Hitting the Lip

Cornel Barnett
Touch the sea, and you caress silver and diamonds. Ride the waves with a board, and you tread upon a ribbon of gold. That’s the message of this book - probably the most comprehensive work on surfing in the world.

This is a practical book.

But not only that. It is a tantalizing work, a book full of the promise of endless waves, superb surf - and how to ride the gilt ribbon to an outdoor, healthy way of life.

Cornel Barnett has avoided the text-book style and has presented in this well-researched book a very readable story that will appeal equally to expert and novice.

He covers every aspect - winds, tides, wave formation, the best spots for surfing, how to make a surfboard, how to become a surfer, the feeling and art of the sport, and the various techniques and styles.

The title of this inspiring invitation to be a good surfer is a crowning manoeuvre: as the rider looks up and sees the crest of the wave about to crash on top of him, he flies up the wave’s face and punches the crest - he “hits the lip”.

The author, chairman of the South African Universities Surfing Association, earned his Springbok Colours at the age of 18 and a place in the team representing South Africa at the World Surfing Championships in California in 1966.

He worked as a journalist for three years and is now studying for an Arts Degree at Rhodes University.
Hitting the Lip

SURFING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Cornel Barnett

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**Foreword**

Cornel Barnett became a Springbok surfer in 1966. He is a very enthusiastic and energetic young man who will go to great lengths to obtain all the details to which his ambitions drive him.

I think I know every surfer in South Africa or they know me. I cannot even begin to think of anyone who could write and research a book of this nature better than Cornel. We are very fortunate that he is able to put pen to paper and have the patience to have for instance, found out about surf spots that I thought I had forgotten.

There is really something about surfing, it has been called “a way of life’, “an art form’’, “physical expression’’. The more conservative would call it “a jolly healthy sport”; whatever it is, there is nothing else quite like surfing.

It’s story in South Africa is here! Cornel Barnett wrote it.

*John Whitmore.*
*President of the South African Surf-Riders’ Association (1964-1973), and three times manager of Springbok teams to international contests.*

**Preface**

Writing this book has been a tremendous experience; exhausting at times, but challenging.

The most important aspect of the entire undertaking, however, has been the closeness I attained with the ocean. For once, I felt, I had come close to understanding this intriguing mass. The ocean’s vibrating force, pulsating rhythm, unpredictability and freshness is something truly wonderful to experience.
As a surfer, I am grateful to have had the pleasure of becoming part of it. Through this book, I have endeavoured, in my limited way, to share some of the many aspects of the beauty of the sea and surfing with my readers.

My research took me along almost the entire South African coastline. The many people I met, the books and magazines on surfing I read, and most important, the waves I rode, enabled me to think a lot more about surfing in South Africa, thus providing me with inspiration to splash information onto pages in the form of a book.

My trip was what surfers would call a surfing safari. I did some weird things such as swimming out in raging surf to take shots of surfers with my underwater camera and ending up being washed hundreds of yards from the action. If I was to write about certain aspects of the surf such as rough rips, I had to experience them myself. At South Africa’s premier surfing spot, Jeffreys Bay, I rushed with my surfboard into a strong inshore current despite warnings from people on the beach and managed to conquer it at first. I tested it again, but this time I was bounced onto the rocks by a powerful inshore wave and tom over barnacled beds by the current. Although I received nasty cuts to my arms and legs, I felt satisfied to have discovered the power of the current.

In Cape Town, I wanted to feel what it was like surfing in the freezing Atlantic waters without wearing a wet-suit. I did, and nearly died of exposure. At a place called Metropole on the Natal South Coast, a six feet Hammerhead shark was pulled out by a kite fisherman right next to where we were surfing. Looking at the man-eater flapping on the beach made me appreciate the danger of being attacked by one of them. A warning to surfers.

Generally, however, surfing is quite safe. I just kind of stuck my neck out. But in looking at surfing, you could be looking at life - enjoyment and adventure, even if it does include an occasional hairy experience.

*Cornel Barnett*
Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Hitting the lip sounds like the most unlikely title for a book on surfing. It seems the kind of name that focusses attention on two pugnacious people beating the daylights out of each other in a ring specially designed for this type of activity.

Hitting the lip is, in fact, a much sought after surfing manoeuvre, not only in South Africa, but in the rest of the world. The name implies aggression. And so it is. A surfer has to be in a fighting mood if he intends hitting the lip. His opponent is the wave.

While gliding along a wave, the surfer may shift his surfboard into the trough. Once in this precarious position, he looks up and sees the jaw of the crest about to crash on top of him. His decision in countering this force must be quick. He has a number of alternatives. He may either shoot away from it along the bottom, or try to tuck beneath it, or even turn his board towards it in preparation to hit it. Once the last tactic is decided upon, he flies up the wave’s face and with precision punches the crest. This is familiarly known to surfers as hitting the lip.
The wave will either knock him down in the form of a “wipe-out”, or he will successfully recover by rebounding from the lip, or he will go shooting through it. The latter two manoeuvres are some of the many that exhilarate surfers to the exploding point of “stokiness”.

Surfing, however, is generally a passive sport in which man blends rhythmically with the smooth flow of an ocean wave.

When riding that wave, his mind is void of the hassles of life. The experience is a manifestation of all that is beautiful. Complete concentration, drive and determination sends a surfer on this thrilling journey - his free ride on nature which welds body, mind and soul.

Besides fish, no living creature is more intimately involved with this turbulent part of the sea than the surfer.

The fact that every wave is different and the supply inexhaustible enhances the excitement and variability of surfing. It has only been for the last 25 years, however, that South Africans have harnessed the wave’s electrifying power.

Once the pulse of the ocean is felt in this surfing fashion, it is hard to forget - and that is why surfing has become one of South Africa’s fastest growing and most popular sports.
CHAPTER ONE

Why Get Hooked on Surfing?

“You never enjoy the world aright, till the sea itself floweth in your veins.”

Thomas Traherne

Centuries of Meditation.

After a stroll down the beach, the surfer meets the ocean - both are breathing heavily. That first caress is the uprush of a foaming wave brushing over his ankles. The backwash draws the rider closer.

Carrying his surfboard, he saunters into deeper water. The level rises until it is deep enough to place his board on the surface and paddle out. The first time out is the most refreshing - the first foamy break rushing past clawing at every part of his body. The two have met, but are still apart.

It is only when the surfer is riding the wave that the real relationship starts - his opportunity of becoming one with this carrying movement. The surfboard is the bond between man and water. The rider reaches beyond the breakers and waits, constantly aware of moving swells. One rises in front of him. He turns, moving determinedly, yet gracefully, and picks up the motion and drops into the wave. Both are moving forcefully. The rider rhythmically blends in and pushes hard, holds his breath, tucks into the hollow vortex and gets locked in. Wave and man are one. The climax. Ah, the ultimate. The surfer comes out exhilarated. The wave has expended most of her energy as both near the shore. The water rushes up the beach and rests.

South Africans are growing fat with the land. At the same time, they are realising they need to be fit to fulfil themselves in life.

But how?
The basic physical releaser is track or road running. People get tired of running, so they play games with balls. These give enjoyment and group identity, each in its particular way. But most of these pastimes are reliant upon venues and people, and also often on complex technical apparatus.

In surfing, on the other hand, your surfboard is your ball; only this 10 per cent is man-made, and nature determines the rest. But nature does not stick to rules, it is unpredictability epitomised. People who have been fortunate enough to liberate themselves from the artificial weather of air-conditioning
and lights of the city would appreciate this. Camping in the wilds has this in common with surfing in the sea.

All sports, whether ball-games or surfing, are health-giving and provide fun for those who have enough incentive to take part. Surfing and incentive are synonymous. Most people who have had just a taste of surfing will tell you they are gripped by it and have achieved more physically and mentally by riding waves than they have in other sports. In fact, surfing incorporates the sensations of a number of action-packed sports put into one (see chapter 3 - George Thompson).

Enter the ocean with a surfboard and catch one wave, and feel the vibrating force pushing you to the shore and fresh frothy seas tugging you as you again paddle out. Your body shakes. Adrenalin races through your system. You are stoked! You are hooked.

Surfing keeps you fit unawares. Everybody talks about surfing, not paddling. Yet 80 per cent of your time spent in the water involves the physical motion of paddling. Surfing gets you stoked - and that is what surfing is all about. But it is paddling that produces fitness. If, for instance, on a particular surfing day, the break is 100 metres out and a surfer rides 10 waves, he has battled, sometimes in raging seas, for at least 1 000 m of pure paddling. Another 100 m could be added for miscellaneous happenings - like being pushed back by breakers while moving out.
At the same time he supercharges his lungs by holding his breath under at least 40 waves that power past him, also on the outward paddle. He may have to swim 100 m in turmoil if he is “wiped out” on just one wave. This is a conservative estimate of the stamina-building activities a surfer performs when enjoying an average surf. And the rides are his rewards.

Also, surfers automatically develop a fair amount of knowledge about winds, tides and wave formations. It becomes natural for them to gaze heaven- and seawards for signs that I show the coming of better breaks.

Every wave that surges toward the shore is different, providing endless variety and enjoyment. When the surf is small, it is pure fun. When it gets bigger, apprehension is coupled with pleasure. Crouching through a small shore-break curl, one gets a white-water ear syringe. But doing the same thing on a big wave is a mind blast. While playing in the surf, you are physically involved without relying on anyone else to play the game. There
are no dictates on time as in most other sports. You can surf for as long as
you like, how you like and where you like - and, what is most important, it is
all for free. Every wave becomes a fresh challenge and a new experience.

Throughout time, as man has built, destroyed, and rebuilt, he has turned to
the sea and seen waves on their endless flow toward the shore. They keep on
coming - they always have, and always will. It has been said that the sea
represents one of the last frontiers as yet unconquered by man. Surfers have
adopted, in a rather personal way, this so-called last bastion of nature.

It is a clean sport because, after all, water is something people wash in. But it
is also a psychological cleanser, a most pleasant kind of purgatory.

Our civilized life has become demanding. Whether in the office, university,
college or school, we have problems. “We need to be untamed,” as D.H.
Lawrence says, and temporarily released from the enclosure of our everyday
and narrowly routine ways of life. People are looking for outlets. And it is in
this sense that surfing provides a natural escape. It is only you and the wave.
Nobody is going to accost you with accounts in the water. In fact you will be
concentrating so much on catching that wave or be so wrapped up in your
beautiful environment - sun on sea sparkling, the horizon, sea, sky and clouds
dominating - that you will not have time to think about anything else but
surfing!

And after whipping across a few waves, or swimming after a wipe-out, you
will feel like a new man - ready to face the world afresh. Making every surf a
rebirth.

Transport to the beach is no problem. If in walking distance, you run down
with your board tucked under one arm. Otherwise, it is simple to tie your
craft to the roof rack of your car and speed to the seaside.

The surf is a wonderland in any form of weather. In Durban, some of the best
waves pour through on rainy days. Cape Town has a perpetual drizzle in
winter. Waves are ridden under all types of conditions, turning miserable days into bright, living experiences. Not many people experience rain on their naked bodies or such a closeness to the dark and looming heavens throwing forth angry forks of lightning and thundering through cracking cheeks. The surfer keeps warm by the constant build-up of energy from within his body through paddling.

Time waits for no man; but the ocean waits. You have only to catch the tide. The sea may be roaring like a lion or purring like a cat, but no matter what the condition of the surf, it waits on us like a servant.

South Africa is a sports-minded country that abounds with natural talent and enthusiasm.

Our warm climate, beautiful beaches, pleasant waters and miles and miles of contrasting coastline with a wealth of ideal surf breaks have attracted thousands. It is only natural that South Africans of both sexes and all ages have taken to surfing.

Standing on a hot sub-tropical beach on a blue-bright winter’s day that is playing host to a fresh off-shore breeze-ideal wind for surfing - one looks to where white fringes unfold. Having fun in the surf are hundreds of people - mainly bathers and surfers. It is the latter in whom we are interested.

Surfing in the broader sense, is surfboarding, bellyboarding, kneeboarding, body surfing, mat surfing or surf catting - all using the wave’s energy. But surfboarding is by far the most popular, and the focus of this book.

Fifty-year-old Durban veteran surfer, Peter Milne, who surfs whenever he has the chance, says: “I am stoked on surfing,” in much the same way as his 10-year-old son or teenage daughter.

Since the Second World War, Peter has devoted most of his spare time energies to surfing. Besides bringing up three children to the sport, he has
built his own surfboards and captured in paintings many moments of the sea and surfers’ involvements with it.

He is a dedicated surfer. There are two other categories: the casual surfer (or weekender) and the up-country surfer.

The dedicated man or woman, boy or girl who characterise the sport in South Africa are, as surfing columnist Garnet Currie says, “Nature’s children.” Their lives are dictated by the surf. When the “surf’s up” they ride. When it is down, they do what has to be done on shore.

Within this group, however, we have a further split. There is the hard core surfer, whose whole life becomes wrapped up in the sport. People like Tony Cerff, Graham Hynes, John Whitmore, Clive Barber, Spider Murphy, Robbie Ponting live for surfing at all times. They are some of the manufacturers of surfboards in South Africa, and to produce quality surfboards they have to integrate fully with the ocean. A good surfboard shaper is like a good sculptor who likes to get the feel of his subject before putting his hands to work. Max Wetteland, who now combines other work with board-building, is a good example of someone who shapes his surfboards according to what he feels in the ocean (see Max Wetteland Chapter 3).

The other type of dedicated surfer is normally occupied in other compulsory activities. But in his spare time, his life revolves around surfing. They are the surfers who are greeted many mornings by the rising sun’s golden carpet over the shimmering sea and this is carried in their thoughts throughout the day. They are those same people who see the sun receding from colourful fairyland skies into its night-time slot - a reminder to catch the last ride of the day.

From them and the hard core come our surfing Springboks - our ambassadors to distant lands like Hawaii, California, Australia, Peru and Puerto Rico, recent venues of international surfing competitions.
For many, surfing has a conditioning effect on their lives. They relate most things in life, to their experiences in the ocean. They may, for instance, set classical music or popular sounds to the motion of the sea - thus listening to music, their minds will invariably be flowing on the face of a wave.

