



Glen E. Friedman

Photos **Glen E. Friedman**

Right place, right time. Not once, not twice.... From skateboarding to punk rock to hip-hop, Friedman has been around more than once. He follows his heart with the intention of getting something that hasn't been captured on film before. They can try and rewrite history, but they can't change the photo.

Steve Olson: Where'd you grow up?

Glen E. Friedman: In northern New Jersey, just across from Manhattan, and West Los Angeles. I moved to California when I was eight or nine. I went to Bellagio [Elementary], and then I went to Kenter Canyon, and then I went to Paul Revere Junior High.

SO: Bullshit! Fuck off. You're not giving me a hat trick right now!

GEF: I swear to God—if I believed in one. That's why I know everyone. The schools that everyone skated at, I actually went to.

SO: Did you skate Bellagio when you were a little kid?

GEF: Nope. This was before that was really happening.

SO: But did you see the banks?

GEF: Yeah, we saw the banks. I remember playing up there.

SO: Why Bellagio and then Kenter?

GEF: Because we moved from Bel Air to Brentwood.

SO: And in Brentwood you lived close to Kenter?

GEF: I actually lived closer to Revere. When I stayed home from school I could hear the class bells ringing.

SO: You could hear the Z-Boys skating? Just kidding. [Laughs] But did you see them skating when you were a kid at Kenter?

GEF: No. When I was a kid at Kenter, I got my first Makaha, one of those red boards, and I skated on the sidewalk outside the school, slalom-ing. I never thought to ride the banks inside the school. Also because you had clay wheels. Unless you were really talented, you couldn't push off on the top with those hard wheels; you'd slide right down the bank. That might've been '72. But of course by '74... '75 we were riding the banks. Then I went to Revere, and as soon as I was in there, Cadillac Wheels came out, and all of a sudden I'm going back to my elementary school to skate the

banks. I would just hang out there every weekend, all the time. 'cause that was my spot anyways. I was a local before they were locals.

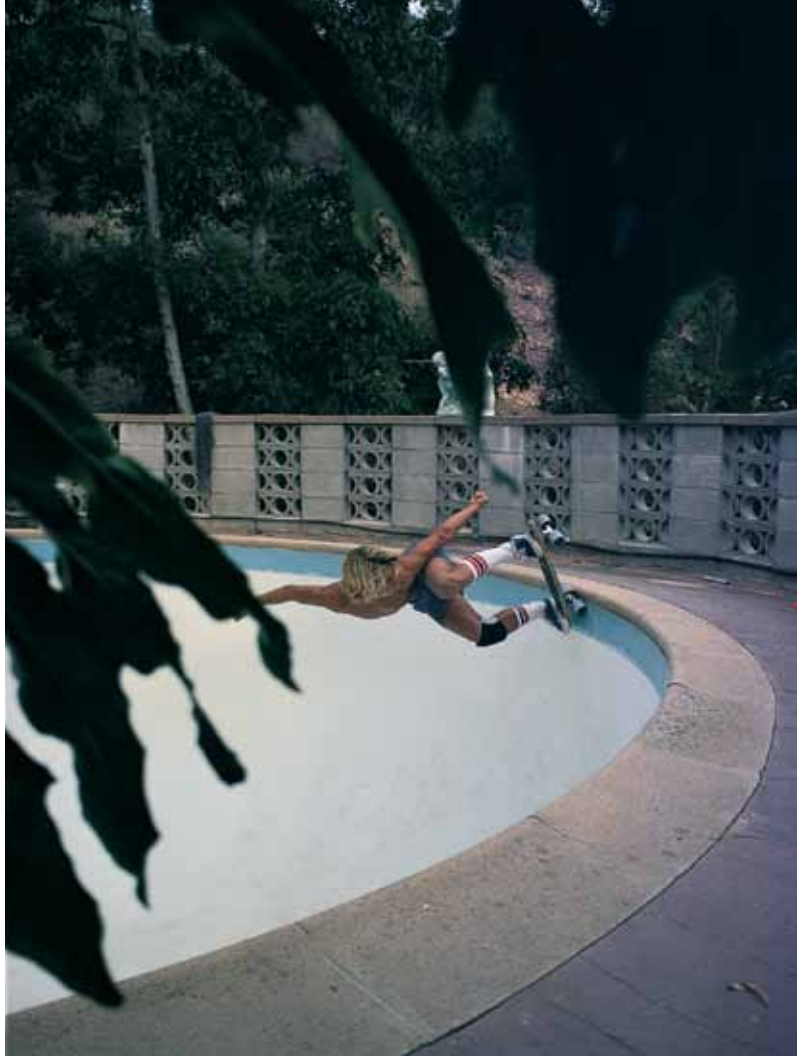
By the time I was 13 I was down at Kenter or Revere or in Santa Monica or Venice, hanging out with that crew of people. And a lot of them thought of me as a "rich kid" 'cause I came from Brentwood, even though I didn't even fit in there. My mom had moved there 'cause she remarried a lawyer.

