALLACE BAINÉ

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Saturday's a big day for Santa Cruz longboard surfer and board shaper Pat Farley. As a community activist helping to preserve the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum, he's excited about the Museum's evening fundraiser, a new surf film narrated by "Apocalypse Now" screenwriter John Milius.

On top of that, he's in the film.

On top of that, the film is actually about him.

The film is called "Between the Lines," and it's a documentary focused on the parallel of two surfers during the Vietnam War. One — Farley — volunteered for the war effort and began his tour of duty in Vietnam in 1967. The other, Brant Page, went on the run to avoid the draft, ending up in Hawaii pursued by the FBI. Director Ty Ponder put the stories of the two men side by side to explore what they had in



Pat Farley volunteered for active duty in Vietnam and served a year and a day in country from 1967 to 1968.

common despite their divergent paths.

Farley has told his story before. His 1994 autobiography "Surfing to Saigon" tells the tale of a Santa Cruz surf kid wrenched from the beaches of his hometown to the jungles of South Vietnam. He volunteered for the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Santa Cruzan Pat Farley, whose experience in Vietnam is documented in 'Between the Lines,' has devoted his life to surfing.

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military out of fatalism; he sensed he was going to get drafted anyway. Once there, he said, he began to see how surfing allowed him to adapt to combat situations.

"Surfers are in tune with the environment in ways that (others are not)," said Farley who's also a filmmaker whose film "Cowell's and the New Millennium" chronicled the history of surfing in Santa Cruz. "You paddle out to places where you have to be aware of what's happening around you. It was how I was able to adapt to Vietnam."

Farley said that his first and primary duty as part of a combat unit in Vietnam was to "walk the point," to be in the lead of the unit as it goes on patrol missions. It's a dangerous job, usually reserved for low-status grunts. But surfing, said Farley, made him really good at walking the point. He was able to hear, see and perceive things using skills that he developed while out on his board in the ocean.

"They had me walking the point from the first or second day I was there, and I turned out to be good at it."

Of course, Farley came

from a Santa Cruz surf culture radically different that the culture of today. Wet suits were rare to nonexistent. There were no steps down to the water, as there are today at breaks from Pleasure Point to Steamer Lane. And almost everyone was using the bigger and much heavier longboard.

"I would camp up there on the bluffs at Four Mile Beach, just living up there, not seeing a soul for days, surfing all day long."

When he returned from Vietnam, Farley said he was ostracized by friends polarized by the war and by the stateside protests against it.

"They thought I was crazy," he said. "I just picked up and went surfing at night time so I would have to deal with them."

IF YOU GO 'BETWEEN THE LINES'

PRESENTED BY: The Santa Cruz Surfing Club Preservations Society as a benefit for the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum.

WHEN: Saturday, 7 p.m.

WHERE: The Rio Theatre, 1205 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz.

TICKETS: \$10.

DETAILS: www.riotheatre.com