Surfing is the strongest single factor to give a surfer a spiritual, physical and mental uplift. When life looks bleak, it is his next ride and the cleansing agent of salt sea water that provides the inspiration to keep him going.

There are also the thousands of casual surfers or weekenders. Because of work commitments and probably the distance the person has to travel to reach the waterside, there is no time for everyday involvement. That would come annually during leave. Their pleasure is normally limited to weekends. It may be that some have family commitments as well, so it is at the weekend that the family find themselves at the beach.

The up-country surfers - and there are hundreds in South Africa - travel with their surfboards to the seaside whenever possible. Some Johannesburg surfers make weekly or fortnightly excursions to the sea while others manage half-yearly or annual trips.

The dominating physical and aggressive aspect of surfing has, as we have seen, been, largely attractive to men, but there are a number of women in South Africa who have found expression in the ocean.
“Many times you have caressed me”
Antoni Brodowicz tubed at Metropole on the Natal Coast

The sport has not been as popularly followed among women here as in top overseas surfing countries. The reason is still somewhat baffling. A woman surfing friend told me that members of her sex tended to be put off, because constant contact with the sea did injustice to their locks, build and skin. She added that they compromised by indulging in the sport in moderation. I personally feel more women would be far more healthy and physically attuned to life if they considered surfing more in their field of events. One woman friend, who automatically became a housewife after marriage, said how she was looking forward to re-entering the ocean with her surfboard when she had adjusted herself to the family way of living.

Christine “Bippo” Muller - probably the first woman surfer in South Africa - travelled to Hawaii in the late sixties and became quite well known as a big wave rider braving the monstrous Hawaiian “killers” with famous male surfers of the Islands.
Each time a Springbok team has been chosen to surf overseas at least two women have been included. Although their standard of surfing has been lower than that of their overseas counterparts, they have done much to enhance the South African image overseas and have added to the interest of the sport experienced by women at home. At the time of writing, those who have travelled overseas are: Margaret Smith, Philippa Hulett, Sally Sturrock, Marlene Webb and Pippa Sales.

No matter the type of surfer, all develop that feeling which vibrates and fuses within the body - the feeling of stokiness.

Basically, surfing is three dimensional - body, board and wave. The object is to achieve complete flow and unity between these three. In other words, body, board and wave must become one.

Herein lies the crux of surfing, and it has taken years of experiment and study of both the surf and the hydrodynamics or science of surfing to help surfers acquire this oneness in surf of all shapes and sizes.

An advanced surfer who approaches a surfing spot with the kind of wave suitable to his particular surfboard and, above all, the correct frame of mind, should be in for the perfect marriage. Of course, only the hotter surfers will experience this unity once they have become aware of this concept of three-dimensionality. To many it comes naturally. But even from point A upwards surfing is super fun. And the beginner should not feel disappointed if only at a later stage of his surfing career he achieves this fully unified flow.

One can distinguish clearly between an experienced and a hot natural, and an aspirant in his first year of surfing. The one will flow with an almost flawless style and extract all the juice from the wave, while the other will appear jerky, as if being carried along by a puppeteer, even if he finishes his ride. Durban’s Springbok, Mike Esposito, is an excellent example of expertise, virtuosity and flow. He answers to every call of the wave and literally rips it to
shreds. If he were soluble, he would dissolve with the wave at the end of his ride.

Now we assume our advanced surfer paddles out and reaches beyond the breakers after the normal rigmarole of rolling, paddling, rolling, paddling through the crashing waves. He sits beyond the breakwater and waits. The waves he paddled through before taking up his present position were created in the form of wave swells by high winds out at sea and generated shorewards. These swells break when the distance from the water level to the ocean bottom is slightly in excess of wave height (see Physical Geographical Aspects, Chapter 6).

The surfer picks his wave, a swell that looms in front of him. He whips his board around and paddles in a prone position.

His paddling gives him initial momentum. He then feels the upward forward pushing below him. He paddles faster until the board is being wholly propelled by the swell. At this point, the swell hits a shallow bank and heaves up, lifts the surfer, and sucks out below. The rider, anticipating this, shoots to his feet, and tucks his board into the frontal wave face.

The size of the wave is six feet. It is a right-breaking wave and the surfer is a natural-footer, meaning he surfs with his left foot forward - characteristic of right-handed people. He naturally faces the wave while traversing its distance. The length of the ride, which was noticed by the surfer during a routine study of the surf before entering the water, was an estimated 100 metres. Observers on the beach may now be witnesses of a wonderful wedding.

The surfer glides down the wave face, hits the bottom and in a flash, powers back up into the packet. There is absolutely no distinction between man and board. This oneness is blending smoothly with the wave. The surfer slides speedily back down and as the wave throws out from the top, there are two manoeuvres open to him - either he tucks deep within the tube and gets
locked in, or he defies all wave power and hits the crest or lip. Experience and discretion, and the surfer’s mood at the time, will decide. If he feels aggressive, he will probably hit the lip and if willing, he will visit the green room, both ways producing ultra-exhilaration.

In the tube it is like travelling along the inside of a pipe at 25 m.p.h. and being chased by a 100 roaring lions. The round gap of light ahead is the exit. Seconds later he pops out, rises up from the crouching position and by the time he has risen, it is time to cut-back, still flowing with the wave. He is then hit from below his behind by white-water which indicates that he is playing it good and tight. He pushes hard around the foaming mass and glides into a few more manoeuvres before the wave reaches nothingness on the beach.

Hitting the lip can be executed and completed in two ways - firstly, he can hit the crest with the flat-bottomed surface of his board. His position, at times, is at a sharp right-angle with the wave face. Gravitational force through speed motions keeps him stuck to his board. Within seconds he rebounds from the lip and goes parachuting back down with the board again underside. Or, instead of rebounding from the lip, he goes shooting through, comes out and throws himself over the top and drops back down. In both instances he hits off the bottom after dropping down, and hurtles back into the traverse position to complete his ride, again managing manoeuvres in unison with the wave.

At the end, he kicks his board out of the diminishing wave and is positioned for his paddle back out. His body is at first limp with excitement. Then with renewed vigour he speeds out.

The ride, no matter which way you performed it, was an example of a few ultimates experienced in surfing. At all times the rider is the artist painting a smooth picture on the surface. Pressing your board into a cut-back after racing slightly ahead, to get back where all the action is - next to the white-water which is the fastest part of the wave - and then a further turn back into
the traverse position, is theoretically two directional changes, one back and one forward. But this must not appear as two. It should be one fast, flowing and curving movement for optimum success and minimal loss of speed. The second you turn back, you have to be always one step ahead. Your board going back and your mind forward.

Jonathan Paarman “Hits the lip” in Cape Town

This has explained basically the theory of the three-dimensional aspect of surfing and the way of succeeding to oneness plus what can be accomplished when perfection is reached. It will come with time and practice.

With only these three to contend with, you can dedicate all concentration and energy to achieving unity. But a fourth dimension often drops in - another surfer. The rider now not only thinks of his body, board and wave. He has to divide his attention between achieving his oneness and thinking of others in the water. This often hampers full-out concentration. Cape Town surfers have a further problem - kelp, a natural sea plant that grows on the
inshore rocks in very cold water. This, however, only seems a problem to beginners and visiting surfers to the city. The locals learn to adjust and to accept it. They get to know where the main kelp clumps are, and ride accordingly. A visiting surfer finds he is drastically restricted because he cannot flow naturally along the wave. He has to surf in and out of the black heads which often bring the board to a halt when the fin strikes them.

Surfing in South Africa has reached the level where almost every wave that hits our coastline is explored to its fullest - even the biggest. The accent with most experienced surfers is on the heavies and their vying for mastership. They have tamed waves under six feet in height.

It is their prerogative to try and do the same on waves higher than 10 feet. Manoeuvres which have been displayed on smaller waves are now being explored on the biggies. The question of the seventies is: Will they conquer? We believe they will.

Therefore, it has become necessary for most South Africans to own two surfboards. This applies almost exclusively to the more advanced surfer. A double-ender surfboard would be used on smaller waves while a speed board with drawn-in gun lines for the bigger stuff - over eight feet.

Some surfers who cannot afford two boards and the average surfer will either have a standard shape surfboard for all kinds of surf up to 10 feet or a compromise between a South African gun and a short board to ride waves higher than 10 feet. This will probably be a board under 20 inches in width with a super-flat planing bottom deck, soft rails and tapered tail.

As we shall see and learn in the school of surfing, there is one word that spells definite success in surfing. It is “positive”. Every wave should be tackled with a positive attitude. If you think you can; you will.
CHAPTER TWO

Life-styles

“The sea doth wash away all human ills.”

Euripides.

Surfing is an ideal South African sport. It raises those involved in it above the mundane levels normally prescribed by our social environment.

We are not saying that surfers are better people. We’re just saying that surfing gives its members something to THINK about.

Something that they want to think about.

South Africans need this. Surfing provides this saving quality. Surfers are obliged to educate themselves.

In the School of Surfing, lesson number one is GEOGRAPHY. Surfers make it their business to study weather phenomena. All try to predict weather changes. Those on the Eastern Seaboard come to know that dark, heavy clouds in the western sky mark the oncoming of an off-shore breeze, which creates good surfing conditions.

Number two school lesson is WAVEOLOG. Hours are spent on the beach. During their Sunday afternoon strolls, people may see surfers looking intently at the sea. Some may think it idle. But normally it’s not. The surfer’s mind is probably ticking over a thousand times. He is studying the surf. By observing the way the waves are breaking, he is able to tell where the dominant sand banks are, thus picking out the best riding spot, as well as the action of side and back washes. Tides are also closely watched.

The third lesson, is, HYDRODYNAMICS. Your thought process here depends on which class you are in. Some surfers may just find a surfboard suitable to
their weight, whereas the more qualified would study things like the amount of lift or drag his type of board will have on a particular kind of wave. He learns that a flatter bottom deck gives him better planing area for more efficient drag-free resistance etc, etc.

Mr. Surfing, who is the teacher, is struck on discipline.

So there is a lesson on DISCIPLINE. In grade one you learn that the early bird catches the worm. In fact, you may catch two or three or more before others arrive. Taught in the same class is “Early to bed, early to rise makes you ....” Health is a natural part of the course.

Surfing discipline classes encourage surfers to go to bed early in order to catch early morning waves, which normally means solitude, glassy sea conditions and sunrises - even if it does mean missing the party given by Joe Scotch and his pals the night before.

Unlike conventional schools, underlying processes toward patriotism, such as in team games, are not stressed. Surfing is taught as an individual relationship between man and sea.

It means coming to terms with oneself in one’s enjoyment of the elements. One also takes one’s cues from nature. As stated by top South African surfer, Max Wetteland, you learn to bend when the wind blows (see Experts, Chapter 3).

Once one is in the sea, gone are land commitments. A surfer has a refreshing, at times tiring, paddle out through breakers. He may reach the take-off point and have the privilege of picking up a wave almost immediately, which will send him on an exhilarating ride back to the beach, or a wipe-out which means a swim, if his board is washed in. The latter, apart from taking up valuable surfing time, is no problem. The surfer simply treads water while waiting for a wave and catches an exciting body slide shoreward. He may swim if he desires.
If a wave is not immediately forthcoming while sitting outside, the surfer waits, firstly checking to see if any wave sets are building up outside. If not, he contemplates his environment, fully appreciating the wonderful privilege of being surrounded with so much natural beauty. If one can appreciate such "God-given-gifts", one is halfway there.

Mr. Surfing tells his class: “The only way we can get along harmoniously is for every pupil to have a POSITIVE approach to everything he does, which will be projected into his riding.” The pupils know this, but at times they forget it and their next wave ends in a wipe-out.

So the surfer catches another with confidence and positiveness. He says: “I’ve got to make it.” And he does.

If he slips up, however, he tries again. And again. The reward - an enjoyable ride to the end - follows a spirit of determination and drive.

John Whitmore in a pensive mood in Bakhoven, Cape Town
ECOLOGY is a popular subject. This is tied with lessons in Hygiene. John Whitmore, the president of the South African Surf Riders’ Association, was stressing a point when he said that water is a thing we wash in.

Every surf is a kind of bath. A clean sport we would say.

The litter-bug is a surfer’s greatest enemy, but there are even some among the surfers themselves. Surfers should get together and try to combat this pestilence. The bug is becoming bigger and bigger - it appears to be a South African ‘‘natural’’.

Surfers also cast angry eyes on oil tankers out at sea. They suspect that inconsiderate ships’ crews clean their tanks off the South African coast while heading towards the Persian Gulf to load oil. They hope the South African Government will stamp that one out.

COMPETITION is not compulsory in the school of surfing. Some like to compete because it may motivate them to surf better. In trying to beat the next person, one has to surf better. If his surfing improves through contests, it means he is going to have many good rides when contests are not around. Provincial competitions are held once a month.

Most surfers go through a competition phase. It gives them the opportunity of meeting other surfers (especially at national events), discussing the latest developments in surfboard design, and generally adding to the spirit of the sport.

Many members of the general public ask how contests are judged. There are various systems, but the basic form is simple. Competitors are divided into heats of about six to a heat. Each lasts for about 20 minutes. Surfers are watched by a panel of about six judges on the beach. The riders are allowed as many waves as they please, but only their three best rides will be counted.
Timing, wave judgment and luck secure a good wave for a person who happens to have positioned himself at the appropriate place. A particular beach is allocated as the contest venue. Once the rider is on the wave, it is up to him as to how much juice his ability and the wave allow him to extract. Each ride counts a maximum of 20 points. If poor, his points will be between 0-4, fair 5-8, good 9-12, very good 13-16, and excellent 17-20.

Excellence may ultimately follow if a surfer’s ride is handled with utmost control in the toughest possible positions i.e. without being knocked off his board.

He may go through some exciting and difficult manoeuvres like hitting the lip re-entry, sweeping cut-backs into a turn and then a power-struggle through crashing white-water, back to the shoulder, functional side-slips, or a host of others, on one wave. This would obviously be an unusual feat on near-perfect waves of long duration usually experienced at a point-break. It can and has been done.

