

LIFE

The 'Other War' in Vietnam

TO KEEP A VILLAGE FREE



After a fishing trip, a Marine and his young friend return to Hoa Hiep

AUGUST 25 • 1967 • 35¢

CLOSE-UP / THE ENDLESS
SUMMER OF FILM-MAKER
BRUCE BROWN

A Happy Tycoon Takes Off

His shoulders ought to be broader. His complexion—pale, very nearly wan—should be ruddy and perennially tanned. He ought to weigh at least 180 pounds. But whether bounding across a desert on a motorcycle or locking in under a 25-foot Hawaiian wave, he weighs only 140.

Bruce Brown, a man constitutionally designed for bank telling, a man of no public fame a year ago, is suddenly a million-dollar heavyweight, all because of an innocent, 91-minute movie called *The Endless Summer*. Produced, directed, photographed and spliced by Bruce Brown himself, *Summer* is about one of the things Brown likes best, surfing. The show biz experts, who figured that the film could never appeal to anyone outside of the surfing circuit, declared flatly that Brown stood to lose the \$50,000 he put into it. But *Summer* went on to make—to date—\$1.5 million, may end up \$3 million in the black. Meanwhile Brown is shooting a documentary on commercial fishing, and he recently finished a TV show on cross-country motorcycling. All was done at his own uncluttered pace. "I'm only unhappy," he explains, "when 10 things are going at once. If you're choking to death on TV contracts, you can't go fishing. Who needs it?"

A self-styled novice, cyclist Brown "scrambles" up bumpy hill on his fenderless BSA.

"I just want to make honest movies—my way, not somebody else's way. And I want to make them about the things I like: surfing, fishing, motorcycling, the rest. Then after the sun goes down I can relax."



BRUCE BROWN
CONTINUED



Brown and his sons Dana, 7½, Wade, 6 (rear), brace for a rocky ride. Except when he is filming, Brown works close by his home in Dana Point, Calif., and spends much time with his children.

“There aren’t many things that can stack up against a hare-and-hound bike race: 250-mile loops over mountains, through canyons, desert, mud with 500 kooks like yourself. You could lose the race, end up good and dead in a dry lake someplace, but it’s still a kick.”

In his workroom, Brown edits some footage that he has already shot for his fishing documentary. He has accumulated over \$4,000 worth of cameras and equipment.

“My fishing movie will take at least two years to do properly. You can’t just go out on the ocean and order things to happen. I’m happy if I can make one good film every 10 years. I don’t want to start popping movies out like jelly beans.”

