

# SkateBoarder

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## RAMPS '79

Homegrown Vert

## LONNIE TOFT

Exploring Peripheral Planes

## MILPITAS PRO

N. Cal comes of Age

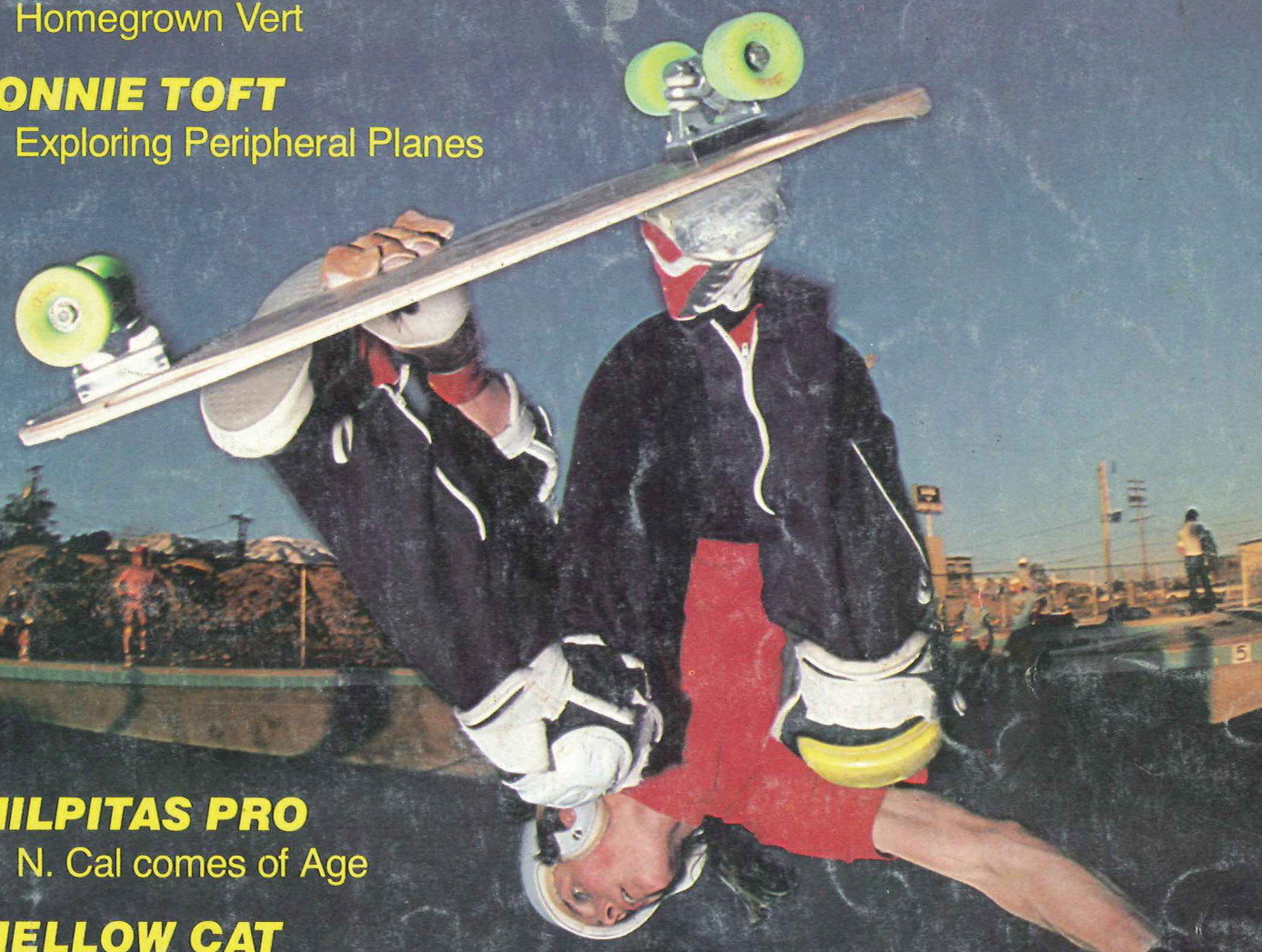
## MELLOW CAT

Skate Truth Revealed

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Hot Unknowns

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SkateBoarder Interview:

