Surfer Magazine

Tandems at the national surfing championships: The winners were neither ho-daddies nor gremmies

New Wave

John Severson blames it on the music. "Ten years ago," said the 30-year-old publisher of Surfer Magazine last week, "surfers were looked up to as good, clean-cut athletes. Around 1960 trouble started with the surfing music. The music really has nothing to do with surfing, but it gave us a bad name—and a bad element."

In the sub-society of Surfdom, the bad element includes the long-locked, peroxide-blond boys ("ho-daddies") and the bikini-clad shorebound girls ("gremmies") who adore Dick Dale's surfing music and for whom the real kicks take place on the sand, not the surf.

To change this image, Severson helped organize the first annual U.S. Invitational Surfing Championships at Oceanside, Calif. Last week, 25 finalists happily rode towering waves while struggling through a series of challenges such as the "hanging tens" (putting all ten toes over the tip of the surfboard), "Hawaiian sit-outs" (crouching on the back of the surfboard and maneuvering its nose out of the wave), and "shoulder swans" (riding on the shoulder of a partner while in a swan position).

Top of the World: The senior men's champ was a muscular 19-year-old freshman at El Camino College in Los Angeles with the Hollywood-sounding name of Rick Irons; the women's crown went to Linda Benson, 19, a sturdy 5-foot 1-inch blonde; and the tandem (mixed doubles) to Mike Doyle and Linda Merrill, who last summer won surfing's current top prize—the Makaha championship in Hawaii. The U.S.'s Best All-Around Surfer award was won by 17-year-old Mark Martinson, a crew-cut Long Beach high-school senior who may go on to Long Beach State College. "Surfing," said Martinson, in a moment of euphoria, "is like climbing up to the top of the world and then falling off. There's nothing better." His prize is a round-trip ticket to Hawaii where he will compete in next summer's Makaha meet.

Severson hopes to match future U.S. winners with the champions of Hawaii, Australia, and other surfing countries in a watery world series that will supersede the Makaha competition. "We hope to make all kinds of leagues," he said enthusiastically. "A, B, and C classes, and even a Little League."

Severson had another reason for enthusiasm; the "bad element" may be abandoning the surfboards. At last week's meet, guitarists were strumming folk songs instead of "Surf City," and most of the 3,000 spectators were relatively quiet, modestly dressed, and more intent on the waves than the *wahines* (girls). "We're getting rid of the ho-dads," explained 15-year-old Lynni Fox of Capistrano Beach, Calif., whose tandem finished third in a field of three. "They act that way for status, and now that they're losing all their status they're dropping surfing entirely. The people who enjoy it as a true, athletic competition are taking over. And as for music—Joan Baez is better than Dick Dale."

Invaders

"The right to be alone," wrote U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis in 1928, "[is] the most comprehensive of rights, and the right most valued by civilized men."

Civilized men, of course, still value their privacy. But in what is rapidly becoming an Orwellian world of "electronic espionage," the precious right to be alone is under siege. The invaders are silent, invisible, and pervasive. Each day, for example, an estimated 10,000 tiny, electronic transmitters or "bugs"—some as small as quarters—eavesdrop on the conversation of the U.S. citizen at home, at work, and at play. Meanwhile, closed-circuit TV cameras silently observe his wife's buying habits at the supermarket and his children's study habits at school. Such snooping, says an ex-FBI agent, "is growing so fast that it scares me."

Indeed, the rapid erosion of privacy is feared by many people. Only last month New York City's Association of the Bar announced that it will soon publish the results of an intensive two-year study on the subject. On a less judicial level, creeping surveillance has triggered two books scheduled for publication this month: "The Naked Society" by Vance Packard *(369 pages. David McKay Co. $5.95)* and "The Privacy Invaders" by Myron Brenton *(256 pages. Coward-McCann, Inc., $4.95)*.

Master Files: All three studies will point out that privacy is being invaded on many fronts. As Packard says, "Most American adults with jobs, cars, houses, charge accounts, insurance, and military or government records can assume that they are the subject of at least one specific dossier, more probably of several." The central index of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, for example, contains approximately 7.5 million dossiers, of which nearly 250,000 contain adverse information. More intimately, there is the growing practice by personnel administrators of giving lie-detector tests, and the intensive probing of the mind by psychological testing, truth drugs, and hypnosis.

Brenton, himself a former private investigator, describes the eyes that peer through the glass of the "Goldfish Age": "There are general investigative agencies, insurance inspectors, credit checkers, auto repossessors, shopping services, security consultants, missing persons bureaus, patent infringement specialists, bill collectors, divorce detectives, and industrial pirates."

Yet most observers agree that Big Brother's most insidious senses are his electronic eyes and ears. The explosion in snoop technology almost invites inquisitiveness: an FM radio transmitter, the size of a lump of sugar, can broadcast conversations to radio receivers a

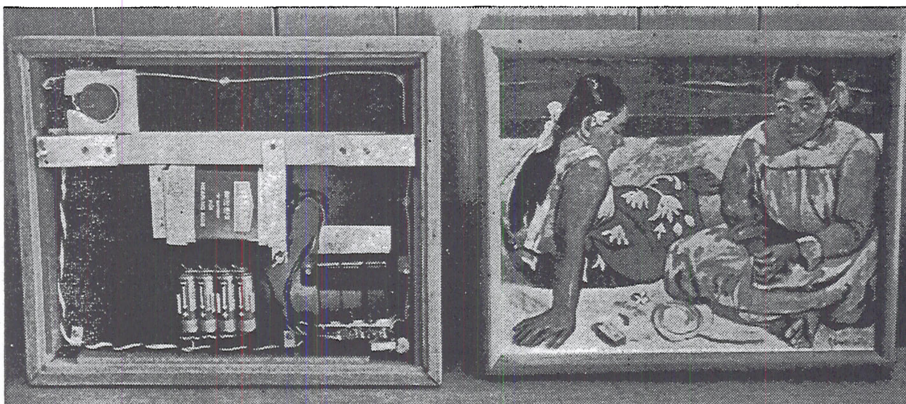
block away; a tiny "spike microphone" driven into a wall can pick up every whisper in an adjoining room; an infrared camera, triggered by a photoelectric cell, can take pictures in pitch blackness. There are as many ways of bugging as there are situations to bug. Transmitters and microphones can be sewn into suits, capped on teeth by a dentist, and concealed in lipstick tubes, tie clips, pens, cigarette lighters, buttons, and even Martini olives. "A guy can stop me on the street," says one Detroit investigator, "start a conversation, and the whole thing is recorded a block away."

