



{12/50}



ZIGGY ALBERTS

Leap of faith, shot by the author

The camera I took this photo with came everywhere with me and lived its best life, before the salt eventually corroded all its working parts. It wasn't waterproof but spent many days in the sea. It was so rugged and reliable and I took some of my favourite photos with it, this being among them.

It was a balmy afternoon on the coast and I had asked my friend Chris to climb up and jump into this shallow area of water between

two sizeable boulders. He had little room for error – at best, it was about two metres deep – but Chris was down for it. I yelled at him to jump and as he did, a seagull flew into frame. I pressed the shutter and wondered if I'd got them both in the shot. When I got the roll of film developed I was in disbelief at how freaking lucky I'd been. The seagull had just flown into view and Chris's knees were still above the shadows cast on the rocks.

I still love taking photos, but it's remained a hobby that comes after my first loves, surfing and playing music. I love the commitment of film – you have one shot at capturing the moment – and you're never entirely sure what you're going to get. This photo represents a few of those things for me; jumping into the unknown and taking chances. Not knowing what's going to work out, but giving it a go anyway.



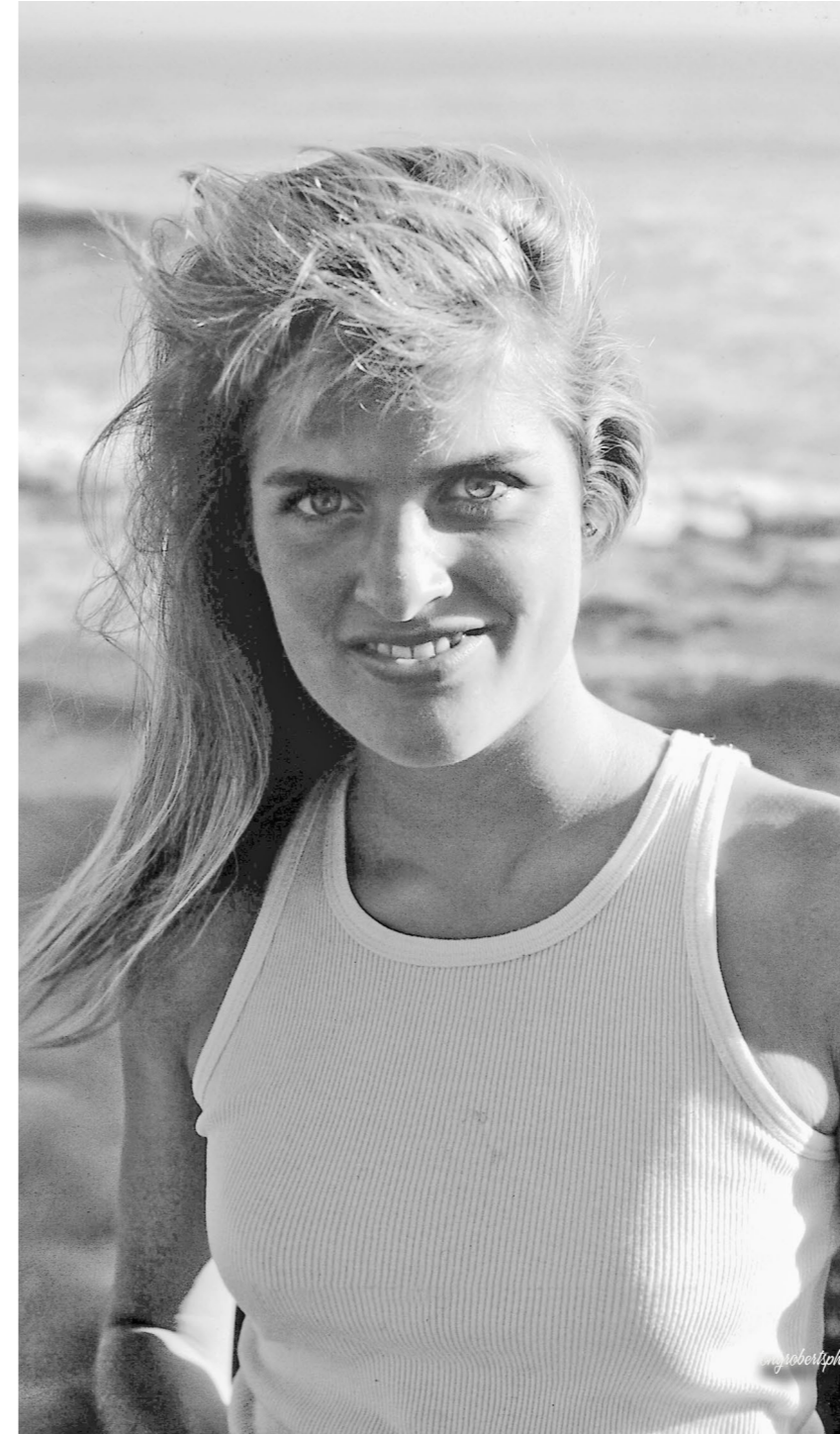
MARA WOLFORD

13, shot by Tony Roberts

A few years ago, photographer and childhood friend, Tony Roberts, sent me this photo. He'd found it going through boxes of his photos he'd stored years ago, before leaving Santa Cruz for Costa Rica. The photo took me aback. I stared at it for the good part of an hour, thinking back to that 13-year-old version of myself.

