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Star Surfing Co. closes after 30 laid-back years

by John Gregory

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Last week Glenn Paculba scanned the few remaining boxes, surfboards and fixtures in his shop as he recalled the highlights of more than 30 years of catering to the surfing needs of a beach community.

Paculba, owner of the iconic Star Surfing Company at 4652 Mission Blvd., said he will miss seeing his customers.

“Hard thing to do — after 30 years,” he said. “A lot of people have come in here in the last week and we’ve cried together and reminisced together. It’s really a cool feeling.”

Paculba’s shop was another victim of the tough economy. “For the last three years the pulse of the economy was really felt in the beach area ... definitely on the mom and pop businesses at the beach,” he said.

Paculba and his first wife, Leslie, opened the shop at a location across the street in 1979. He moved the business to its present location 11 years ago, he said.

Paculba was originally an interior designer, but became frustrated with having to depend on unreliable tradespeople, he said.

“I knew how to surf and I knew retail, so I started looking for a space,” he said. “We opened right in the nick of time because it was pretty unsophisticated at that time and we got in on the big change in surfing.”

Being in on the surge of surfing’s popularity in the '80s and '90s was one of the highlights, he said. He also recalled founding the Pacific Beach Surf Club and serving as its first president in 1994. The club sponsored surf events such as the Summer Classic every June and the World Famous contest, with proceeds from such events going to charities such as the Big Sister League, Muscular Dystrophy Association and a battered women’s shelter.

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Paculba pointed to a large piece of wood with rows of faded pictures attached.

“Those pictures go back to 1981 when we first started taking pictures of the great people who have come to my surf shop — either customers or surf stars or families or just tourists that make me feel good,” he said. “We used to have flags hanging from tourists that sent me their flags. So the thing I will really miss are the great people who have come through my doors.”

He said he does not have any solid plans yet, but was just trying to close his shop last week.

Paculba, a surfer for 49 years, had a message for his customers: “It’s been a great 30 years. I’ll miss them, but I’m moving on to a new chapter of my life,” he said. “I will continue surfing. I will see them around the neighborhood, but I will really miss the daily interaction with all the great people that came to my shop.”

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