The largest customer of the 30 U.S. firms that manufacture such devices is the government; in Washington, D.C., it is assumed that almost every phone line is tapped—particularly in such agencies as the FBI, CIA, Secret Service, State and Defense Departments. When the staff director of one major Congressional committee wants to make a confidential call, he places the call from a pay phone at Union Station. (In addition to bugs in the Capitol, there are some 5,000 devices around Washington called "snooper buttons" that allow secretaries to come on the line silently. Other customers of electronic surveillance firms are foreign governments, suspicious wives, auto and dress manufacturers interested in their competition's new designs, and even athletic teams.

Playboy Protection: The snooper network is held together by a variety of motives. Business, faced with the fact that U.S. white-collar workers steal about $4 million a day, can hardly be blamed for keeping an electronic eye on stores, offices, banks, and assembly lines. In apartment projects, closed-circuit TV monitors protect unescorted women (while exposing lobby lovers and back-from-the-party squabblers in the elevator). The intruders may even promote another form of privacy: some Playboy Clubs train TV cameras on outside doors, while receivers in the bar alert patrons to unwelcome visitors.

But increasing closed-circuit surveillance of the labor force is triggering some understandable howls. C.N. Kanis, director of the California Association of Employers, in San Francisco, says: "We feel it is a sneaking thing to use undercover methods to ferret out what an employe does or thinks." And last week, workers at a Chevrolet assembly plant in Baltimore voted to strike if the management went ahead with its plans to install a closed-circuit TV system.

'Counter-Intrusion': On the executive level, bugging is big business. Firms have been known to pay an agency $500 a day to bug a rival's board room or design department. Bob Jeffries, president of Police Systems, Inc., in Costa Mesa, Calif., says: "When a man asks how he could lose the million-dollar bid by $21.38, there is usually just one answer—he was bugged." In fact, the practice has become so widespread that, like the anti-missile-missile race, it has produced the field of "counter-intrusion," or, more graphically, "de-bugging." Before crucial meetings, it is almost common practice for firms to hire "communications security" experts to sweep the conference room with an electronic detection device that quickly ferrets out bugs hidden inside picture frames or sewn into upholstery. The motto of Los Angeles' Argus Investigation and Security Research Co., is: "A security sweep of your innermost offices should be made as regularly as a medical check." One counter-intrusion expert says: "The most embarrassing thing is when you find one of your own bugs."



Newsweek—Tony Rollo

Concealed transmitter: Behind the Gauguin, someone is listening

Nor is the practice confined to the professionals. Because of the proliferation of devices—and the simplicity of technique—more and more basement-workshop espionage operations are appearing in the U.S. A Detroit investigator tells of a 17-year-old boy who had developed a device to cut through the busy signal on a telephone and was eavesdropping on his girl friend's calls. Other amateurs are using complex directional microphones to pick up conversations in neighbors' homes. And for the less talented, there are the investigative firms whose advertisements resemble those on the backs of comic books. "Be a Spy," advises one. "Special to our customers—the world's only correspondence course in wiretapping and bugging—$22.50."

Unfortunately, the legal aspects of such operations are so confusing that they amount almost to permissiveness. One Federal judge has described U.S. privacy laws as resembling "a haystack in a hurricane." There are no laws against selling snooping devices and very few against their use; the Federal Communications Act does not prohibit wiretapping but forbids the disclosure of wiretapping information, at risk of a $10,000 fine and one year in jail. Yet to prove disclosure is difficult, so private agencies can operate almost at will.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy is pushing legislation to ban all wiretapping, except when authorized by court order in such "telephone" crimes as extortion or kidnaping and, with the Attorney General's permission, in matters of national security. But once wiretapping is legalized in some cases, there will be constant pressure to permit it to invade almost every area.

Dilemma: Moreover, as snooping devices become more refined, they are bound to intrude even more upon the free functioning of innocent individuals. But what of the not-so-innocent? One Justice Department official says: "Wiretapping and bugging are invasions of privacy, but the activities of corrupt officials and racketeers are invasions of the rights of citizens."

It has been said that Americans are a people who dread the thought of being alone; if so, perhaps they have invited the invasion of their privacy and welcomed being a subject for the "candid camera." Still, as Vance Packard says, "The Founding Fathers of the U.S.A. contemplated a society in which a man or woman could have a great deal of latitude about choosing his style of living . . . Today . . . the idea that one can—or should try to—lead a private, unfettered life is losing much of its force."

Perhaps the idea of privacy has become confused with the idea of loneliness. But to be a private person is simply to be oneself, not a passive object for information collectors, malign or benign. What, then, can one do to protect himself? A modest beginning is suggested by a sociologist at Columbia University: "Everyone cannot, of course, electronically sweep his home and office every day. But the next time a credit agency calls to inquire about a neighbor, or one is asked to fill out a questionnaire on his sex life, he can simply say what no one seems to say anymore: 'It's none of your business'."