

July 1, 2000

Does it matter which side I carry my board on ?



If you can believe it this time around things got started behind the paper cutter at Kinko's. I struck up a conversation with this guy named Kip and found out he'd been teaching surfing for sixteen years and runs a combo surf school and beach camp called Kanoa Aquatics. 'Kooel' I thought, perfect story subject, ...and just maybe I could pick up a few pointers on the cheap.

The next time I saw Kip on Saturday morning he had come up lame,

benched, beached, on the DL list with a broken limb to be wrapped up for six weeks. When I saw all the stuff that needed unpacking from the van I got a little suspicious, but after checking the cast for zippers I guess I was okay with that -fall during a Strand run- story.

Anyway, I really wanted to see how surfing was taught since my own skills came from trying to rise above the razzing of friends who had gotten their Christmas beards a couple of year earlier than me. I met instructors Dru Harrison and John Philbin and in this case 'those who can ...teach.' Dru Harrison gained fame as Beys Champ, Jr. Mens Champ, and eventually Mens Champ. He's further distinguished by holding the title as the first number one rated pro surfer in the history of the sport. If our Dave had showed up to take the pictures I could point you to one, but alas you'll have to trust me that he was skillfully walking the plank more than once that morning. But I did get John on film teaching the moves. Now you may recognize him, I did when I saw him in person. He's been in a few movies including Point Break and Spielberg's Amazing Stories, but manages to keep near the shore between gigs.



Bad tan line in the making.

Now John is one of those guys destined to be a good dad 'cause he's patient, concerned and just a great teacher. You know the type, always finds something to compliment and when things ain't exactly right, says "...think of it this way..." I stuck with him because while Dru was already in the drink with the second lesson guys, John was with a first timer.



He first asked the newcomer: "Do you skate or snowboard?" presumably because some moves are similar. After getting acquainted he went over a few safety tips: "Put hands in front of your head when you're going down, ...cover your head with your hands when you come

up, your board usually comes back toward you." Or someone else's... that's a tip I still employ on a busy weekend morning. John went on to explain some things that surfers instinctively know, but rarely quantify: "...paddling is 80% of surfing..., ...the deeper and more under the board you paddle the better," as well as other little tid-bits.

John then started the pop-up training attentively critiquing postures and form from all sides. He calmed some over-eagerness with: "... people put too much pressure on themselves to pop up, keep your center of gravity low." Pretty soon after that they were off to the real thing. I was impressed. My way of teaching (the co-worker who finds out I have an extra board) has always been: "Here, stay away from everybody and don't snap it my board!" On the other



Now for those wondering, our title question wasn't made up. While John responded politely I scrambled for a pencil to capture that classic. Well, someone's got to live east of the 405. Anyhow, two hour lessons in an adult group go for \$40, private lessons are also available. In both cases, boards and wetsuits are provided. Along those lines, I always figured students got those foam type boards so they couldn't tweak a good one, but Kip has got both kinds and pointed out that a Styrofoam board is 1 pound density per square foot vs. a regular board at 2 1/2 lbs. per square foot density, that makes it softer (safer) and more buoyant for students.



Summer school by Dave.



Life is full of choices.

The next time I visited Kanoa it was beach camp time. Now I'm really thankful I got a chance to shoot a bow & arrow and sort pinecones when I was a kid, but beach camp is where I'm going the next time around. Lots of them have sprouted up in the South Bay, the perfect day care I guess. Kanoa's are held in two week sessions through September that start daily at 8:00am and go to 2:00pm for kids from 5 to 17 years old.

Kanoa has been doing beach camp for four years now and Kip takes pride in more than just giving kids toys and letting them run loose. Instructor and lifeguard Dave explained and Kip emphasized that Kanoa teaches water safety, beach knowledge and etiquette. I got quite a laugh when I caught Dave leaning parentally over some kids saying: "don't play with the jellyfish." Ah, to be that young, I'm rollin'.

Kip Jerger, a certified ocean lifeguard himself who gets around the world a lot (and joked he's soon headed to Hawaii for a vacation) brought a couple of New Zealand guards back as instructors for the summer. Brendan and Lloyd are enjoying their first visit to the states and escape from winter in New Zealand where they lifeguard at Piha beach. This beach apparently has super dangerous condition changes where rip tides force moves of thousands of swimmers at one time. They seemed up to the task. When we were talking I got more than a couple of "no worries" from Brendan and asked him if he was from the valley or something, he laughed. The heavy accent just proved New Zealand is really close to that Crocodile Dundee country like my six years of high school taught me.

Besides being just plenty qualified, instructors get to join in on the mayhem. From the water they moved to the sand for a little volleyball and a lively game of dodge ball where I heard Lloyd ask the tikes why they kept picking on him. It apparently was some kind of elimination game and Lloyd was the kids' favorite target and always the first to be thrown off the island (yeah, I'm watching that.) Hey Lloyd, we no speak a d' queen's English here! Welcome to the 'hood.

Okay, admittedly it's a nice 'hood and I got an overdue story, met lots of nice folks and didn't have to go to the library to research anything. All in all, pretty dang good, but still... top-able! Turns out Kanoa will be teaching surfing to the blind mid July in conjunction with the Braille Institute. Think of that!! If I'm going to watch the ten o'clock news I'd like to see them lead with that story instead of ...well, you know.

Lastly, we wish a speedy recovery to Kip who's got be suffering not being able to break up the break for another four weeks. Hey Kip, keep that thing outside the shower curtain and it will all be over soon enough.

EP.