I was younger than most of them. [Stacy] Peralta knows me since I was 12, probably. [Tony] Alva knows me since I was 13, and Jay [Adams] too. The other thing was that when the cops would come, I would know where to hide before anyone else, because I lived in the neighborhood. I could ditch into someone's house.

SO: The only time I rode Kenter we had to run from the cops.

GEF: It was great skating Kenter, because I actually could ride it pretty good, 'cause it was just a nice long bank. I mean Alva shredded there, Stacy shredded there—he rode it more like a wave than anyone. Watch that footage from FreeWheelin', Peralta carving on the bank, doing those quick turns. That's something I tried to emulate for my whole life, but I could never do it like Stacy.

Someone's mom drove a bunch of us to Carlsbad, the first skate park ever, and we came back that day just fucking high. I was so fuckin' pumped. And so we're at Kenter, it's around three o'clock in the afternoon, and I'm telling you, I was passing Peralta on the bank. Twenty minutes later the board slid out from under me and I broke my arm. That was like '76, in the summer, and I think I had just taken the first photos that I ever got published.





SO: Let's talk about that for a second.

GEF: I showed the photos to [C.R.] Stecyk [III]. I didn't know it was him; I just knew he worked for SkateBoarder magazine. He was stoked. And Stacy comes by and sees them at my mom's house, he and Jay, and he's like, "Glen, you should send these down to the magazine. These are really good." And it was the first time I'd ever shot skate photos with a real 35mm camera. Next day, I disguised my voice, I called [Warren] Bolster on the phone, and I said [deep voice], "I have these pictures and they're really important to me and I need to get them back if I send them to you. I was told I need to send originals." He said, "Don't worry. We'll send them back to you." There was no Fed-Ex back then; you had to put it in the regular mail. A couple months later I get a tear sheet

in the mail with a check for \$30, and my mind was just blown. And then everything just blows up from that point on. Those pictures were shot with a borrowed camera. I didn't even have a real 35mm camera yet.

SO: Why did you decide to borrow the camera at this point?

GEF: Because I found this unripped pool. Someone knew that I knew the Z-Boys and wanted to tell me, 'cause they wanted to be cool. They wanted to get some points with me. He said, "I know this house, it's under construction...." I never told him I was going there 'cause he was a fuckin' kook. I scoped it out myself, I went back, told myself, I gotta get a real camera. I'd been shooting skate photos with a [Kodak] Pocket Instamatic for at least six months, maybe a year. So I found this pool and I said, "Now's my

chance to really get something in the mag." In SkateBoarder magazine at the front it said if you're gonna contribute stuff, you gotta send color slides or black-and-white prints. I didn't realize that, but it really wasn't that in focus with a Pocket Instamatic, 'cause you couldn't focus it and it was a slow shutter speed. But I had taken Photography 1 with the Instamatic. I got a D in the Spring semester, and I was published in SkateBoarder with a photo I took in the Fall semester. I learned all the basics, that's all anyone really needs. If you got the eye you'll get the shot, as long as you got the basics. If you don't have the eye, no matter how much schooling you get, you'll rarely get a great shot.

