



Pat Farley

The year was 1967 and a young Patrick Farley found himself wading through knee-high rice paddies as a Ranger in the Me Kong. “We couldn’t take our boots off for weeks at a time”, Pat says, “because you never knew when you were gonna have to move out and fight for your life”. As a result, most of the recruits in his squadron had terrible cases of “Jungle Rot”, a foot fungus that runs rampant in moist environments. One day Farley was out sloshing through the sticky mud when, before he knew it, he was peering down the wrong end of a rocket launcher pointed at his head. As he fell to the ground and felt the projectile go whizzing past his ear, he managed to fire off a few rounds which found their target and ironically marked the beginning of what would become a lucrative business venture for this blond-haired California kid. “I ran over to the guy, who was on the ground wounded, and before I could do anything an [American] gunship came up behind us and wasted him. That’s when I noticed that his feet were roughly the same size as mine so I took his sandals (which were made from rubber tire treads) and put them on right there as bullets whizzed around me”. Now, 30 years later, Pat Farley makes a living crafting leather sandals, shaping surfboards, and freelance writing about his

memories of the Vietnam era (he won the Santa Cruz writer of the year award in 1994 for his book, *Surfing to Saigon*). I visited Pat at his home recently - sitting on his redwood deck next to a temporary shaping bay, listening to the faint sound of the Rivermouth crashing in the distance, he enthralled me with stories about growing up in Santa Cruz and eventually making a livelihood out of his favorite pastime. He moved from the Salinas area when he was 16 and remembers living up the coast for a year or so at a place his brother turned him on to called “four-mile”: “It was pretty sketchy back then [surfing up North] because I rarely had anybody to surf with and legropes had not been invented yet”. So instead, Pat banded together with a bunch of other local kids and, calling themselves “The Rivermouth Rats”, would hang out at the beach all day and shred the perfect sandbars of the Rivermouth and Harbor entrance on their stubby little 5’8” twinzers.

Through the years, Pat Farley has embarked on numerous business endeavors but his sandal crafting has remained a consistent money-maker for over two decades. He also owned and managed *Santa Cruz’n* and later, *Seabright Surf Shop*, and more recently began shaping custom longboards at very affordable prices. If you are interested in a pair of killer leather sandals, a copy of his book (which was just selected as a reading requirement for a class on Vietnam at West Point Academy), or a new custom shape at a good price **call this guy** - you’ll be as stoked as he will.

-Brady Teufel

Photo: Annie Sakamoto