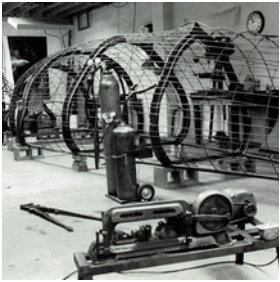


The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



SAVORING SANDY

Happy Anniversary, Sandy the Whale. Exactly fifty years ago, artist Larry Foster completed the beloved life-sized gray whale sculpture that resides in front of Pacific Grove's Museum of Natural History. She has evolved into a PG icon, but I have to admit that most of what I always assumed about Sandy... is wrong. For instance:

- Sandy was NOT born in P.G. She was created in a rented warehouse in East Oakland by a team assembled by Foster, who sold illustrations to buy supplies of steel and concrete.
- Sandy was NOT commissioned by the Museum of Natural History. In 1971, Foster started the project with no commission, no contract, no idea quite where she'd find a home.
- Foster had a lifelong passion for whales, but it did NOT begin with him. His great-grandfather actually arrived in California aboard a whaling ship.
- Foster was NOT only a sculptor. In fact, his first whale creation was made of stained glass, 70 of his watercolor paintings appeared in the Sierra Club's Handbook of Whales and Dolphins, and he illustrated a Smithsonian Institution publication called The World's Whales.
- Sandy is NOT quite as heavy as she looks. Beneath her shell (less than an inch thick) is an iron framed armature interlaced with layers of chicken wire. She's essentially hollow inside.
- Pacific Grove was NOT Sandy's original destination. First, she visited Caltech in Pasadena, Indiana University, Boston's Museum of Science and New England Aquarium, the Sacramento Civic Auditorium, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Macon, Georgia.
- Sandy did NOT arrive in one piece. She can be subdivided into eight transportable sections.
- Sandy is NOT the only Foster-designed gray whale sculpture in the region. There's one at the entrance of the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History and another at UC-Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science.



- Sandy did NOT arrive in PG as a permanent resident. In 1981, she was rented by the Museum of Natural History to coincide with the winter's gray whale migration. Sandy was purchased for permanent placement at the museum, but the story of how that was funded is a reminder of how Pagrovians come together in support of America's Last Hometown.



With the museum hoping to raise \$24,000 to purchase the 8,000-pound whale, a fundraising drive featured an option to buy shares of Sandy at \$3 per pound (PG's city council members were the first part-owners). All part-owners received a certificate, and PG volunteers sold them. People even gave them as gifts to distant relatives. So hundreds of locals—and not-so-locals—officially own a piece of Sandy.

But the collective effort went much further: During a festive "Whale Day" celebration, local merchants decorated their store windows in nautical themes and contributed a percentage of profits, 60 artists donated artwork which raised thousands of dollars at auction, and the P.G. Art Center sponsored a whale drawing contest for kids. In the end, the eight-month campaign raised more than \$31,000 from some 1,200 donors in 20 states.

So now I don't view Sandy as only sculpture, but rather a symbol—of creativity and community.