An example of a poor ride would be a rail dig or nose dig or spin-out shortly after take-off. Surfers are not penalised when wiping out. The action prior to a wipe-out is taken into account (See glossary section for meanings of surfing terms).

The top three scorers in each heat move into the next round. The rest are eliminated.

There are two or three elimination rounds in the form of quarter-finals and semi-finals before the number of surfers is whittled down to six - the finalists. The final heat, of course, culminates the contest. The time of the heat is extended to about 45 minutes or an hour according to the discretion of the judges.
The whole contest experience should be regarded as fun. A serious kind of fun. If your object is to win or do well, you must adopt your usual positive attitude and set yourself on a ripping expedition. Tear the wave apart. Give the judges something to write about. Execute as many manoeuvres as the wave allows - it usually impresses the judges. Sometimes you have to give the judges what THEY want. So it’s best to find out what they are looking for. Sounds a bit restricting, but that is the way of contests. A good surfer, however, rips regardless and usually comes out on top.

South Africans also stage one of the world’s best professional surfing contests. The success of the “500” series, as they are called, has been largely due to the unfailing work and organisation by pro-boss, Peter Burness, of Durban, and co-workers, president of the Natal Surf-Riders’ Association, Ernie Tomson and his committee. The contests are held annually in Winter.

The pro-meet has attracted the world’s best surfers and has developed a considerable amount of international relationship and understanding. All six
finalists receive cash prizes. The first is usually R500, second slightly less, until the sixth person receives about R50.

The next lucid lesson concerns FOOD. If a surfer wants to get the most out of his surfing, his diet has to be right. A body filled with synthetic foods, starchy products and lashings of sweets is not going to respond quickly and efficiently to a wave filled with natural goodness. It’s a conflict. The waves win, and very quickly.

Wholesome foods packed with nourishing vitamins and proteins consumed on a balanced basis enables a surfer to tune more finely, fluidly and flawlessly into a wave. The two natural factors, wave and man, meet on a comparatively equal footing.

Although the wave still comes out on top, the rider will be able to hit the lip many more times and go through longer rounds before he is forced to retire.

There are a number of food patterns to follow. The more dedicated health addict may stick to a stricter diet, namely vegetarianism. Many people are realising the importance of body and mental health. This is largely affected by the food we eat.

Meat is generally an aggressive and stimulating food. Many football players eat steak before a match because it tends to power the body - ideal for coping with the roughness of the game.

Vegetables, it is said, are of a more mellow nature. Vegetarians are supposed to be a more gentle breed.

According to Durban surfing vegetarian, Peter Rorvick, one’s whole life-style changes when one becomes a vegetarian. He says that proteins are essential for the body, but the protein in meat is of a lower grade and secondary to that contained in vegetable substitutes, such as legumes, lentils, soya beans and wheat. The latter is purer, he maintains.
Basically, people are chemically different from one another. Thus foods effect people differently. One has to find what suits one, through experiment and experience.

A basic vegetarian diet, worth following or just noting to include into or supplement your present diet, has six important points:

1. Eat as much as possible raw fresh foods, especially unfertilised and unpesticised. If you should cook, steam lightly. Food over-cooked loses its vitality, goodness and nourishment.

2. Eat a lot of fruit. Surfers spending long periods in the sun can satisfy warm mouths with some cool fruit.

3. Vegetables.
4. Protein supplementary foods, like nuts, sunflower seeds, sprouts, any seed or bean, such as alfalfa or lucerne. Moisten them and place them in a dark place. The most nourishing part is the baby shoots, the first burst of goodness.

5. Various herbal teas.

6. Surfers normally have their own juice extractors for fruit and vegetables juices. Instead of drinking a coke try a natural juice.

Cooking should be done in steel pots. Aluminium minimizes goodness. A grater is handy. Some surfers are growing their own food and concocting their own recipes which they prepare themselves - it makes eating and surfing more enjoyable. Eating the correct foods may inspire a surfer to practise various other useful activities, such as YOGA - the mental, spiritual and physical discipline of the body through exercise and posture. This, it has been discovered, is another way surfers can improve their surfing.

A few top surfers in South Africa and many in Hawaii, practise yoga. Anything that improves a surfer’s riding should be seriously considered. By using old muscles in new ways, by conditioning new types of responses, by awakening new centres of the mind, surfers can put the ancient Eastern practice to effect in their surfing.

A Durban yogi, a young-looking 45-year-old woman, said yoga made one physically and mentally relaxed and taught one to a better understanding between mind and body.

Certain yoga postures produce remarkable, almost instant results. One posture can reduce neck, shoulder and arm fatigue. A neck, spine and waist-twisting posture produces a feeling of well-being and ease after only short periods of practice.
Breathing exercises and meditation, although they form an important part of yoga, may be done independently. Breathing exercise, in fact, is an important step in meditation. It revitalises the body and mind and is especially good before going surfing.

Meditation, which may be practised from 10 minutes to an hour or longer, has certain subtle techniques. Basically, meditation releases your mind of cluttered thoughts. For meditating, a good sitting position is that known as the “lotus”. Start the exercise with easy, rhythmic breathing and concentrate on the fore-centre of the brow. Your thumbs, which are most comfortable on your legs above your knees, should be touching one of the fore-fingers, or you clasp your hands by crossing your fingers and place your hands below your stomach. This maintains circular flow through the body.

At first, you will have thoughts running through your mind that you cannot stop. You must become aware of them and where they come from - the subconscious. Dredge these thoughts until you achieve a period of non-interference. This stage is difficult to reach. It may, however, be substituted with an inspiration of sorts. The length of time you are able to remain like this depends on abilities - your body often calls you back.

These are some basic principles surfers may consider, in order to attune themselves to the rhythms of the universe - one of which is the ocean.

As in all games, surfing contains an “unthinking element”. There are definitely some surfers who are lacking in intellectual pursuits. Thoughtlessness impedes mental growth. These would be the people who fail to reach higher classes.

Unless one is prepared to digest some of the messages of surfing, and put them into practice, even to go beyond oneself, one will find that the waves will not flow as smoothly as they should.
CHAPTER THREE

What the Experts Feel

“He who commands the sea has command of everything.”

Themistocles.

South Africa has emerged as one of the most positive, go-ahead and vibrant surfing countries in the world. Our outstanding surfing breaks have attracted many overseas visitors to our country. At the same time, wondrous waves in international lands have drawn many of our surfers to them. But often the meaning of such visits is transferred from waves to the surfers themselves. As visiting surfers to South Africa have had the opportunity of meeting many locals, so it is invariably our top surfers who tread distant shores and carry the vibrations of their home country with them. The result has been smiles all round.

One need not be a top surfer to travel overseas, but if the purpose of the trip is to go surfing, one finds it is the more mature surfer who will go, especially if he visits places like the Hawaiian breaks of Pipeline and Sunset Beach. Because of their excessive power, these waves can be mastered only by the experienced surfer. Another reason for our surfers crossing the ocean to foreign beaches is to compete in international surfing competitions, whether invited to attend a professional meet or to go as official representative Springboks to the World Titles.

Thus these surfers, termed in the title of this chapter as experts, have taken South Africa’s image with them and expressed it both in the surf and on land.

In this chapter, we introduce you to a number of South African surfers whom we consider have made the grade. We could have chosen at least another 20, but because of limited space, we could not include all. Thus we settled for a
“magnificent seven” who represent a good cross-section of both areas and ideas in the field. By making the grade, we mean that they have more surfing in them than most other riders in this country. They have experienced areas in the waves which are the aspirations of keen surfers.

Often being involved in something bigger than themselves has given them humility, respect and the courage needed to continue living both in and out of the water. Although all have a healthy regard for the sea and have expressed a certain powerlessness against the might of the ocean waves, they have done a mighty lot of conquering.

Characteristic traits in all are positiveness and confidence - the two concepts being so closely related that we wonder whether they can be separated. When they began surfing, however, they may not have had the confidence, but that spark of positiveness must have been there. Then perseverance and practice placed them on the confident path to success.

They have achieved goals outwardly, such as winning contests and acquiring Springbok colours, but their ultimate gain has been personal enrichment - not externally viewed or materialistically, but wealth from within where it counts most.

Sharing is probably one of the most positive traits in life, and when our experts were approached to express their views and feelings, they were only too pleased to share. They are George Thompson, Max Wetteland, Peers Pittard, Jonathan Paarman, Shaun Tomson, Antoni Brodowicz and Dave Hanssen.

All have represented South Africa a number of times in international events, except for East London’s top surfer, Dave Hanssen, who was chosen as a Springbok to travel to the world surfing championships in Hawaii which were unfortunately cancelled. South Africa’s surfing prodigy, Gavin Rudolf, of Port Elizabeth, who won a world pro-am contest in Hawaii in 1971, was again
gracing the waves of Hawaii when this book was written and was therefore not available for interview.

Ting! Bang! Jangle! as cents were thrown into the orange-coated cash register that colours the sweet counter of GEORGE THOMPSON’S restaurant in up-town Durban.

It was another busy day. But George’s mind was not on rands and cents. The ting, bang, jangle only registered the hiss, crash, rumble of waves that rolled—not only in George’s head but onto Durban’s shoreline.

![Image](image_url)

*A silhouetted Gavin Rudolf glides in at Cape Town
Noordhoek Beach tube at dusk*

Just then his beautiful wife, Lorna, who had been teaching infants in school all morning, walked into the shop and slipped behind the counter. She kissed George and encouraged him to have a break - such as going for a surf or something.
Next thing, the Springbok surfer was racing to the beach in his red-roasted grilled chicken-ad Kombi. It was a hot day which had combined with George’s heaviness of handling customers. Arrived at the beach his eyes were on clear blue wondrous waves washing coolly toward the shore.

The scene then resembled a movie speeded up - out of the car he jumped, whipped his surfboard from the back, waxed up, hopped over a wall which divided the road from the beach, raced along the sand and tripped into the ocean, sizzling.

Fine paddling technique shortly saw him beyond the furtherest breaker. A wave loomed and he was on it - to the bottom of the face, muscles flexed ... swoosh!! and up he flew then bang! he explodes on the lip and rebounds down and completes his ride after a series of graceful manoeuvres. Kicking out, he lies on his board relaxed.

The sun, competing with the city lights, begins setting behind buildings while George takes yet another of his countless rides. Finally, his body dripping, he drags himself from the ocean and trudges back to his red-roasted grilled chicken-ad Kombi. Again he has left his towel at home, so he sloshes onto the driver’s seat and bounces home.

From the verandah of his flat 15-stories up, he can still hear a slight hiss of the nearby ocean. He has a shower and prepares to return to his restaurant. But before leaving, he pulls out an L.P. by American group, Bread, flips it on the turntable of his hi-fi and settles to a cup of coffee on his already darkened verandah.

Listening to the distant surf backed by the sounds of Bread, he reflects. Was his mind on the waves of Hawaii, Australia, California, Peru or Puerto Rico ... or simply on the rides he had just taken? He had experienced surfing at all these places, mostly as a Springbok representative and captain.
“My hairiest experience,” he told me, ‘‘occurred at Makaha (big wave spot in Hawaii) in 1970. We, Shaun and I, were sitting about 15m inside the break-line at a place called the bowl. Suddenly, a gigantic 18ft set loomed outside. We turned around and were exposed to a wave which looked like a mountain.

“It was so huge that we felt we could not get a big enough breath to go under it. We managed to stand on our boards, however, and dive off!

‘We dived right onto the impact zone, and as we descended, we felt tons of water breaking on us. It then ripped us out of the water as if we were little cork floats and threw us about eight feet in the air. We were then churned over and over and over. Although it only lasted for about 10 to 15 seconds, it felt like 15 hours. You lose all your air and all your power of resistance, and you feel it’s the end.

“The next minute you’re released, and it shoots you straight out the back...”

He sank in his chair and gulped down a mouthful of coffee. All of a sudden, he was aware of the record that was playing. It was the track “Guitar Man”.

“This really switches me on,” he exclaimed. “Before I go for a surf, I really like to blast it through my body -it gives you that almost essential rhythm you need while surfing.”

Why are you stoked on surfing?

“Surfing has given me feeling. It’s had me in emotional phases like I have never been in all my life. There is nothing anyone can experience like one can when one’s surfing good surf, when you’re tubed or when you are going down a wave at 20 m.p.h. and it’s 18ft above your head.

“When you’re inside, you get butterflies, you go lame, everything is drawn out of you as if something is sucking the power out of you. You are put on a
cloud. You’re just away from everyone and everything and you feel that nobody can come near you.

“Surfing? - You cannot explain how stoked you can get. One has to go out there, even a beginner, catch one’s first wave and realise just what surfing is. It is the ultimate in anyone’s life.

“You’re fighting the elements. You’re fighting the sea. And the sea is so moody. It can be gentle one day, and you can be so stoked. You feel the next day is going to be the same. But it’s not. You paddle out the following day and the waves are twice as big, powerful and, terrifying. You experience fear - not a fear such as when you are going 100 m.p.h. in a car with someone else driving - but a fear like diving out of a building and you know that when you hit the bottom, you are not dead.”

Phew!!

The ocean is an experience of whelming beauty here a surfer expresses himself at Victoria Bay, Near George in the Cape
“When you experience being stoked, it would be the same as experiencing sky-diving, water-skiing, drifting your car in wet weather and banking your motor-cycle scrambler around a steep and fast bend. But these are artificial. A Surfer experiences all these sensations on one 15 second wave ride - something which some people would take a life-time to experience.’’ George has won numerous surfing contests and has represented South Africa a number of times overseas. Asked to what he attributed his success, he replied:

“Well, first there’s my wife. Like surfing, I am completely relaxed when with her. We are able to converse about things other than those occupying my daily life, especially business. She provides that equilibrium which keeps me going.” “People like John Whitmore and Nat Young, and the true friends around me, have also provided a lot of encouragement. By eliminating any of these guys, I’m sure my success would not have been as greatly realised.

“There is, however, a certain amount of natural ability that gives you the edge on others. By pushing this ability while surfing and by being in the right frame of mind, you can achieve things. And of course, practice definitely makes perfect!