# LONNIE TOFT

by B. Schwartz

*Lonnie Toft will be 21 this May. That would make him 17 at the '75 Cal State Northridge Contest, where I first remember seeing him skate. Mustacheless, thinner and his hair considerably longer, Lonnie was already full on into eight wheeling as an art form, as well as more conventional modes of skating. I can't remember offhand how he placed there in the freestyle event at Northridge, but he was a trip to watch. Since then, Lonnie has generated the same type of response from hundreds, perhaps thousands of unsuspecting observers. A member of the original Sims and Pepsi teams, he has performed numerous demos in Southern California and across the U.S. and Canada. Lonnie's influence has led to the proliferation of the "outrageous" eight wheeler in Texas, on the East Coast and to points beyond. His association with the Skiboard, a surf/skate type vehicle for the snow, has likewise sparked much curious enthusiasm. And, as some of you have pointed out, Lonnie turned on more than a few of his skate brethren to the advantages of the fuller deck (8" and over) long before the present wide board craze took off. It should have been no surprise, then, when we at SKATEBOARDER began to notice that, with the exception of Mellow Cat, Lonnie has been receiving as many inquiries and fan letters as any other skater, including Alva. This was not only something of a compliment for him, but a gage for us in deciding just who might give a timely and interesting interview. On a recent Spring afternoon in a stark office cubicle in San Juan Capistrano, Lonnie proved us right.*

*Skiboard layback, Mt. High powder.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CRAIG FINEMAN



**You've been around skating for quite a while now. When did you first get into it?**

I've been skateboarding for about 10 years off and on. Let's see, I actually started in 1964. I did it in 1964 and a little bit in 1965. I started skating a lot right before the second generation, when the Urethane wheel came out. I've been skateboarding heavily for about 10 years off and on.

**Were you living in Oxnard all that time?**

I've been living up in that area for about 9 years or so.

**Is that where you first got into surfing?**

Yeah, pretty much. I surfed a little bit before that, but not too much.

**Skating in the Oxnard/Ventura area has always been surf oriented. Do you feel that's true of your style?**

I don't know; like, every place is influenced by some local. You know, each skater throws in his own techniques and creates his own style. But I guess my style kind of comes from surfing.

**Isn't a lot of longboarding associated with your area?**

A lot of longboards are ridden up in Santa Barbara. Like, Tom Sims used to ride boards 44 inches long. But now most of the boards are 30 and 33 inches long.

**In Ventura, Steve Monahan, Richard Vanderwick and Steve Miller used to be hot on longboards.**

Yeah, they were and they just kind of faded out.

**So who are the hot locals in that area now?**

John Stevenson is an outrageous rubberman. Jack Waterman and Tom Fain are hot. Gordie Lienemann is incredible in freestyle. There are some more guys but I can't think of their names now. Gotta give them credit.

**Did the park [The Endless Wave] have a lot to do with that?**

Oh yeah. Before that there weren't too many skateboarders in Oxnard, or there were but they just freestyled and they had to drive south to skate vertical. And they didn't like that. But when the park opened, there were just tons of skateboarders who turned up.

**They previously had to drive to L.A. or San Diego Counties to ride pools or bowls?**

Yes. Well, there was occasionally a backyard pool in Oxnard, but not too often.

**You started off as a freestyler. Weren't you freestyling on your eight wheeler in '74 or '75?**

Yes.

**So how did your eight wheeler evolve?**

Well, my brother Dan used to ride in '64 and '65 and then in about '73 or so, and he just mentioned the idea to me. I was in my garage making a new skateboard, and he mentioned something about eight wheel skateboards and I just cut out a design, made a skateboard. I cut it out by hand, went to the swap meet and got eight clay wheels and some roller skates, set the board up and tried it and it worked. Later, when I had access to better wood, the boards started to become more functional and I started riding them in swimming pools.

I can keep myself enthused with the sport.

**What are the disadvantages?**

Well, when I set up an eight wheeler, I get a ruler and measure the exact middle, make a right angle and set my trucks so they're all perfectly set at right angles and then they work pretty good. The disadvantage is if you get one truck a little bit off, the board won't work as well. Instead of going straight, it's going to kind of go to the side, you know. And other disadvantages would be in really tight swimming pools, it's really hard to maneuver it. But in a wide open bowl, you can be riding on the right rail on a



Five out.

**When did you start riding them on vertical?**

In about '75.

