

**Martha Alvarez, MMC**

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**From:** Gary McAulay <gary.mcaulay@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 2, 2023 2:30 PM  
**To:** List - City Council  
**Cc:** City Manager  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] for historical accuracy, please reconsider Velzy plaque

**EXTERNAL EMAIL:** Do not click links or open attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Council –

Dale Velzy was a legendary surfer and innovative board shaper, a colorful character who made major contributions to surfing. He deserves recognition for the influence he had on the sport.

However, there are problems with the 1950 claim.

Despite the Velzy plaque having advanced to the Consent Calendar, I would be remiss if I did not urge you to reconsider this plaque that so brazenly, without substantiation, makes the grandiose claim that Dale Velzy “Opened the World’s first known surf shop on this site in 1950.”

An old City business license register was found. Velzy does not appear in it. But, it shows that on Dec 7, 1949, one James Sinicrope paid for his business license at 117 MB Blvd, where he owned a shoe repair store called Jimmie’s Shoatorium. In other words, the shoe repair store that Velzy claimed to replace later was occupying the address in 1950. Velzy, age 22, was residing with his mother on Loma Drive in Hermosa Beach (US Census April 6 1950). He shaped boards in his mother’s garage (Holmes, Dale Velzy is Hawk). Less than five months later, in late August of 1950, Velzy received a draft notice. He was inducted into the Army and served briefly, having fallen off a truck, injuring his back. He was recovering in the hospital when his unit was deployed overseas. (Holmes). Velzy received a medical discharge sometime in 1951.

But, scratch 1950.

The only known photo of Velzy’s “shop,” the photo to be used on the plaque, was taken in 1952. It shows no store identifying signage. The 1952 City directory shows 117 MBB as “vacant.” Possibly Velzy had not moved in when the directory was compiled. Or maybe he simply did not have a business license, and so was not listed in the business directory.

Based on a boast by Velzy, the plaque relies on conflating “work shop” with “surf shop” with “retail shop.” Actually, there were other commercial surfboard manufacturers. There were other shapers “taking orders” out of their workshops. So, what makes Velzy’s workshop a “surf shop,” different from others? His unverified claim that he got a City license and “California’s first State Board of Equalization resale (sales tax) number in the category of surfboards.” This, despite having no surfboards on display, no counter, cash register, phone, or signage; “I didn’t want people to notice that much,” he said, hoping to avoid a city inspector. When an inspector did show up, Velzy told him that he only made boards “for the guys down at the club,”

Nobody has come forward with any proof that, in Manhattan Beach, Velzy operated anything more than a workshop to make boards for friends and surfers that came to him. This was not a “surf shop” as is commonly understood. Nobody has shown proof that Velzy ever licensed, advertised, or operated his

MB workshop as a legitimate retail surf shop, or that he had a state resale number, as he claimed.

To assert the “World’s First Known Surf Shop” requires 1) a license, or photos or advertising of an actual store, and 2) a verifiable date, not a range of dates. Without some documenting proof, Velzy’s claim is empty bragging, a legend of conflicting stories relying on emotion and popular appeal. It is an unsubstantiated myth. Whether such a debate is just harmless fun, a friendly rivalry, or not, this should not be cast in bronze and placed on the public right-of-way with the City’s endorsement. It is not history.

The 1950 date is contradicted by City records. It is an easy enough fix, but I would suggest a return to more defensible language:

“Iconic Velzy surfboard created by surfing and shaping legend Dale “Hawk” Velzy, developed and sold at this location in 1952.”

Respectfully,  
Gary D. McAulay