

Basic Detail Report

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Title

Tom Zahn, Greg Noll and Mike Bright with their surf and paddle boards

Date

c 1956

Primary Maker

Fred Lang

Medium

Photograph

Dimensions

Overall: 562 × 458 mm

Name

Print

History

Of all the racing paddle boards, this is one of the most historically significant with great provenance. Used by Greg Noll, as part of the USA team that participated in the demonstration sports during the 1956 Olympics held in Melbourne Australia. The Hawaiian and Californian lifeguards also competed at the International and Australian Surf Championship Carnival at Torquay Beach in November 1956. The visiting lifeguards could turn and cut across the face of a wave on their malibus, an impossible feat on the five metre longboards (known as toothpicks) still used by Australian surfers. These demonstrations ushered in a new era in Australian surfing. Noll recalled “we hit ‘em like a comet...took’ em from the horse and buggy straight to the Porsche”. Some Australians were quick to buy the ‘hot dog’ surfboards from the visiting Americans. Bob Evans bought a 10-ft gun-style board from Greg Noll, Peter Clare bought a Quigg designed board, Gordon Woods bought a 10-ft Velzy /Jacobs board and Bob Pike purchased Tom Zahn’s 9’6” Malibu. Within weeks board makers in Sydney and Victoria were producing similar balsawood boards. Compact, light and easy to transport, the new surfboards transformed the way Australians surfed. Board riders could at last venture further away from familiar surf club beaches to try larger waves. This also speaks to the relationship between surf lifesaving and surfing/beach culture. This paddle board was previously owned by a retired California life guard, it has been verified and authenticated by Greg Noll prior to this auction. When asked 55 years on Greg could not remember definitively who built the paddle board, but he thinks it may have been Dale Velzy- the innovative surfboard designer and builder from California who designed the prototype for the long board/Malibu boards.