SO: So when do you get your own camera?

GEF: Pretty soon after that. My first published photo was taken in September or October of '76. The magazine tear sheet I get in January '77, and that's when the magazine comes out. It's the April '77 issue. I borrowed that camera, and then within a month of shooting those photos, I got my own camera. I had the lens that came with it, the 50mm lens, and a cheap "screw-on fisheye." Then for my birthday, after my first published photo, my stepfather got me a used Takumar fisheye—the real deal. I went to that pool on Maple Drive with Alva, and I got that picture of him giving me the middle finger. A print of that is in the permanent collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. That lens was the one that Bolster was using, and it was what they were using for surfing.

SO: So what had older guys that were shooting photos in the same genre as you? Bolster and Stecyk? I don't know how you feel about Bolster, but he was pushing shit, and Stecyk was pushing shit.

GEF: I was very lucky that those guys

saw me and saw the film that I was turning in. Part of it has me believing that they saw this kid doing this and they just stepped out of the way, almost, and they just let me fucking go and they gave me ideas and tutoring.

SO: Like mentorship?

GEF: Kind of, but really? No. Stecyk would only harass me. I didn't know him then.

SO: How would he harass you?

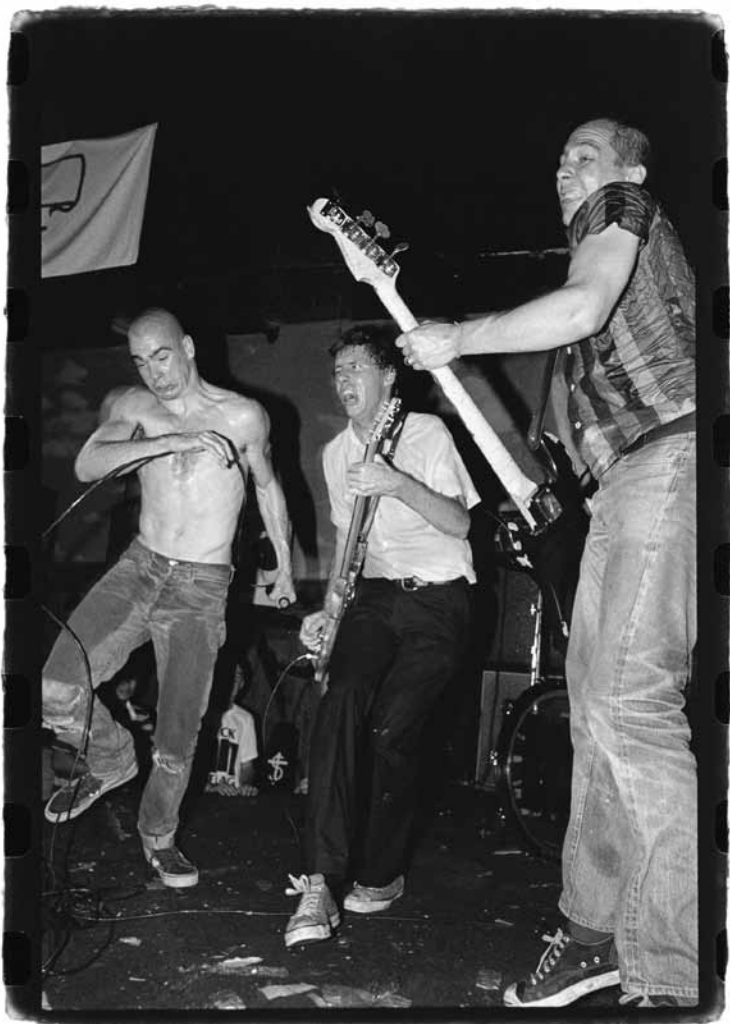
GEF: In the gossip columns. He would always put me down and push me harder. "Friedman is focused somewhere between three feet and infinity." "DogTown's youngest and only!"