“When in the water, you must be communicating on the same level as others out there. You must have no hang-ups and must be at ease with your natural environment. You feel that the moment you are in the water, you are freed from all the commitments on land. You become an individual with nature.”

George is like a lot of people, especially the businessman. But he has a natural escape to keep him going.

“There are two things in my life which keep me going - my wife and surfing. If I did not have these, my business would have broken me down.

“In business, you must get involved. You must not go in half-heartedly because if you do you become a flop or failure. So you must have a positive
attitude - and so it is in the water. Your attitude is to make the wave. I adapt the same principles in my business as I do when surfing. I’m out there to better anything or anyone - as I am in my business. Nothing will overcome me. Surfing also relaxes me physically. Two hours surfing is like five hours of sleep.”

George had not noticed that the record had stopped. He glanced toward the black sea. The coffee he clutched in his hand, turned cold in contrast to the warm thoughts of surfing.

“Back to the shop!” he said resignedly, but before he left, he listened once more to Guitar Man.

Elephants and sharks are two monsters which remind me of DAVE HANSSEN, of East London. Another thing is the virtuosity with which he handles the city’s power-packed wave, Nahoon Reef I have said that East London is Nahoon Reef. To take it further, I can call Dave “Mr. Nahoon Reef”. The break is his personal favourite.

“The Reef gives me the greatest sense of personal achievement because of its enormous size, speed and power. This is where surfing is at. A beach-break is fun but you can get tired of it. It’s like listening to bubble gum music, it’s nice and fun but you can only listen to it once. You never get tired of the Reef because there’s always something new to try. For example, you can easily hit the lip on a beach-break, but at the reef it’s something you can really aim for. Most times you won’t do it, but it’s always good to try. That’s part of surfing.”

What about the elephants?

“As the wave breaks over at the take-off spot, you can fit an elephant in it without getting it wet,” said Dave.

Where do the sharks fit in?
“It’s not often that we notice sharks at the Reef, but they are there. Once I had quite a weird experience. It was a very clear day and the water was clean and calm. You could see the bottom of the Reef quite clearly. I picked up this wave and was driving across its face and looked into the wall and right next to me was a six-foot Hammerhead shark. It was like standing in an aquarium and looking at the shark on the other side of the window. I could have stuck my hand into the wave and touched it.”

On a calm surfless day, most surfers like to swim or paddle out at their favourite breaks with a pair of goggles and study the type of underwater topography their waves break upon.

Dave did this one day. After a slight mishap, he lost his goggles. He spent at least an hour searching for them. He looked and looked but could not find them. They were definitely lost. To this day, he believes they were carried away by a goggle-gobbling shark.

In spite of elephants and sharks, Dave is extremely stoked on surfing. Why?

“Well, you can consider surfing from two view-points - as a sport or as an art. As a sport, it’s a fantastic exhilarating feeling when screaming across a wave at high speed. You are the only person in command, the only person to help yourself out of difficult situations. It’s you against the ocean,” he said.

“Surfing as an art implies that when I’m in the water, I consider myself an artist to a certain extent. I like blending with the wave because the wave is the only variable factor to take into consideration and you must adapt to that particular variable. Surfing is more than just a sport, it’s an art, expressing oneself. That’s what I find so intriguing about surfing. I don’t get tired of it. It is actual self-expression, freedom and individuality.”

Dave is a business economics honours graduate from Rhodes University, Grahamstown. He won the South African surfing championships as a junior in
1967 and the senior title in 1970. He has also won the inter-varsity a number of times.

Asked to what he attributed his success, he said: ‘ ‘Motivation played a big part - like going to National surfing championships and watching and meeting other top surfers such as Max Wetteland, George Thompson and Ant van den Heuvel, helped me to surf better - a will to go out and rip.

“I acquired different ideas of surfing from different people, like Ant’s timing and smoothness and George’s more adventurous surfing. It’s good to note the best from other surfers and think about it and maybe incorporate it in your own style. You should never, however, try to crib another’s style.

” Dave is one of South Africa’s surfing individuals. He prefers, like most of our experts, to escape the crowds. In spite of this, he does enjoy contest surfing. It is because he has a positive approach to it.

In fact, it is up to the individual. Personally, I find contests fun and a good experience because one does have the chance to meet other people from different parts of the coast. You see their equipment, the way they surf and you can exchange ideas.

I find that after a contest, whether I have done well or badly, I find myself surfing a lot better. It’s like recharging batteries.

“Competitions are also good for character-building. To do well in a contest, you have to have a certain aggressive yet compromising approach to your surfing and to other competitors in the water.”
Dave was asked to comment on board design and where he thought we, South Africans, were heading or should be heading. In a rather outspoken reply, he said:

“Where we should be heading is away from following other countries blindly. Over the last few years, all the stokies have been reading the international surfing mags, adopting their heroes and trying to surf like them, forgetting that South Africans have their own individual personality and their own type of surf.”
The thing to do is to concentrate on the difference between us and other countries. We should forget about following big names overseas. It’s about time we got together in South Africa and developed our own style and really achieved something by ourselves. We should be far more creative. And of course, take the best from other countries but not follow them blindly.

“Lately, however, there has been a definite break away from this hero-worship of overseas surfers. For example, Gavin Terry Prince rides the back of the ocean on the one hull of his surf cat during his journey to the outer breakers of Nahoon Reef, East London, from where he will return to the beach along the face of a wave.

Rudolf’s winning the Smirnoff Pro-am in Hawaii has brought to light that our surfers are just as good.

“The better surfers in South Africa have been liberated to a certain extent. They are thinking for themselves and being creative in their own right. This awareness is growing. A lot of our youth lack this awareness, mainly because they haven’t developed a philosophy of questioning everything. And, of course, that attitude is carried over to surfing”.

Where is surfing heading? Is there a limit?

“There’s no limit as long as man is creative and aware, it’s just as simple as that. And surfing will go on evolving,” said Dave. “Lately we’ve been through a stage when so many new things have been tried - which is good. There’s been a great increase in knowledge.

But a lot of surfing style is simply a commercial gimmick, which is probably part of the cancer in surfing. We should avoid the sheepish way of thinking that something like a new surfboard must be good just because some top guy is riding it.”

Dave is undoubtedly still looking for the shark that gobbled his goggles.
It was midday. I had come to visit South Africa’s fearless big wave rider, JONATHAN PAARMAN, who was asleep in his parent’s home which overlooked the intense blue Atlantic Ocean at Bakoven, Cape Town.

Jonathan had every reason for sleeping. Hours previously, he had landed at the city’s D.F. Malan airport after a tiring flight from Hawaii.

It was ridiculous to wake him. His huge sun-tanned 18-year-old form lay heavily on the bed in his room - was in slumberland. Nevertheless, his mother felt it impolite to turn me away, so Jonathan was wakened.

Cape Town’s big wave virtuoso Jonathan Paarman with the “guns” he brought back from Hawaii

Jonathan did not mind - always ready to oblige. It was hard to believe he was back in South Africa after spending two months in Hawaii and one month in California. He had gone to the U.S.as a Springbok representative at the World Surfing Championships.
It took him a while to assimilate his surroundings. His tanned body showed through the open floral Hawaiian shirt, and he spoke in his usually modest fashion, tainted with an American drawl.

Like many of Jonathan’s friends, I was interested in his trip abroad. The first question was what the surfboard scene was like in Hawaii (Hawaii is the fastest-moving country in the world in board design).

Jonathan replied:

“Basically, they’re on to flatter decks - top and bottom so that they can have fuller rails. Some are concave on the top deck so they don’t have such a bulky board. The thicker rail gives more power on the turn. Tails are very thin and drawn in straight lines into the back. They are also sampling fish-tails drawn in all the way and the back is fished in.

“Length goes on the wave sizes. On a small four to five feet day, the average board is about 7’2”. Everybody rides boards seven feet and over. Some may go lower but they would have a hard time.”

“Which are the most popular spots in Hawaii?” I asked.

“Sunset Beach and Pipeline, the bone-breaker. It’s called the bone-breaker because if you come over with the lip, you’re going to hurt yourself. South African breaks similar to those in Hawaii would be Outer Kommetjie and Sunset (both in Cape Town) and Cave Rock (Durban). There are a few little spots in Hawaii with no names, called Backdoors, which are very similar to South African waves.”

“What ideas did you bring back?”

“It’s just gonna have to work. I’ll have to make some of the boards for myself - the thicker rails and flat decks and just see how they go personally, before I give them to anybody else. You can’t really bring back boards from Hawaii and surf them here, because they are a lot bigger and the surf is different. I’ll
ride a board longer than seven feet and get slowly back down. Maybe I’ll bounce straight down.” “Why are you stoked on surfing?”

“I don’t have to rely on anything else when surfing. You just get into the surf. Generally, I like a bigger wave because when you take off at the top, there’s so much in front. Sometimes you freefall if you take off late.

You’re just dropping in, into so much speed while going down the face. Like Sunset. If you have not surfed it for a few days - as you take off your first wave, your whole stomach goes up and you’re just screaming down the face and when you get to the bottom you just turn as hard as you can, because there’s tons of water above your head.”

“Don’t you get scared out there?”

“Sometimes. For the first wave or two, I take it easy. Then I just go in and ride it. As long as I don’t take over the falls backwards. You know, you lose your breath, so you take it a little easier the next time.”

He concluded: “In South Africa, you can go for the lip because you know you can hit it and come off. In Hawaii, you have to go for the lip and tuck underneath it. It throws over so fast that you go into the tube. We can also go for the tubes here. I think the most exciting manoeuvres are rebounding off the lip and going as far back into the tube as you can.”

**MAX WETTELAND**, all 35-years of him, emerged sprightly and body shiny from the shallows of Durban’s South Beach shoreline and ran skimming along the water to retrieve his surfboard which he had lost after a wipe-out. He beckoned as I was shooting him with my camera: “Come surfing, the waves are really good!”

Even the hottest surfers have wipe-outs. A wipe-out is experienced by all, whether one is the world surfing champion, or a beginner. It is all part of the fun of surfing. In spite of his wipe-out, Max was stoked.
A few nights previously, Max was in good humour as he expressed some ideas on his association with surfing. He had just had an enlightening conversation with fellow surfer Tony Cerff, who had recently returned from Australia where he had become pretty heavily involved in the surfboard manufacturing industry. A “surf-rap” often places surfers on a positive wavelength. And so it was with Max.

Maxie has been a main force behind the growth of surfing in South Africa, especially in the line of board-building. He was the first South African to compete in a world surfing championship. The year was 1964. The place, Australia. Since then he has placed this country on a par with overseas countries in the design of surfboards. The South African surfing community has reaped much from his innovative ideas. His biggest interest in surfing has been the surfboard - besides riding, of course.

Max probably has his best mental experiences while with his surfboard in the water.

“When surfing, you have to have a certain mental attitude - you have to surf for yourself,” he said. “If you go out there and try to have a conversation with someone and take your mind off surfing, you won’t catch as many waves as you should. You also have to be positive with your approach to surfing. You don’t try selling surfboards in the water. To have any success, you have to be thinking about where there is more pressure hitting the bottom of your board, whether you should move the flattest area forward or back or make the rail a little harder for bite or round it off for more release, or whatever.

“I like to go out there and try to do something and have fun. At the same time, if my fin feels a bit wide, thin or narrow, I like to change it or put it further back or further forward.”

This is what one may term an ultra-involvement in surfing. That’s the way Max is.
“What about board design in South Africa? Where are we and where are we heading?”

“Usually people are guided by someone, or someone gives them inspiration to do something to a surfboard or in riding a wave. Surfing has to go faster, which is the only way we can go.

Manoeuvring and positioning on a board has been practically mastered - wouldn’t say every possible manoeuvre though. 'I still think we could be going a lot faster - riding with the wave, high up and deep into the pocket.

“I can remember going to Jeffreys Bay many years ago and looking at Super Tubes and saying to myself it could never be ridden because it was too fast. Today, most surfers are riding it. That’s how surfing has speeded up.”

He added with a chuckle: “I think it could reach a stage when we will be able to ride across a close-out. We will need boards with very deep fins for direction in one super-fast straight line.
“However, I think it is all going to happen where the most fun is, because as soon as you get too serious about it, you make it too damn difficult and complicated and you lose the whole aspect of fun.”

Fun is doing what you like to do. Max likes thinking of the hydrodynamic intricacies of surfboards and their applications through personal experience in the surf for his fun. Many other surfers are the same, like Tony Cerff, for instance.

Through the years, Max has kept his youthful and exuberant approach to surfing. In other words, he has remained stoked.

“Surfing is just my way of life. I like to be at the ocean. I like waves and I like moving water. Pools have never got me stoked because they are still with no action in them. I’m stoked on swells and especially riding them. I like to see them rising and hear them breaking.

“Surfing has been a wonderful guide to my life. I’ve learnt through surfing that when the wind blows you bend like a tree or else you break. In life you are pressurised in many aspects. If you don’t bend, or give a little, you crack up.”

“How do you keep in tone for surfing? Does food play an important part?” I asked him.

“Actual surfing keeps me fit. Food is like fuel to a car. Food is the most important thing of all - it provides the right energy, especially when you know the surf is going to be good for a few days. People who do not know how to eat properly run out of energy sooner than they should - they are normally surfed out within two hours.

They could kick themselves while sitting on the beach through sheer exhaustion and looking at all the waves they should be riding, if they ate the right food.
“When this happens, one should rethink one’s diet. The right foods should be high protein, or anything in moderation. I don’t believe in strict vegetarian diets like many others.

Too much of anything is bad. Eat good solid food - and not this synthetic trash that’s dished up,” concluded Max.

“Come on Nige, there’s a good body wave at Lucien!!” cried Springbok surfer, ANTONI BRODOWICZ, from the Natal South Coast. His surfing buddy, Nigel Heath, and a few other South Coast ‘stokies’ scrambled into a car and sped off.

An onshore wind, that made conditions for surf-board riding unsuitable, was howling. The wind was blowing cross-direction at Lucien Beach which helped create huge, dumping shore breaking waves, ideal for body surfing.