We'd been down at the beach at 38th Avenue, Pleasure Point. I had run away from home a few months earlier and was living with Shannon and Anna Vacca, twin sisters who had briefly been my neighbours over in Silicon Valley. They hated living in the Valley and the moment they turned 18 and graduated high school, they bailed to Santa Cruz. They surfed at a time that few women did, played beach volleyball, introduced me to the Surf Punks, Oingo Boingo, Midnight Oil, California Coolers and pretty much everything else that was cool in life. I wanted to be just like them.

My situation at home had been shitty – you know, those parents who should divorce but don't. Instead, they cheat, lie, yell, drink too much, cry and heave plates at each other. I'd been thrown out of school for non-attendance a few months earlier. They'd caught me out after I'd written a letter saying I had mononucleosis and couldn't attend classes except for exams. The plan was to send homework home with my neighbour who was in my grade, and she would bring it back completed. The system worked for months on end. I earned straight A's and went to school once a week. The rest of the time was spent skating ramps and bowls, hanging out with boys a lot older than me, trying to find a ride with older kids to the beach to learn to surf, sucking cheap beer, snorting biker speed and smoking clove cigarettes. The gig was up when my swim team won Western US champs. Our team photo was published on the front page of the Mercury News and all my teachers saw it. I never missed practice between 4.30 and



7.00pm and had landed two Top 16 times in breaststroke at the championships, so I couldn't be all that ill. My parents couldn't even get angry with me, my ploy was so good, but the school expelled me – which was in fact exactly what I wanted. I packed a bag and bailed in the night on a Greyhound bus to Santa Cruz to rejoin my older "sisters".

I found work clearing tables in a newly-opened restaurant located in a strange, old ballroom on Pacific Garden Mall, the historical centre of the town. My first boss was a cool guy from a wealthy family from Oaxaca, Mexico who would line me up rails of coke, then ask me to get naked with him, and not get upset when I refused. He liked me better for it. So did his wife. Not that carnal pleasure was foreign to me at that point: I had already had several joyous and fulfilling encounters with men that would serve as the basis for a life-long adoration of the masculine gender. One of them is still my lover today, 35 years later. I reckon that's pretty cool. The restaurant is still open and thriving, some of the best food in town.

This photo was taken in the summer of 1983. We'd walked the stairs up the cliff and

or become the impetus in most of my relationships and marriages, and sometimes the reason for the end of them.

I hadn't yet imagined the exaltation and pure joy the ocean would offer me. Nor had I any concept of the sheer terror or the injuries she would subject me to. I didn't know about the friendships that would last a lifetime that surfing would offer me. I hadn't conceived that one day I would fail some of those friends.

I hadn't considered nursing my mother to her death yet. I hadn't imagined that a man that once loved and adored me could be violent, spiteful or cruel because he couldn't control me. I had no concept of the damage failed relationships could cause. I hadn't yet envisioned watching the body of my best friend and lover pushed into an incinerator in a crematorium in an equatorial island nation, or that the devastation that loss would cause could be nearly enough to send me over the edge. I hadn't really suffered yet, although I thought that I understood quite a bit. I can see it in my confident, adolescent face.

I had no idea of the joy, completeness and willing sacrifices that my first-born and only son would bring to me, but he's definitely

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TR was at the top. I think one of the twins was dating him. He snapped that photo and I remember I was embarrassed by the fact I wasn't wearing a bra. That's raspberry bubblegum sticking out between my back teeth. I was very pleased with myself because I'd just learnt that I would be able to enter university that autumn, having aced the high school equivalency exam and my SATs. I would start my higher education at 14 – fuck high school – and life was about to really begin.

I had no idea where that life would take me, but I was already certain that both fun and surfing would be a major part of it. I hadn't guessed yet that the surf would actually become a defining factor. I didn't know yet that surfing would take me overseas, teach me several languages,

already a glimmer in my eye in this photo. He's already present. I think I had already understood who he would be. His eyes – 14 years old today as I write this – hold the same glimmer of unknown potential and expectation that most of what is to come in life will be outrageously fun. I can see in his eyes that he loves and respects women in the same way I do men, which will make life very rich for him. I had no way to conceive of the pleasure, pride, worry and fear of loss I'd know when I watch him prepare his spear gun and swim far out to sea, probably just like my mother did the sole time she actually watched me surf. I know his eyes see everything with avid anticipation, devoid of all consideration that anything could ever go wrong, just like mine did when I was 13.