SO: [Laughs] That is so sick. Was Stecyk talking about focus? "Three feet to infinity"?

GEF: Yeah, pure harassment in ink. Shooting the DogTown guys, if I just sat there and shot pictures all day long I would have to be in everyone's face. And I didn't want to be a fucking camera nerd right from the beginning. I had to shoot photos when it mattered and make them good. 'Cause if I didn't shoot good photos, I wouldn't be allowed to come back.

SO: Right. And there's also the possibility of getting beat up.

GEF: I wouldn't get beat up, but "in the way" and a "pest" was not something you wanted to be. I definitely got harassed and tortured at times and bullied a little bit. But not too bad, 'cause everyone actually liked me and everyone was actually pretty nice to me, most of the time because I was getting great shots, if for nothing else. Even the toughest guys. Some guys gave me a hard time because I came from the nice neighborhood. Years later, those guys turned out to be the nicest guys of all, 'cause they realized how mean they were to me. Some who I hadn't seen in 20 years came up to me at the DogTown [and Z-Boys] premier and were saying how proud



they are of me. It meant an incredible amount to me to see them grow and to also get that praise from them at this point in our lives.

SO: What about hanging out with those maniacs, going into a pool in a house in a fancy neighborhood and getting chased, breaking the law?

GEF: I remember so many times being chased by people with baseball bats, chainsaws, shotguns. They probably weren't going to shoot us, but they would scare us. The chainsaw revving up was always a classic. I remember this one pool, I think it was called the Buddha Bowl, where I shot the first ever DogTown Skates ad with Paul Constantineau. Wes [Humpston] was there and Jim [Muir] was there. So we got just a few shots, and then you hear the car pull up and some raving maniac gets out—the guy who'd just fucking replastered the pool probably. Everybody fucking runs, and my camera case is on the other side of the pool. I knew that Muir said he was gonna get it, but we all ran in different directions. And then you're just bailing down the mountainside through ivy, rolling, not even on your feet half the time. Twenty minutes later we're walking around a neighborhood where we don't know shit, and you're afraid that the guy might come looking for you, so every car that came by, you'd hide. And then finally I see Muir come up over a hill, walking down the middle of the street. He's got my case in his hand.

SO: He's a good guy like that.

GEF: That's probably the reason I helped out Mike Muir. Before I ever knew anyone else in Jim's family, Jim treated me like a little brother. First time I met Mike was in Santa Monica College. We were in school together there, and he tells me he's Jim's younger brother. I'd heard of his band, but not the music, and he gives me his demo. Everyone hated them.

SO: Hated who?

GEF: Suicidal Tendencies. Not that many people knew about them, but just locally and in the punk scene—outside of Venice and Santa Monica—they hated 'em. But I was like, "This is Jim's little brother. This is a family matter for me." I had been around a lot of shit at that point. I'd been in the studio with The Circle Jerks, Black Flag, The Adolescents, T.S.O.L. I'd seen everyone making mistakes, knowing that I could probably make everything sound better, even though I'd never had the experience myself, except for sitting in a studio. So I said, "Fuck it. I think they sound great." I got them their record deal, did all the photography, all the publicity, was their manager, and produced the record. Biggest-selling punk rock album of the '80s. Period. Bigger than Black Flag, bigger than The Dead Kennedys. Not that it deserved it. It certainly wasn't the best, not even in my opinion, but it sold the most by far.

SO: You shot pictures of Duane [Peters] after skating went back kinda underground in the early '80s.

GEF: Yeah. The thing I liked about Duane is that I was really into punk-rock culture and he was too, and I thought that was the way to promote that culture, by shooting more pictures of him, and you.

SO: You both had the same passion and were deep into it, which is cool.

GEF: When I see someone doing it and believing in what they're doing, believing in themselves, I'm gonna help them, whether it's getting their picture in the magazine or helping them win a contest by telling them to do this or do that. I want that in the magazine because I like that to be publicized. And to get them in the magazines they have to win. So I want them to do better to bring attention to their lifestyle, to their culture, to their attitude.