The car screeched to a halt at a parking bay above the beach. They poured out of the vehicle and ran down to the beach. One by one they splashed into the water. They looked like a school of playful porpoises as they caught wave after wave.
Body surfing provides a pleasant pastime to surfers when the waves are not good enough to tackle with a board.

“While body surfing, your body and the wave are so close to each other. You are really surfing the wave with your body. I’m more stoked on proper surfing though. It’s just the closeness of the body surfing I like,” said Antoni.

The sport was clean, healthy fun, but the group were already predicting a wind change which meant they would be able to do what they liked best - go surfing.

Early the next morning, Antoni and Nigel, were back on the waves at their favourite South Coast spot, St. Michaels-on-Sea, this time with their surfboards. Antoni was displaying the power and aggressiveness that had earned him a place in the Springbok team which travelled to California in 1972. He was 16-years-old at the time.

A characteristic of Antoni is his positiveness, both in speech and surfing. When asked why he was excited about surfing, he said:

“When you are in the water, you are free. You are out of all the hassle, away from all the people. You’re out there doing your own thing. When you are on the wave, you know YOU are doing it - nobody else.

You’re creating. You also want to show yourself something like becoming aggressive and just showing the wave that you are the master.’

Antoni is one of the few top surfers in South Africa who surfs goofy-foot (taking up a position on a board with your right foot forward, characteristic of a left-handed person). Most waves that break on the Indian Ocean side of South Africa, break towards the right, which makes things a little harder for the goofyies because their backs are to the wave face while surfing a right.
“It is harder to adjust, but you get to know back-hand,” said Antoni. “It is a slight disadvantage surfing with your back to the wave, but you get used to it. You learn to adapt.” He returned to the question of why he is excited about surfing. “The thing I get most stoked on in surfing is being right in the green room. You’re just trying to get out of that little hole ahead. Once you’re out, you just can’t explain the feeling.”

And about mastering the wave, he said enthusiastically, “I do what I want on small waves, but on big waves, my whole attitude swings. I do what the wave wants me to do.” He added with a laugh, ‘ ‘but you want to beat it all the time.’ ’ The Natal South Coast is notorious for shark attacks - some popular bathing and surfing beaches have off-shore nets while other spots, especially surfing places, do not. It is not uncommon for a fisherman to reel in a shark almost next to a group of surfers in the water.

Antoni commented: “If you paddle out at a place where you know there are sharks, you should realise you are doing it and that you may be bitten. You’ve just got to watch all the time. Half the time you are watching for sharks, and the other half you are surfing. There’s always the chance that you will get bitten.

“If one is going to surf in shark-infested waters, one must keep one’s eyes peeled. And when you lose your board, swim quickly to the shore. Don’t panic. Take things casual. While waiting for a wave, it’s best to remain in a lying position on your board.”

An important asset of Cape Town is its wine. It grows well down there. The quality of the surf is also good. There are so many edifying aspects of Cape Town I could mention, that if I did, I would defeat the purpose of this chapter. Like its wine and surf, the area also produces good surfers, such as PEERS PITTARD.

It is not unusual for Peers to pack a Sunday basket with lots of meat to ‘braai’ and a bottle or two of wine, and spend the day with his beautiful wife and
baby son and friends at some idyllic surfing spot on the Peninsula. After a crispy, appetite-building surf, he prepares lunch in the good old South African tradition.

If the water is clear, he may dive for crayfish for afternoon ‘tea’ - he became a qualified diver while doing his citizen force training in the South African Navy. Besides that, he was a Springbok surfer in Puerto Rico for the World

*Crouched and determined George Thompson flies in a low trimming position from the curl of a neat Durban wave*

Championships in 1968. Three years later, he won the South African men’s surfing championships.
It was Peer’s capacity for holding his breath for long periods under the water that saved him from drowning while surfing one day at Cape Town’s famous big wave spot, Sunset.

He miss-timed his turn on one wave and as he came off the bottom, the lip struck him on the head and wiped him out.

“It wasn’t such a bad wipe-out,” he said. But he had lost his surfboard. While treading water, another wave brushed past him and washed him about 300 metres from the place where he was wiped-out. A third wave came that was bigger than the others. It hit him and forced him under the kelp-beds. The wave went past and he could not surface.

“The kelp was thick and matted on top of me. I really struggled. But the sea has its own secrets. After the wave had passed, the water started moving back. As it washed above me, the kelp moved out and I think I came up in the same hole that I went down in. It was murder down there. Such a relief to see the open again.”

Jonathan Paarman digs in while free boarding against the backdrop of the growth at the Keurbooms River
Did it put Peers off surfing?

“No, I just wanted to get into surfing again. All sports have their dangers. But surfing has it’s own. The whole thing in surfing is man against the sea, and the sea is stronger. It’s impossible to overcome it, but it’s a good feeling to know you escaped it that time. It’s just the chance you take. However, if you’re confident of yourself, you can do just about anything.

“Surfing is pure enjoyment because you are so close to nature. I’ve gained a lot of respect for the ocean - something that man will never tame. Surfing is both a sedative and a stimulant, and while playing in the ocean you can let all your worries run away from you.”

Peers is one of South Africa’s most versatile surfers. Asked what his best manoeuvres were, he said:

“A good cut-back, an in-the-tube ride and hitting the lip. When you’re right inside the tube and all you see is that hole in front of you, you get a sense of claustrophobia. Your blood is pumping so fast that your head is really lifting off. Unreal! Everything is at peace. Sometimes you come out so fast that you can’t correct yourself.

“After taking off on a big wave, the blood in your stomach races around. It’s a fantastic feeling after kicking out of a big wave. Your body goes limp with excitement.

“I like big, juicy surf. After a while, you get tired of doing the same thing on small waves, so you see if you can do them on big waves. It’s a good feeling after being tubed in a four to five feet wave taking off on a 10 to 15 feet and getting inside. It’s as if a double-decker bus can ride along with you in the tube. Everything becomes bigger in perspective all the way round.”
SHAUN TOMSON, of Durban, has represented South Africa many times overseas, yet surfing is always something new to him. He bubbles with enthusiasm about the sport as if he had started only yesterday.

It is his approach. He feels there is no achievable goal in surfing. ‘ ‘As my riding advances, the thrills I get out of surfing go with it. It was exciting riding long boards and hanging 10 at the time, and then re-entries. But these moved on. Now, it’s in the tube. I don’t know what is going to come next. But, I’m confident that something new will.”

His views about not achieving a final goal, but always experiencing new thrills, add up to the pure and simple fun which he says he finds in surfing.

Even his theory on why he is stoked on surfing keeps changing.

“You try to analyse why you are stoked but you can’t because the feeling changes. To be stoked? Maybe it’s the speed of it. You’re completely alone out there you know, away from people. I realise there are others in the water but you’re not in the rat-race, so to speak.
“How do you set yourself up for the tube?”

“How do you set yourself up for the tube?”

“Everything is instinctive or spontaneous. I don’t plan anything. As you go along a wave, you see it forming into a tube and that is when you set yourself up. You usually go to the bottom, do a speed turn or stall turn and just wait for it. But it is hard to explain it because each wave is different. And on each wave I do a different thing.”

“You can’t explain surfing. Alone with nature and so on, it just gives me such a thrill. Getting in the tube, right now that’s my main attraction in surfing. Just to get further and further back into the tube. It’s such an extreme sensation. There’s also that danger part of it - you know you are going to get eaten if you don’t make it because that’s where all the power is. The danger part is what makes surfing exciting.

In spite of Shaun’s age, 18, he has an exceptionally mature approach to his surfing and to life.

“In life you have to make a compromise. I’d like to go surfing all the time, but you have school, now I’m in the army [spoken to while on a weekend pass from Citizen Force training] and I’ve got no choice. I suppose if I went surfing all the time, I’d become slack. I wouldn’t be fresh anymore. Just to get away from surfing for a while, you can think about it, look at yourself and look at new things, and just get re-stoked.”

Asked what the driving force behind his surfing was, he said: “The sea is my driving force and just wanting to go surfing all the time. For me, the surf does not have to be good to go surfing. I can also have fun in lousy surf.”

Commenting on his involvement in other sports, he said he used to play rugby and swim at school.
“But all these sports are competition orientated, whereas surfing isn’t. Competitions are just a tiny part of surfing. In other sports, competition is the whole sport. In swimming you train to win the next race. You cannot really go and enjoy yourself. But in surfing, you don’t train for contests. You relax and enjoy yourself and it’s just a completely different sport. I suppose skiing is the same, although I haven’t tried it.”

CHAPTER FOUR

The Historical Perspective

“The harp of the ages, making music Soothed by wind and spray.”

Donovan Williams - The Sea.

Surfing produced the biggest explosion in South Africa during the immediate post-World War II years.

There were as many beginnings in South Africa as there were major coastal cities - Durban, Cape Town, East London and Port Elizabeth. Because of the long distances and lack of communication between the centres, all started surfing on their own before merging in the last two decades.

In the late forties and early fifties, there could not have been more than 50 surfers braving South Africa’s waters. Today, thousands carve tracks.

As the fusion between the centres took place, new surfing spots unfolded. South Africa’s long coastline was explored by surfers seeking perfect waves and solitary beaches. Somewhere along the historical line three of the worlds best point breaks were discovered - Cape St Francis (Bruce's Beauties), Jefferys Bay and Elands Bay.
South Africa has hundreds of other surfing areas, some still undiscovered, which may dominate the surfing history chapters of tomorrow.

Compared with today’s surfing standards of board design and riding ability, the country’s beginning was primitive. But without these enthusiastic foundations South Africa would not have reached the present high status of being a major surfing country.

Although we boast a history, the sport in this country is relatively young compared with other major countries of the world like the U.S., West Coast (California), Australia and big-daddy Hawaii.

As in South Africa, the U.S., Australia and other surfing countries, such as Peru, France, Puerto Rico, England and Japan, started in the 20th Century.

It was in Hawaii, five small islands in the mid-Pacific, where surfing had its birth as part of the fabled Hawaiian way of life in pre-European times. Much later, it spread to the rest of the world, and somewhere along the line it hit the shores of South Africa.

South African surf has attracted many top overseas surfers, including world champion Nat Young of Australia
Recent archaeological findings suggest that Hawaii was settled around A.D. 500. Because the ocean was always a part of the island’s way of life, it was guessed that Hawaiian islanders rode swells since settling on the islands. No one really knows when and how the uniquely Hawaiian form of the sport was developed, but the most likely date is about 1000 years ago.

Once upon a legendary time, a prince of Kauai, named Kahikilani, travelled hundreds of miles across open sea between his home and Oahu to prove his prowess in the great Pau Malu surf on the north shore of Oahu. This surfing break was known among the islanders for its hugeness, ferociousness and power. (Today, it has the same reputation. It is the famous Sunset Beach).

Soon after Kahikilani arrived at Pau Malu, he rode the surf with courage and skill. Day after day he rode the rumbling waves perfecting his style until noticed by a Bird Maiden with supernatural powers who lived in a cave in a mountain nearby. She fell in love with the prince and sent bird messengers to place an orange lehua lei around his neck and to bring him to her. By flying around his head, the messengers guided Kahikilani to her cave. Enchanted, he spent several months with the Bird Maiden. One day Kahikilani heard distant rumblings that marked the return of the surfing season. The sound of the surf was too much for Kahikilani, and he left the maiden but promised never to kiss another woman. The thrill of being back on the waves must have clouded his memory, because after a short while a beautiful maiden came walking along the white sand and stopped to watch Kahikilani skimming across the surging surf.

Fascinated, she waited until he rode to the shore and place an ilima lei around his neck, and kissed him. His vow was broken. He had not remembered his promise to the Bird Maiden and paddled back out to the breaking waves. But the bird messengers had been watching and immediately flew to tell their mistress of this infidelity.
When she heard what had happened, she ran to the beach and snatched the ilima lei from Kahikilani’s head and re-placed it with a lehua lei. She then turned around and ran back to her cave. He chased her but never saw her again. Halfway up the mountain he turned to stone.

This is one of the many Hawaiian legends about surfing. To the islanders, the sport was a national pastime that had tremendous social, political and economic significance.

Surfing was enjoyed by kings and commoners, boys and girls - but it was normally the kings and their princes who rode the larger surf where the feat of standing erect on a speeding surfboard found its noblest expression. Great romances could blossom or fade with the rising and falling of ocean swells.

The sport involved many ritual activities that began from the selection of a tree from which the surfboard was carved, to surfing competitions where defeat could have resulted in loss of possessions or death. The sport was bound up with gambling, song (surf chants), religion, language and sexual practices, long before the first Europeans came to settle there.

Captain James Cook was the first European to observe surfing when he discovered the Hawaiian islands during his third voyage in the Pacific in 1778. Islanders paddled out to welcome him in canoes and among them was at least one man on a surfboard.

The fascinating sport of “surf riding”, “wave riding” or “surf boarding” amazed subsequent explorers, sailors and missionaries who visited the island.

Lt. James King, of Captain Cook’s expedition, wrote in the first account of the sport, “The boldness and address with which I saw them perform these difficult and dangerous manoeuvres was altogether astonishing and is scarcely to be believed.”
His wonder at the Hawaiian’s skill led him to write: “Their first object is to place themselves on the summit of the largest surge by which they are driven with amazing rapidity towards shore.”

Captain Cook’s discovery of the island and the subsequent influx of other Westerners led to the sport’s demise. First came the explorers and the traders and then settlers who started developing the island both commercially and industrially with the setting up of cattle ranches and sugar plantations.

The Hawaiians were soon attracted to the new ways. This resulted in the rapid disintegration of traditional life during this period of expanding foreign contact that amounted to a cultural revolution.

Missionaries who also visited the islands imposed their Christian values on the island group which helped end former ritual practices, gambling and the “immoral” dress of women who rode the waves bare-breasted.
At the end of the 19th Century, surfing in Hawaii was at its lowest ebb. Occasionally one saw a lonely surfer with his alaia board gazing forlornly at distant swells. The fire of the former surfing life on the islands smouldered dimly. Surfing in the traditional sense had died.