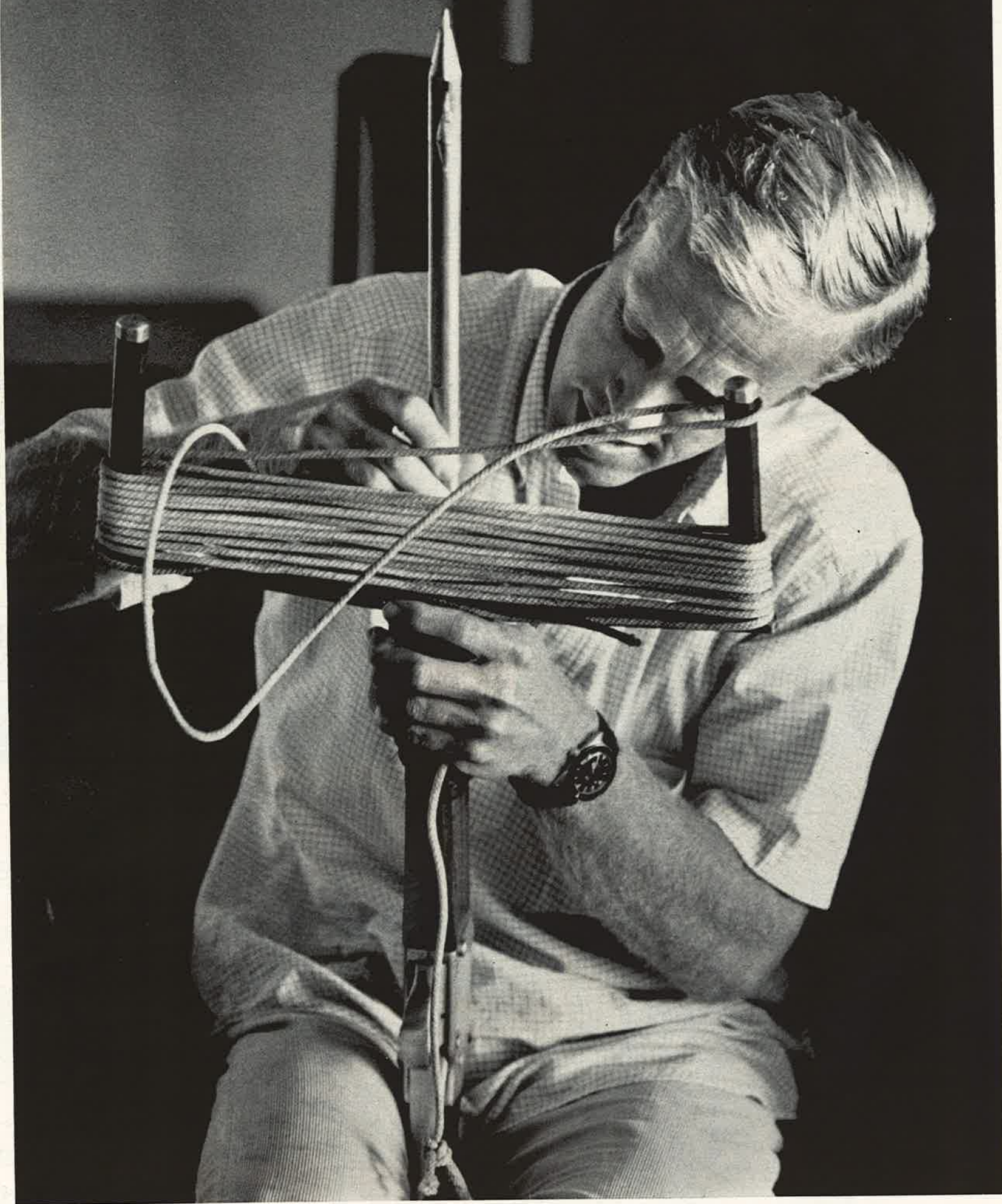


In the living room of their home, Brown’s daughter Nancy clamors for attention from mother Pat.

“The Pacific is right outside the window. There’s a mountain nearby

with plenty of deer. On a clear day we can see 100 miles, all the way to Catalina. On a clear day we see whales jumping out of the water. The surf is right downstairs. Where else could I live?”





Brown toys with a \$300 harpoon gun. A devoted hunter, he also owns a rifle and two shotguns.

“Even when I wasn’t making anything, I had to have a bike and a boat—not a splashy yacht—but

a boat. Some people are hung up on old chairs and poodles. I’m stoked on clean air and harpoons.”

CONTINUED



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BRUCE BROWN
CONTINUED

'I hope you enjoyed my movie'—and they did

The *Endless Summer* was originally shot on 16-mm film and was intended—like the six other surfing documentaries Brown had made in the past—to be used purely on a limited lecture tour. Early reception to it was so enthusiastic, however, that Brown and his associate on and off the waves, R. Paul Allen, decided that it might be worth a major showing.

Big-time distributors could not have agreed less. As Brown recalls, they felt that since “there was no sex and no violence, it was therefore noncommercial.”

Undismayed, Brown and Allen took *Summer* to Wichita, Kan., as distant from water as anyone could reasonably ask. Opening night in the corn belt was a producer's nightmare. “Wichita chose that November day to have a blizzard,” remembers Brown. “The local projectionists' union chose the day to call a strike, and all of a sudden some movie house kook thought it was a great time to have a bomb scare.”

But it boomed, first in Wichita and then all over the country. Brown accounts for the film's improbable success with a matter-of-fact shrug. “I think we stoked 'em with simplicity. I didn't have any great messages to spout or tricks to try out. The only gimmick was that there was no gimmick.”

For all its sudden glittering success, *The Endless Summer* has failed to introduce any tinsel to Brown's uncluttered life. Bruce Brown Films, Inc. still occupies the same unassuming space in tiny, seaside Dana Point, Calif. His home, two blocks away, is still perched grandly (and somewhat precariously) atop a cliff gazing straight at the Pacific.

Brown still isn't so busy that

there isn't time for him and his pretty, nonsurfing wife Pat to tend a garden where grows every vegetable yet known to man. Also growing there are a few unheard-of vegetables like “super-radishes.” “I do the planting,” reports Brown, “Pat sees to it that nothing dies.”

He is likely to fall into new projects with the same sort of easy nonchalance which marks his execution of them. Just for laughs, he wrote an ABC-TV producer a gag letter asking him if he'd like to have a good ol' motorcycle nut named Bruce Brown set up and shoot a cross-country bike race. ABC went for the joke. The results of the prank will be nationally telecast this fall.

In his current movie venture, Brown wants to dispose of the stereotype of “the dumb fisherman. One of the smartest, one of the most dangerous, fish around is the broadbill swordfish,” he says. “You can't be a blundering fool and pull in one of those. But to capture on film the excitement, the incredible excitement of all of this is going to take time and a lot of fancy cameras.”

If, as he wants to, Brown retains the mood and the uncomplicated charm of *The Endless Summer*, his fishing documentary will probably end much the same way: “This is Bruce Brown,” said the narrator. “Thanks very much for coming. I hope you enjoyed my movie.” Simple, but—as the happy tycoon has abundantly proved—effective.

GILBERT MOORE

On location in Japan, Brown, camera in hand, rode white water filming *Endless Summer*.