**Did you find it was more difficult or easier than riding a conventional board?**

It was a lot more difficult. Like, in a swimming pool it took a lot of practice; but after a lot of practice, I started to be able to ride them and maneuver them almost like a regular skateboard. And pull off more radical maneuvers than you could on a regular skateboard.

**What are the advantages?**

The advantage was that it was just different, you know. The advantage was that it kept me enthused in the sport. Riding just a conventional skateboard gets kind of boring sometimes, so if I ride something different once in a while,

backside grind and then transfer over to the left rail and do a frontside off the lip and hang seven wheels out and then come down and do some kind of slide or something on the other wall.

**Are you still riding an eight wheeler?**

Yes. I still ride them.

**How much of the time do you ride an eight wheeler as opposed to a four wheeler?**

Well, in freestyle almost half as much and in pools I ride them even more, but not quite as much as I ride my regular board. I also have an eight wheeler kneeboard that I made that is about 20 inches wide and about 35 inches long. It's kind of like surfing; it's good in reservoirs. It's just another kind of skateboard.



Rad rollback, Oxnard.



#### Did you ever kneeboard surf?

No. I just stand-up surf. But I ride a surf ski. You sit on them and you paddle it like a kayak. Merv Larson invented them. Larson's up in Santa Barbara. But the kneeboard eight wheeler is just a bizarre idea. I thought I'd try it and it worked, you know. There are not too many kneeboard skateboards and this is functional and it worked.

#### We've found that a lot of people have got into eight wheelers as a result of seeing you ride them. There are supposed to be some hot eight wheeler riders in Texas and Florida and on the East Coast.

Yes. Pineapple and Dennis Martinez ride them in freestyle. Like, Pineapple got first place riding one [Oceanside '78]. He didn't ride it the whole time but he performed some tricks on it. And I have a couple of other friends like Gordie Lienemann and Jack Waterman who ride them really well in swimming pools. Gordie rides them incredibly well in freestyle. Also Willie Winkles in Canada.

#### You also ride a conventional board and you've been into wide four wheelers for quite awhile. Conventional skateboards, except wider. Was that kind of a spin-off from the eight wheeler?

Well, before my eight wheeler I was riding fairly wide boards.

#### Back in '75?

Yes. I was riding a hand-cut plywood board with some gravel and resin on the deck for traction. I had the same board for a couple of years and it was about eight inches wide, something like that.

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#### On wide boards:

*“It feels like surfing and that's where it's at.”*

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Everybody else was riding boards about six or seven inches wide. And my boards were blunt: they had a round nose and a square tail. Those that everyone else was riding had pointed noses and diamond tails, which I found to be unfunctional because the pointed nose in surfing is made for off-shore winds and the diamond tail is for certain types of turns and skateboarding is a whole different sport — there are no off-shore winds in skateboarding and your foot needs a lot of area. I feel really comfortable on a really wide board because it's a lot more stable and you have a lot more control. You can't get as good a turn on a really narrow board as you can on a wide board.

#### So how long a board are you riding now?

At the present time I'm riding a 32 by 11 inch. More of a square shape. I mean the nose is rounded but it's really blunt shaped.

#### For a maximum amount of surface area?

Yes. My feet just fit perfectly and it's extremely functional. And I'll probably come out with a longer eight wheeler also.

#### Where do you think board widths will settle in 1979?

Well, it's supposed to settle at ten; but if the trucks get wider and the wheels get bigger around and wider, I think it has to make a wider board more functional. And more like surfing. That's what everyone's saying. It feels like surfing and that's where it's at.

#### So you think maybe the wide board is drawing skateboarding back to surfing, back to its roots?

Yes. The basic styles are changing and they're getting more and more like surfing. That's what most of the hot riders are saying. They're just trying to relate skateboarding to surfing.

#### While taking advantage of the increased stability?

Yes, definitely. Like when the wide boards came out, maneuvers were getting more and more radical within a few months. And now new tricks are being learned.

#### There are a few new trucks coming out for the wide boards. What do you use?

I'm using FulTracks with Copers and extenders to make the truck a little bit wider. They seem to work excellent.

#### What about wheels?

I use Sims Snake wheels. Conical wheels are really fast.

#### Are there special wheels that work best with the wider boards?

Yes. With a really wide wheel and a wide board, it's kind of like riding on the edge of the wheel. Whereas if you have a little bit narrower wheel that's kind of tall, it's a little bit more functional, at