At the beginning of the 20th century, however, came a revival. A number of Honolulu residents, including many enthusiastic schoolboys, rediscovered the waves at Waikiki, and gradually the interest in the sport was renewed. Among the new aspirants were young George Freath, the Irish-Hawaiian who later took surfing to the U.S., and Alexander Hume Ford, an adventurous mainlander who was so enamoured of the sport that he took it upon himself to boost its revival and popularization. He conducted surfing classes and in 1907 he taught author Jack London how to ride a surfboard.

Jack London wrote an impassioned article on “The Royal Sport” which appeared in a national American magazine and sparked interest among Hawaiian residents and mainlanders.

The first surfing club was founded in 1908, which included outrigger canoeists and called the Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe Club, for the purposes of “preserving surfing on boards and in Hawaiian outrigger canoes.”

Surfing rocketed on the islands. In 1915, Jack London returned to Hawaii and was amazed to find that the club had 1200 members “with hundreds more on the waiting list, and with what seems like a half a mile of surfboard lockers”.

The sport survived two world wars, including the bombing of Pearl Harbour, and spread to the rest of the world. Australia and California soon became synonymous with surfing.

It was from these two places that South Africa received the sport.
Although surfing in its modem sense was unkown to South Africans in the pre-World War II era, the ocean still attracted thousands to the beach. There was plenty of fun at the seaside during those roaring times of men in full-length striped costumes and their bashful bathing belles.

The first object in South Africa that resembled the modem surfboard was a surf-ski built by Fred Crocker, of Durban, in 1938. Designs for a ski were taken from a rough sketch of an early model brought back by a swimming coach from the Empire Games, in Sydney, that same year.

Surfing and board design was a “hit and miss” situation up to the early sixties. Activities up to this time produced laughs, tears, disappointments, joy, and most of all, gave a new identity to the participants.

After the war, gone were the full-length striped bathing costumes. Daring male surfers donned waist “cossies” which gave them more masculine appeal when they rode high above the waves.

As mentioned earlier, surfing in South Africa had four main beginnings, in Durban, Cape Town, East London and Port Elizabeth, and a merging between the centres came about in the late fifties and early sixties.

Fred Crocker with contemporaries Carlie Schiefner and Frank Cook pioneered surfing in DURBAN and graced the surf on the famous Crocker Ski. The board was about 13 feet long, 2 1/2 feet wide and six inches deep. It had no fin and was made of meranti wood covered with canvas, stuck down with aircraft dope and copper nails.

They were part of the few who saw surfing into the post-war years and were later joined by other keen water-men, Dux Coetzee, Ivan Bold and Dave Hooten, of South Beach, who rode the first ply-wood surfboards, and men such as Peter Milne and Richie Field, of Country Club Beach.
The first surfboard club, called the South Beach Surfboard Club, which injected new life into the surfing scene was formed in 1950. Among the members were: Cliffy Honneysett, Bruce Giles, Shorty Bronkhorst (still mastering the waves today), Bob Burdon, Les Ginsburg, Noel Dodd, Pierre Cerff, Dez Caplin, George Bell, Leith Jardine and Ray Booth, who is frequently seen today surfing with his sons.

The club’s formation was a clean break-away from lifesaving circles. The separation still exists today because of the clear-cut difference between the two sports. The South Beach surfers of the fifties were, however, given the opportunity to compete in a Natal inter-club lifesaving competition. They took up the offer and walked off with the first six places in the paddle-board race. That was the last time they were invited to compete. Surfers were on their own. The sport became such a full-time activity that there was no time to take part in other beach activities.

A year later, a tiny 13-year-old boy used to sit on the beach and admire and envy the riders who rode boards next to the South Beach jetty. He did not own a board so he went body surfing. His name was Baron Stander, who was later to become one of the pioneers in the modern surfing era of the sixties, surfboard manufacturer and radio broadcaster of surfing news.

He managed to get hold of an old disused board that lay in the backyard of the building in which he stayed. He lugged it to the beach and soon received his surfing baptism. He could not surf at South Beach because the venue was reserved for the elite few. He rode at The Wreck, a neighbouring beach. He was sitting close to the wreck one day when the board started to sink. He paddled frantically to the beach but halfway to the shore his board sank - never to be seen again.

Surfers began to develop their own language with words and phrases like: “Backie” - large wave, bigger than others; “Plow” - when the surfboard nose-
dived after a rider took off on a wave; “drac wave” - offshoot from a dracula film; “play” - very good, pleasant; and “pos” - position.

“All the Way!” was the excited cry when the ultimate in surfing was reached. Muscular board-riders caught the biggest wave, at times about 10 surfers to one wave, and raced to the beach. The surfer who hit the beach first would jump onto dry sand without getting wet and shout exaltedly, “All the Way!” These were also the days when only the big waves were ridden. A rider dared not ride small surf - if he did, he was called a “Ripple King”.

To handle the heavies, big boards were built. The average board was made with a wooden frame interior, square or rounded solid wood sides or rails, six inches deep, covered with plywood or masonite decks, and scores of screws running down the sides and at the joins of the double strip of masonite and plywood decks. Length exceeded 10 feet. Thick nose blocks were placed in front of the board to avoid damage when it nose-dived into hard sand in a hairy shore-break. Tail-blocks, called “Bum-blocks”, were fixed to the back of the board.

Average weight was 45 lbs which increased while surfing because most of them leaked. Each board contained a plugged hole that was unplugged after surfing to let the water out.

It was no easy task carrying these boards. You had to place it on one end, get under it, and drop it on the back of your shoulders. Once at the beach, the board stayed there. It was unheard of to place the board on the roof of your car which is a common feature with today’s light boards. If they had to be transported, they were carted by truck.

In 1952, tiny Baron who weighed only 80 lbs had one of these boards built 200 metres from the beach. Finally came the day for him to carry it to the beach. It was newly painted and polished and was the pride of its new owner. But Baron could not maintain the board’s balance which pivoted and pressed
hard on his small shoulders. He dropped it three times and each time, he cried.

Building one of these surfboards was a major task and normally involved the spirited hands of a number of people. Excitement surrounded the completion of a board built one day by Noel Dodd, Barry Edwards, Clifffy Honneysett, Bruce Giles and George Bell. The decks were fitted and all that was left was to screw them down, probably the biggest task, and the placing of a keel. The young surfers fitted each screw an inch apart. The job was done and the board lifted to place the keel.

But as the craft was lifted a strange sound came from the interior. The board was lifted higher and the knocking sound went down the board and stopped. Something was inside.

They turned the board around and there was the noise again. Bewildered eyes glanced around the shop and it was discovered that the hand-planer had been left inside.

It would have been too arduous a task to remove it, so it was left there and whenever the board was ridden the planer would roll noisily from side to side.

The first person to ride across the wave’s face while others went “all the way” was George Bell. He would paddle out on his nine feet board, pick his wave and angle it to the beach. The others thought he was crazy. Little did they realize that this was one of the biggest break-throughs into the modern way of surfing. The manoeuvre was called a “broadie”.

An Australian lifesaving team toured South Africa in 1954 and introduced a 16 feet paddle board and 14 feet six inch wave board, with ply-wood sides and convex top and bottom decks. More people began to broadie at this stage.
Many life savers were still incorporating lifesaving with surfing. Among them was Dux Coetzee who was chosen for the Springbok lifesaving team to visit Australia in 1956. Present in Australia was a Hawaiian team. They had brought with them their fibre glassed balsa surfboards and set everyone agog with the performance and manoeuvrability of these light-weight craft. When Dux returned, he related what he had seen. It was beyond the locals’ comprehension and they continued to surf in the old style.

In the following years came the Malibu Board with the introduction of the first fins or skegs, as they are known today. Men like Roy Allaway, now a prominent advocate, Reggie Blunt, Jack Wilson and Harry Bold were seen more often on the beach. Finn Anderson produced aluminium finned boards. Cliff Honeysett built the first Trick Board.

Surfing was still pretty much in the dark in 1959 when Californian surfer, Dick Metz strolled up to locals and asked to borrow a board. He was wearing what looked like “kitchen boy pants” - the first baggies or surf trunks seen in Durban - that made the locals a bit dubious, thinking he was some type of hobo loon. After a friendly chat Metz paddled out on a borrowed board. He gave the first display of walking the board and “toes on the nose” which shook onlookers.

Surfing was now on the verge of the modern era. Locals not only broadied, but they also started shuffling to the nose (front) of the board.

Harry Bold who was completely stoked on surfing, began writing overseas and became Durban’s foremost contact with the outside world. He received the first surfing magazine in 1960 which inspired him to travel to California. Together with Baron, he hitch-hiked through Africa - got the local Africans stoked on body surfing in Dar-es-Salaam - and eventually arrived in England. Harry left Baron there and travelled across to the United States.

After Baron’s return to Durban he received an astonishing letter from Harry, who said he was at a place called Rincon, famous Californian point break. He
wrote that surfers there were catching broadies in front of rocks - rocks! - and were travelling a distance comparable to the distance from South Beach to North Beach, about 220 yards. Baron thought Harry had gone mad. To top it, Harry continued that the Americans rode their surfboards behind boats - wake surfing.

The tales seemed so ridiculous that Baron and Jack Wilson got a huge Hammerhead shark that had washed up on the beach, pierced in it a spear-gun and took a photograph of it and sent it to Harry to tell the Yanks that they had shot the shark in the public bathing area.

Three months after his departure, Harry returned to South Africa, bringing with him an American surfboard that was the first hot-dog board in the country. He stopped at Cape Town en-route and showed his new board to Cape Town pioneer, John Whitmore. Contact between Cape Town and Durban was thus established.

The prolific fishing grounds off Cape Town and clear water suitable for diving made it seem natural that divers, the prime water-men in the early days, would explore other areas of the ocean like the rushing surf.

Thus, back in the dry-suit diving days of the late forties, Cape Town’s pioneer surfer, John Whitmore, who was later to become the first president of the South African Surf Riders’ Association and manager of many Springbok teams overseas, took to surfing in his own unique way.

While diving for his living at Hermanus, he and friend, Roy MacGregor, would swim to the outer breakers during diving intervals and catch slides while holding a plank under one hand.

They called it surfing in those days, whether they body surfed or used some form of equipment. But the ultimate was a surfboard and getting the right board was their hang-up.
As a boy, John came up with various new methods to keep himself afloat on the waves. One invention was the construction of a craft made from ceiling boards and a paraffin tin. Two six-feet lengths of ceiling boarding were stuck together with glue, reinforced with a cross-piece that was nailed to the boards. Plywood was then nailed to the tip and rounded off. An end was then placed in a flattened paraffin drum containing a little water for boiling. A sack was placed around it and then put into a fence and bent back to give it a scoop. Local Sea Point surfers, contemporaries of John at this his home beach at the time, swam out with the intricate device and returned to the shore riding in front of a wave.

About the same time, many other Cape Town residents were involved in surfing in one way or another, particularly body surfing, plank riding or surf canoeing. Among the postwar pioneers in Cape Town were Earl Krause, Tim Paarman, Pikkie Higgo, top big wave rider Dave Meneses, John Raffino, Arthur Holgate and Gordon Verhoef. Peter Blaizby, Mike Ray and Jimmy Lilly appeared later on the scene.

It was so rare to see a surfer in those days that when surfers approached each other by car, both would stop and swap surfing news and probably go surfing somewhere together. A great camaraderie existed among them.

In the early fifties, John was bitten by the surfing bug and wanted to find out more about the sport. He wrote to America, even to newspapers, for anything on surfing. The best information he received was via a picture of a surfboard. He could see parts of the top shape, side shape and fin.

John soon learned how to make proper foam and manufactured the first foam in 1955. He brought the Malibu surfboard on to the Cape Town market. It varied in length from 9 feet to 10 feet and was 23 inches wide. Surfing was slowly growing. To cater for new aspirants, John built 20 inexpensive wooden boards made from sheet ply and wood, hollow with rounded rails. They were 10 feet long, weighed 75 lbs and cost £20. When Harry Bold of Durban
returned from California in 1961, he visited John with his new American surfboard. John liked what he saw and built a few similar, and a short while later he travelled to Durban with six polyurethane boards which closely resembled Harry’s Ole.

John’s adventurous spirit and love of the outdoors, lead him to many surfing spots - some still virgin. He visited places like Cape St Francis, Elands Bay, Buffalo Bay, Mossel Bay, and later Jeffreys Bay.

Travelling away from home was another important factor leading to the merging of the centres.

The pioneers in EAST LONDON, Bobby Joubert, brother Norman, Terry Prince, brother Ralph, and Mickey Breetzke, all members of the East London Surf Lifesaving Club, used to dive for fishing sinkers to save enough money to buy their first community surfboard, a Crocker Ski, from Durban.

Their first rides on the ski got them immediately stoked on surfing. They all used to go to the beach, two having to carry the ski, and have turns of riding it - even in the worst sea conditions. The ski was soon joined by another, and a 16 feet board, which cost the members of “Surf Club” £10 each.

Terry, who was chosen to represent South Africa in a lifesaving tournament in Australia in 1956, saw a Hawaiian team displaying incredible skill on surfboards.

He returned to East London and told friends “the Hawaiians went down the wave, back up the wave and then back down again.” Bob and other gaped. They had never heard of such manoeuvrability. All they could do was “broadie”. Being used to under-buoyant 16 feet boards, they did not believe that boards of the Hawaiian dimensions, 10 feet by 22 inches by three to four inches, could float a body (Today the average board is seven feet long). The 16 feet surfboards could just float the East London surfers and they used to sweat blood paddling them.
Terry then bought a Finn Anderson board from Durban, that weighed 45 lbs. Bob copied it, and so did professional lifeguard Bunny Barnes and friend Neil Jones. Bunny also developed his own foam.

To demonstrate the strength of his foam, he took a glassed board to the beach, placed it on its side and before a large crowd hit it with a crowbar handle without damaging it. But it was later discovered that epoxy resin did not show dings from the outside, but developed a soft spot inside that crumbled at a later stage of the board’s life.

