

The Shack is history ^{6/4/1998}

Longtime La Jolla landmark finally gets city's recognition.

**By Oscar Guerra
Light Staff Writer**

The city of San Diego's Historical Site Board last Thursday voted to designate the unassuming, four-post, palm frond-roofed shrine to the surf gods, otherwise known as The Shack at Windansea, a Historical Site.

"(The Shack) is the quintessential embodiment of the surfing culture associated worldwide with Southern California and, at 50 years of age, the oldest continuously used shelter of its kind on the West Coast," was the way the board agenda described it.

Some of the Windansea locals might say it's an awesome event.

Hans Newman, Melinda Merryweather and Tony Ciani proposed the designation.

Newman, a surfer and past president of the Windansea Surf Club, took over unofficial maintenance of the Shack in 1986.

"In 1986, David Coy had blueprints made in case it ever got

damaged, we would be able to replace it in kind," Newman said.

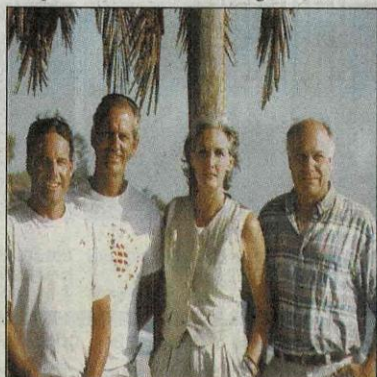
When it was all but destroyed by rough weather on Dec. 1, there were thoughts by some that The Shack could not be rebuilt without a Coastal Development Permit.

"It's been kind of a gray area, with it being city property," Newman said.

On Sunday, Dec. 7, the doubts gave way to action by about 10 locals, including Newman and Merryweather, who rebuilt it.

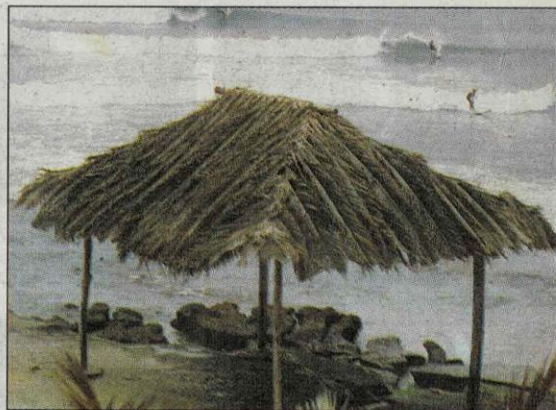
Since then, like the many surfing locals who frequent Windansea, The Shack has been riding a wave of support.

With its 50th anniversary, it was able to qualify for the Historical Site



Left to right, Lewis Beacham, Kevin Weber, Melinda Merryweather and Tony Ciani said they were glad to hear the city designate The Shack an historical landmark.

Photo/Don Balch



Familiar to many locals and tourists as The Shack, the palm frond covered structure was recognized by the city as being of historical significance. Photo/Don Balch

consideration.

"I'm very grateful that this very long process is over," Newman said. Historical Site Board member Mike Tudory was just a great help, he added.

Merryweather, who was once married to surfing legend and board designer Mike Hynson of "The Endless Summer" surf movie fame, has been visiting The Shack since she was 12.

Ciani is a surfer and a former lifeguard who led efforts to restore the Mission Beach Roller Coaster.

The designation gives the responsibility of maintenance and upkeep to the trio, and assures The Shack will survive whatever nature or mankind throws its way.

It will also be put on a list of

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city and state historical sites. "The legacy lives on," Merryweather said. "I'm elated, without a doubt. It is a huge, important part of Southern California history, and surfing history.

"To many people, it's the church at Windansea Beach," Merryweather said.

Shack fans are hoping to get the structure considered for a National Historic Site.

Newman wants to see it taken a step further and next would like to get a National

Historical designation not just for The Shack, but for all of Windansea Beach.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's March-April issue featured a photo of Newman at The Shack.

"We'd like to get the whole beach designated," Newman said. "It may be one of La Jolla's last natural areas left."

Since first being erected in 1947 by surfers returning from World War II, The Shack has been a multi-purpose facility, to be sure.

It was initially used as a

place to shelter "planks," the early long, wooden surfboards that could damage in the sun.

Over the years, its has become the stuff of legends.

It has served as the unofficial clubhouse of the Windansea Surf Club and other locals in their endless search for the perfect wave.

It has played host to weddings, surf competitions, luaus, romantic interludes, occasional overnight guests, and survived a torching by a disgruntled former boyfriend who lost his girl to a surfer. Or so the legend goes. ■