GRANNY GIDGET'S STILL A L'IL SURFER GIRL

THE real-life surfer gal who inspired the Gidget book, movies and TV series is now a 60-year-old grandma – but she's still hangin' 10!

Kathy Kohner Zuckerman and husband Marvin have two grown sons and a pair of granddaughters. But nothing can stop her from riding the waves at a yearly cancer charity event in La Jolla, Calif.

And the petite granny is busy off the beach, too. She's just put together a new version of the 1957 best seller, *Gidget*, which spawned a string of popular movies starring Sandra Dee and Deborah Walley and a 1965 TV series with Sally Field.

In an exclusive interview, 5-foot-1 Zuckerman tells GLOBE that while her screenwriter dad wrote the original book, her mom was responsible for turning her 8-year-old tomboy daughter into the surfer the guys nicknamed Gidget – a combo of "girl" and "midget."

"My mother forced me to go to the beach at Malibu on sunny days because she felt it was healthier than sitting in a dark movie theater," Zuckerman confides. "At first I resisted, but after I discovered surfing, there was nothing I liked better than hanging out with the guys. I was fascinated with their lifestyle."

Zuckerman got a board and became one of the first female surfers. By the time she was 15, she was shooting the curls with the guys. "We surfers became a family," she says.

Tales about her pals and their lifestyle prompted her dad Frederick to write the phenomenally successful book. The romantic parts, she notes, were made up.

More books, movies and two TV series followed. Sandra Dee, the first movie Gidget, is Zuckerman's favorite, but she also kept in touch with Deborah Walley, the star of 1961's Gidget Goes Hawaiian, who died of cancer on May 17. "We spoke three weeks before she passed away," reveals Zuckerman. "She was a lovely person."

Granny Gidget is now hoping the re-issue of her book will "inspire today's teen girls to take up surfing."

– ROBIN MIZRAHI

Sandra Dee played the title role in the first Gidget movie

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Real Gidget Kat... Zuckerman, 60, sti... she did when she w...