Surfing in the late fifties was limited because surfers did not know what to do with their boards. It was not like today when a beginner can watch a more experienced surfer performing all types of exciting manoeuvres and then try them himself. The old-timers needed direction, but there was none and until then surfing was “trial and error”.

Direction came in the early sixties when Bob received the first American surfing magazine which contained articles on up-to-date manoeuvres. About the same time, he travelled to England in the Springbok lifesaving team and saw his first fibreglass balsa board.

In the same team was Max Wetteland, of Durban, who was later to become South Africa’s foremost surfboard designer and top surfer (see Experts chapter). Bob and Max became close friends and when they returned to South Africa, they met John Whitmore in Cape Town - and that completed the link-up with Durban and East London.

PORT ELIZABETH was a late starter. While surfing flourished in other major South African centres, Port Elizabeth slept.

Its awakening came in the early sixties within lifesaving circles. Paddle-skis were ridden until the first wooden boards were built in 1964.
Former Springbok lifesaver, Bruce Matthew, and Frank Giradeaux then built styrene foam long boards. Overnight Mickey Baxter transformed Port Elizabeth’s archaic method of surf riding when he arrived in the city with a modem Whitmore surfboard from Cape Town.

This induced new life in local board-builders and in 1965 Martin Toms and Bruce Matthew made their own modem polyurethane surfboards.

Contact between Port Elizabeth and Cape Town was established.

After the fusion of the centres in the early sixties, surfing in South Africa became revolutionised. A tidal wave of surfing news, films, international visits, national contests and board design ideas swept through the country.

Surfboard shapes changed like women’s fashions and the number of surfers shot from a few hundred at the beginning of the sixties to thousands at the close.

Surfing films were the biggest influence. For the first time, “stokies” could see surfing on the screen and try out what they saw the next time in the surf. Top honours in this field went to Harry Bold. Starting from 1961 to well into the sixties, he imported at least 13 films. The first was “Surf Mania” by Walt Phillips. Other more popular ones were: “Water Logged” and “Endless Summer” by Bruce Brown; “The Hot Generation” - Paul Witzig; “The Angry Sea” - John Severson; “Locked-in” and “Gun-Ho” — Bud Browne; and “Surfing Southern Cross” and “The Long Way Round” by Bob Evans.

John Whitmore was instrumental in enhancing the Cape scene by showing Bruce Brown’s two films, “Water-logged” and “Endless Summer.”

Surfboards became much more advanced in both shape and material, but were still long - between nine and 10 feet as opposed to today’s seven feet average. The boards also had more flotation and surfers were still able to
paddle them on their knees - something seldom done today. As a result, surfers developed little lumps below the knees - called “surf bumps”.

Some riders acquired bigger bumps than others. It became so bad with Springbok Errol Hickman that his friends called him Tick-bird. Some surfers even managed to skip draft into the Army by displaying their bumps at medical check-ups. Medical officials couldn’t explain this strange disease and would not risk drafting those ‘afflicted’ with it.

While John Whitmore and Bobby Joubert were establishing themselves firmly in the surfboard industry, in Cape Town and East London respectively, Harry Bold, Max Wetteland and Baron Stander also went into the surfboard business and started to produce the first “Safari” surfboards.

Baron and Max produced the boards part-time while working as professional lifesavers, and Harry handled the liaison side. The year was 1963.

Their first surfboard caught alight while they were applying resin to the fibre glass. They had added too much catalyst to the resin during mixing and as they spread it onto the cloth which covered the foam, it flamed. Baron ripped the burning cloth off the board with his bare hands and both he and Max slumped in a corner of the workshop and almost wept.

A similar incident took place with Bob Joubert while glassing his first surfboard in the East London lifesaving clubhouse. Together with a friend, they mixed two one-gallon tins of epoxy resin. He also put far too much hardener in the resin. While glassing with his hands, he felt a sudden build-up of heat. His immediate reaction was to throw the tins outside to save the clubhouse. They snatched up the tins and hurled them outside. Hitting open ground, they exploded and caught alight. Seconds before they would have gone off in their hands.

And so surfing exploded into the modern era.
An invitation was extended to South Africa to send their national champion to the first World Surfing Titles, at Manley Beach, Australia in 1964, but South Africa had no champion. They had never had a contest. It was eventually decided to send Max Wetteland who was the top surfer and someone to bring back useful technical knowledge.

Thus South Africa’s initiation into surfing contests was the world titles. Max was bewildered throughout. He had just taken off on his first wave of the contest, when the commentator hailed his name over the megaphone. The thousands of spectators roared with applause and Maxie got such a fright that he fell off his surfboard.

In addition to a few contest nerves, Max gained a wealth of experience and board design knowledge and returned home to inject new life into the local scene. He brought out the named after the winner of the world titles, Midget Farrelly, who later visited South Africa on two occasions. Marriot and Ken-Ben surfboards were also popular crafts of the day.

Surfing contests sprang up and became an accepted activity surrounding the formation of the South African Surf Riders Association and area associations, Eastern and Western Province, Natal and Border. The large population of riders along the Natal coast in the early seventies necessitated the formation of the Southern Natal Association, catering for surfers south of Umkomaas.

Inter-provincial contests were staged in each centre annually, bringing surfers together to exchange ideas and giving all the opportunity of observing new styles of surfing. New surfing lands were uncovered along South Africa’s relatively unexplored coastline.

The first official Springbok team was chosen to attend the second World Titles in California in 1966, Max Wetteland, Ant van den Heuvel and George Thompson, all of Durban, had unofficially represented South Africa in former international events. Springbok teams have since been
selected after extensive trials and have surfed for their country in Australia, Puerto Rico and Peru.

South Africa was placing herself firmly on the international surfing map. Our natural talent found expression and was observed, both in international events and during the visits of top overseas surfers to our country. The main attraction was South Africa’s successful run of professional meets which have played host to the hottest surfers from the U.S., Hawaii and Australia. The “500” series of pro. contests have been regarded as the best organised in the world, thanks to the endless efforts of pro-boss, Peter Bumess of Durban, and the assistance of Ernie Tomson, father of hot Durban Springbok Shaun (see Experts chapter), and the committee of the Natal Surf Riders’ Association. These contests have been supported by many generous sponsors.

A number of top South African surfers have also been invited to professional meets in Hawaii where they have done well. Port Elizabeth Springbok, Gavin Rudolf, won the world pro-am surfing contest there in 1971.

Surfboard design has changed dramatically from the time Max and Baron burnt their first board, and has probably been the greatest influence in the rapid advancement of surfing in South Africa.

The boards underwent a major transformation from the long nine to 10 footers of the “Hang Ten” era to the short six footers in 1968 of the new and exciting “Hitting the Lip” age which projected surfing into the seventies. The new short boards could handle more wave area thus covering more distance with a multiplicity of new and imaginative manoeuvres.

Boards today are stabilising around seven feet and utilising many refined hydrodynamic qualities in shape and design. Surf-board design, however, will always change and we cannot predict which way it will head. This again is part of the fascination of surfing.
South Africans are realising that they have their own identity, made up of their own form of surfing, their own waves, and way of life, and are shaping their boards and styles accordingly.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Definite Identity

“An ocean is forever asking questions
And writing them aloud along the shore.”

Edwin Robinson.

Surfing is fortunate in being part of the play-ground that has inspired many people to artistic expression, whether it be in art or music or latterly clothing or photography.

For thousands of years, man has gazed on the ocean, felt its pulse and has desired to reproduce it in his own way -through creative art. The quotations which head the chapters of this book illustrate this point. These were produced by people who preferred to paint their pictures in words. Flow-lines of the sea and surf have also received expression through such media as painting and music.

Former greats in the artistic world are to be admired for their creative reproductions of the sea and its moods, especially when most of these were done from the shore. I wonder what more could have been produced if artists had actually wet their bodies and physically felt the ocean like surfers do today.

A refined surfer actually complements the rhythms of the ocean when he flows along a wave’s smooth contours. He gets right into the picture and
feels his subject like a sculptor running his hands over the real human form before shaping his block.

It seems inevitable, therefore, that surfing will produce its own artists. Jack London was probably the first great writer to have been involved in surfing. We wonder if surfing had anything to do with him writing: “... from out of the sea he has leaped upon the back of the sea and he is riding the sea that roars and bellows and cannot shake him from its back,” in The Cruise of the Snark. But because surfing on a mass scale is still young there has not been much time to reveal some artistic masters who may be locked away in a wave.

A few South African artists have emerged to express their intimate experiences with the sea. Most notable has been poet, David Livingstone, who wrote a vivid poem of a surfer’s journey along a wave. Two less famous artists are folk-singer and guitarist, Brian Finch, and painter Peter Milne, both surfers from Durban.

Brain has been a professional musician for four years and has played throughout the country and in Europe. Although his repertoire does not include actual surfing songs, his involvement with the ocean has inspired him to compose music - both the motions of the sea and music moving along similar flow-lines. He told me he wanted to get surfing into his songs.

To represent the sea and surfing artistically is no easy task. Peter has painted over 50 pictures relating to the sea and surfing - one of his works being illustrated in this book (see: Who Surfs, Chapter One).

More commercial but still a factor that captures and projects the atmosphere of surfing and the sea - probably more than all the art forms - is that of clothing. Surfers have developed a definite outward identity, revealed mainly by the clothes they wear. Through their open or intimate identification with the sea, they have come naturally to wear characteristic clothing.
We cannot speak of the modem medium of man’s involvement with the sea and surfing without introducing movies.

This, of course, has brought the sport splashing into the theatre and homes which may be miles from the ocean.

But let us have a closer look at these flow-lines.

The surf is the MUSIC of the sea. Its sound, nuances, moods, movement and life have been the inspiration of many musicians and surfers. The latter, in their closeness with this turbulent part of the ocean, found that music helps them achieve the flow needed to ride waves successfully.

Thus, by constantly relating his rides to music, a surfer is able to achieve a oneness with the music of the surf. Many surf-riders purposely listen to tunes or songs before entering the ocean in order to place themselves on an appropriate wave length.

At the time of writing, “Guitar Man” by the popular group, Bread, was the number which inspired Springbok surfer, George Thompson, before many encounters with the sea (see Experts chapter).

Every surfer, although not a musician in the real sense, creates his own music while going through the fluid and rhythmic movements on a wave.

About eight years ago, popular surfing musicians expressed their feelings of the ocean and translated the atmosphere of certain waves onto musical sheets, which lead to the birth of what was known as surfing music. Groups like the Beachboys and the Ventures, of the United States, successfully launched this new image. It received wide acclaim among the youth culture at the time until its demise due to exploitation by other groups wanting a quick “buck”.

The original surfing musicians attempted to project the true feeling of the waves. One tune, called Pipeline, was named after an exciting Hawaiian reef
break. Its deep, rhythmic and bassy sound captured almost realistically (or so I thought when I was a “stokie”) the power of a Pipeline wave pouring onto the beach.

The exploiters, on the other hand, transformed the surfing music scene into a pseudo-commercial, money-making racket. Any noise was produced and labelled with a surfing term. This led to surfing music’s death.

There has been almost constant controversy as to whether surfing is an ART form. The answer to this is an unquestionable - yes! While riding, every surfer draws lines on his moving canvas - the wave!

The quality of the picture is obviously representative of the artist. A good surfer with a smooth style will paint a picture we all admire while a beginner will produce a scribble or blotch following a wipe-out. Sadly, the picture drawn by a surfer is seen only in the minds of observers. The surfer himself retains but a memory of his ride, unlike a snow-skier, who after flowing down a mountain slope, glances back and sees his artistic tracks imbedded in the white smoothness of the snow covered slope.

One of South Africa’s surfing artists, Peter Milne, although producing his paintings from photographs of surfers on waves - one way of freezing a rider in his tracks - has said he would not be able to paint the sea as well as he does if he was not a surfer. By living with the surf, he has come to know it intimately. Watching thousands of waves and riding them under all types of conditions have taught him about their shape and power and the feeling of movement.

Sea artists often have to imprint a “perfect” wave in their minds before putting brush to canvas. Reproducing the surf is not like painting a mountain which is always there. Every wave that exposes itself for a few seconds in the surf zone is different, and this can only be appreciated through almost constant contact with the sea - which surfers have.
Surfing’s biggest influence lies in CLOTHING. Surf-gear, which emerged on a mass scale with the rise of modem surfing, has been an important contributing factor to the western world’s swing towards a more casual look.

About 10 years ago when surfers were hanging 10 on their surfboards (walking to the front of the board and standing there with all ten toes hanging over the front while riding), a clothing company in the U.S. named their gear after this trick manoeuvre and started producing clothes which they thought would characterise the excitement of surfing.

Their clothes have spread to resorts around the world and even influenced the South African scene, both at the sea and inland.

By wearing brightly-coloured and casual surfing gear, many people who cannot surf are able to identify themselves with the athletic image of those who ride the waves. The real surfer, however, tends to wear plainer, more practical gear.

Most of the colours, designs and styles of surfing gear have come from cues provided by a surfer’s natural environment - mainly the sea and sky which present a kaleidoscope of colours during sunrises and sunsets. Flowering fashions from Hawaii have also filtered through to the local clothes-conscious community. South Africans have associated Hawaii with flowers, warm smiles, pagan gods, surfing and sunshine.

So far we have spoken about the clothes worn on dry land. But what do surfers wear in the water? Basically, all a rider needs is a pair of surf trunks or baggies. That is if he lives in Durban where the weather and water are usually warm. A wet suit, preferably full-length from the neck to the ankles, with a pair of rubber booties, is almost essential when surfing in the chilly waters of the Atlantic Ocean in Cape Town. The suit enables surfers to remain warm in these icy conditions.
A few years ago an American, Bruce Brown, produced an outstanding film called Endless Summer. His locations were the surfing beaches of the world and during his round trip he followed the sun.

It was in South Africa that the best footage was taken of what were described as the most perfect waves in the world. The place was Cape St Francis where his surfing stars, Robert August and Mike Hynsen, who travelled with him, exploded in the most unbelievable hollow waves. It has been said that Endless Summer has collected more box office tickets than My Fair Lady. The film’s world-wide success placed South Africa on the map as being an almost essential stop-over for any travelling surfer.

Films have been a most vital medium in capturing exciting moments in surf around the world and making it alive at home. Not all of us can visit places like Hawaii, but we can get an idea on film of what we are missing.

Small 8 mm films have enabled surfers to see themselves on the screen and thus have an objective view of their shortcomings which can be worked on next time in the water. Cape Town Springbok, Peers Pittard, has said that films made a valuable contribution to his improvement.

Surfing magazines with imaginative photographs and articles have also played a constructive part in keeping surfers informed. Most magazines are imports from either the U.S. or Australia. South Africa did have her own magazine in the mid-sixties but it only lasted for about two years. Maybe it is time for another S.A. special. Surfers often speak about it.
CHAPTER SIX

Physical Geographical Aspects

“The sea never changes, and its works, for all the talk of men, are wrapped in mystery.”

Joseph Conrad - Typhoon.

Knowledge of the physical geographical aspects of surfing, such as winds, tides and wave formations, is invaluable to any surfer.

Many surfers automatically develop an intelligent sense of their physical environment and can spend hours discussing the various weather patterns or phenomena that have an effect on the surf. Their different theories are, at times, quite astounding. Each surfer seems to have his own interpretation of why a particular surfing spot works the way it does.

It is difficult to pin-point or come to any absolute conclusions with something as unpredictable and mysterious as the sea - of the various phenomena that take place in its most turbulent and exciting part, the surf zone.

Thus my explanations may conflict with some people’s interpretations, but they will give a general outline and supply some answers as to why South Africa produces some of the best quality waves in the world.

As stated by Dr. G. A.W. Fromme, of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, in Durban, it would take days or weeks of lectures to describe near fully the phenomena of waves and beaches, their causes and effects.

But the account as illustrated in the limited space in this book will supply readers with a safe guide to this rather complicated and sometimes touchy
subject. The material has evolved from the study of a number of books on the subject, and hours of discussion with surfers and weather experts alike - a rather confusing combination.

Geographically, South Africa is probably the second best located country in the world for surf. First are the famed Hawaiian Islands which receive the full onslaught of heavy Pacific wave swells generated largely from the Furious Fifties in the north.

Any land mass, however, which is surrounded by vast expanses of sea, is potentially a surfing area. Whether you pack your bags and board and travel to France, Japan, Australia or America (north or south), you are bound to meet with excellent surfing breaks. Thus, visiting Europe, you not only go there to snow-ski, but also to taste the local surfing spots.

For the uninitiated, at this stage it is worth stating a basic fact of surfing. Conditions most suitable for riding are either an off-shore breeze (from land to sea) which has a smoothing effect on the ocean, or a no-wind condition which glasses the surface. On-shore winds result in bumpy or choppy waves unfit for surfing.

But back to South Africa and Hawaii. South Africa is just as exposed to mighty swells as the Mother Islands - her 1 560 miles of colourful coastline offer an enormous variety of winds and swells. She also has interesting underwater topographic contours. Many countries have land masses surrounding them which block swells, but South Africa is embraced by vast naked oceans.

The difference is that South Africa has a continental shelf and Hawaii does not - or it is very thin. Hawaii also has a longer fetch - the extent of the open water across which the wind blows.
“Body wave at Lucien!”

Springbok surfer Antoni Brodowicz takes time off surfing to enjoy a closer bodily contact with the ocean by body surfing at Lucien Beach on the Natal Coast

The Islands consist of five tiny land masses which pierce straight from the depths of the Pacific, surrounded only by a thin shelf. The huge swells that power towards these islands are not interrupted by shallow underwater areas that tend to slow down swell velocity. Thus, waves hit the Islands virtually directly and often resemble toppling mountains, such as occur at Waimea Bay, on the North Shore of Oahu. Sudden shallow reefs, receiving these powerful swells, cause the waves to heave suddenly and plunge with terrific force to form perfect spinning cylindrical tunnels ideal for ultimate surf-rides - an excellent example being the Bonzai Pipeline.

South Africa’s waves may not be as consistently huge as those in Hawaii, but she does have her “Pipelines” and “Sunsets”, which are possibly the two most renowned spots on the Islands.
When waves reach the shoaling waters of South Africa’s continental shelf, they drag on the bottom causing wave velocity to decrease. This, in turn, causes the phenomenon of refraction, which will be explained later in the chapter.

The wide stretch of South African coastline, flanked by two major oceans, the Indian and the Atlantic, with the vast Southern Ocean in the south, lends itself to a multiplex of interesting wind systems that are, at times, so violent they generate powerful swells onto our shores. These often compensate for the bottom drag of the continental shelf and cause large and forceful waves to break in our water, such as in the cyclonic conditions off the eastern seaboard.

Before continuing it is necessary to agree on a standard set of names for the parts of a wave. The principal ones are defined as follows:

- **Crest**: The high point of a wave.
- **Trough**: The low point of a wave.
- **Wave height**: Vertical distance from trough to crest.
- **Wave length**: Horizontal distance between adjacent crests.
- **Wave period**: The time in seconds for a wave crest to traverse a distance equal to one wave length.

While any kind of disturbance in the water is likely to generate waves, there are three prime natural causes: winds, the gravitational pull of the moon and the sun and earthquakes. The first two concern us most.

Wind waves are the most familiar kind. Three factors influence the size of wind waves. These are (1) the wind velocity, (2) the duration of time the wind blows, (3) the extent of the open water across which it blows (the fetch). In a stormy generating area, wind waves are called sea. At the upwind end of the fetch the waves are small, but with distance they develop - their period and height increase and eventually they reach the maximum dimensions possible
for the wind that is raising them. Then the sea is said to be fully developed; that is, the waves have absorbed as much energy as they can from a wind of that velocity.

Springbok Shaun Tomson flows and flies along the face of this Bay of Plenty wave in Durban
Photo: courtesy of Mike Duff, of the Natal Mercury, Durban

This occurrence affects South Africa in two ways and at two main places - one the broad low pressure belt that moves in from the south-west and the other the cyclonic conditions in the Indian Ocean that generate monstrous swells toward the east coast. The former is more consistent. The intensity of both is greater in winter, although both affect South Africa throughout the year.

There are two other interesting wind phenomena that produce surf along our coastline. The one is in the Cape area which is hit by swells deflected from the Roaring Forties, a west to east-blowing wind in the Southern Ocean.
The other, which occurs off the East Coast any time of the year, is a cyclonic condition with a long fetch that generates powerful swells straight towards the coast, and which at times has a destructive effect on the land structures, such as harbour entrances and piers. It is created by a low, which instead of disappearing in the south-east, becomes stuck north of a high. A low moves in a clock-wise direction in the southern hemisphere and a high in an anti-clock-wise direction.

The low then interacts with the high. A fierce wind is whipped toward the land in a gradient between the high and low which may last for days before the low eventually disappears. This takes place hundreds of miles off the coast. As the monstrous surge approaches the land, for example at Durban, surfers who then brave the surf with their big wave boards - mostly semi-guns in South Africa — really learn to respect the mighty force of the ocean.

Synoptic charts (weather maps) which are normally published daily in the local newspapers supply details of the positions and approaches of high and low pressure belts, as well as barometer readings and forecasts of the weather and wind. Surfers often refer to these in addition to trying to predict conditions themselves by weather observations.

Travelling from Cape Town to Durban surfers may observe interesting weather changes en-route. For example, from Cape Town to Swellendam a strong south-easter may be blowing. From Swellendam through the Garden Route to the Tsitsikama Forest area it may be windless until one nears Jeffreys Bay where an off-shore breeze may persist all the way to Natal.

South Africa could have all the winds and swells in the world, and still would not be worth talking about surf-wise, if she did not have suitable inshore topographic formation, or a sufficient number of reefs, points and beaches for all this wonderful swell to expend itself in a way appropriate to surfers.

The good news is that South Africa’s mighty long coastline simply abounds with places that absorb all the swell given them to create and recreate
endless hours of riding enjoyment for all who wish to get involved. This applies to both the known areas and the numerous untapped or virgin beauty spots.

As hinted earlier, South Africa has three predominant natural breaks: beach, reef and point. The latter two are permanent forms, mostly rock, which do not vary except for the effects of tide and swell direction onto them, or when there is a possibility of sand covering them. Generally speaking, they are the constants, and normally have their own character, such as Jeffreys Bay, Cape St Francis and Elands Bay, regarded as three of the best surfing areas of the world.

The beach break, on the other hand, changes constantly. The waves are influenced by the bottom and the bottom is changed by the waves. And since waves arriving at a beach are greatly variable in height, period and direction, each wave creates a slightly different bottom configuration for the one that come after it.

As swell, waves may traverse great stretches of open sea without much loss of energy. Eventually they reach the shoaling water of our continental shelf. Once on the shelf the wave fronts are bent until they almost run parallel to the shoreline. This is called refraction or bending. A swell may travel at right angles to a coast but as the waves move into shoaling water the friction of the bottom causes them to slow down, and those in shallowest water move the slowest. Since different segments of the wave front are travelling in different depths of water, the crests bend and wave direction constantly changes. Thus the wave fronts tend to become roughly parallel to the underwater contours which are normally parallel to the shoreline.

Even on a circular island, with gently sloping underwater topography on all sides, a wave train from one direction will “wrap” itself around the island so that the wave fronts arrive nearly parallel to the beach on all sides, although,
of course, the waves are substantially higher on the side facing directly into the deep-sea swell.

This wrapping effect is experienced at most of South Africa’s point breaks. The waves refract beyond the land and move in parallel to the shore-line, but suddenly encounter an outcrop of rock or small land area, normally the head of the point, which lies at an angle to the shore-line. The swell hits the back or neck of this outcrop and wraps around or pushes through at an angle, forming the classical “peeling off” effect of waves. Jeffreys Bay, about 45 miles south of Port Elizabeth, is a good example.

The underwater topography, or position of reefs, of other point breaks may cause the peeling off effect in a different manner, for example, Cape St Francis (Bruce’s Beauties) works best and biggest when hit by a direct southerly swell. A surfer’s take-off onto a wave is directly onto the rocks, and as he executes his turn he moves away from the rocks at a terrific speed through a spinning curl. If he blunders at the take-off, he will crash onto the rocks. Therefore, the place is only ridden by the advanced surfer.

Waves break at a depth of water roughly equal to 1.3 times the wave height. This occurs when not enough water is available in the shallow water ahead to fill in the crest and complete a symmetrical wave form. The ordinary oscillatory waves, after breaking, become waves of translation - the turbulent rushing white-water part of the surf which travels in powerful rolling forms before disappearing in a sudden uprush on the shore.

When waves break in the surf zone, they either plunge or spill. Plunging breakers are the most impressive and are preferred by the experienced surfer who, in riding them, may hit the lip or tuck into its tight curl. Their principal characteristic is a very rapid release of energy from a wave moving at high velocity. There is a sudden deficiency in water ahead of the wave that causes high velocity currents in the trough as the water rushes seaward to fill the cavity beneath the oncoming crest. This area is known as the impact
zone, the most dangerous part, especially in big surf. Often a surfer paddling out is sucked into this area by the water rushing seaward. When there is not enough water to complete the wave form, the water in the crest, attempting to complete its orbit, is hurled ahead of its steep forward side and lands in the trough.

In riding such a wave, a surfer will attempt his turn inside the trough and fly out of the side of the mouth and continue his ride along the peeling wave face. But soon after his turn he may become trapped inside - “locked-in” - for a while where he will also experience weird exploding sounds of rumbling inner ocean turbulence. The curling mass of water will often trap air and, as the upper part of the wave collapses, the air is compressed. The compressed air may either burst through the watery cap, creating a geyser effect, or shoot out the side. As to the surfer, he is spat right out of the tunnel. This is an ultimate surfing experience.

A spilling wave breaks gently. Its crest merely tumbles down a more gently-sloping wave face, and if the bottom gradient is slight and stretches for hundreds of yards out to sea, a surfer could continue riding for a long time. The beaches surrounding Muizenberg, near Cape Town, are like this. Spilling waves give the beginner a better opportunity to work up his skill.

Tides are another phenomenon which profoundly affect surf conditions. The study of tides is a vast and complicated subject, which is beyond the scope of this book. However, we shall give an idea of tides and how they are discussed by surfers.

Some surfing areas may operate best at low tide and others at high. But the consensus among South African surfers is that ideal conditions at most spots occur during the in-coming and out-going tides. The in-coming probably pushes in a bigger swell, thus getting a good compromise between a fair swell and low banks which are more prominent at low tide. The out-going
meets with the in-coming swell to create a more hollow wave. This is normally the position at beach breaks.

Tides are the longest waves that oceanographers commonly deal with, having a period of 43 000 seconds (12 hrs 25 mins) and a wave length of half the circumference of the earth. The crest and trough of the wave is called the range of the tide. The gravitational attraction of the moon and the sun on the earth and the waters causes tides.

Spring tides occur at new and full moon, when the earth, sun and moon are aligned (in phase). Neap tides come about when the moon is in the first or last quarter, when the earth, sun and moon make a right angle (out of phase).

When a small swell is running under Spring tide conditions, you can expect a “hot” high tide shore-breaking wave close to the beach in the early mornings and late evenings. This is normally a good fun break that requires only a short paddle and easy opportunities for roller-coasters, fast sections to break through, ripping cut-backs and a final head-dip and wipe-out on the sand as the wave makes its final plunge on the shore.

But during a bigger swell, the surf is normally its hollow best at low tide when the wave breaks on off-shore banks or bars. At high tide, too much water builds up above the bars and creates a wave break, but it soon peters out and the swell continues before crashing in an un-ridable hairy burst close to the beach. This inside break allows exciting suicidal body slides.

Some people may wonder what effect currents have on waves or swells. They do not have any significant effect worth commenting on. The wave swells, however, have an influence on currents eg: the warm Agulhas or Mozambique Current, that flows from north to south on South Africa’s east coast normally meets the oncoming southerly swells. This contributes to the creation of an alongshore counter current or net drift.
This net or sand drift moves from south to north and transports sand brought down by rivers or that attained from erosion or cliffs. These are seasonal, that is, minor inshore currents may move southwards in particular seasons, but the south to north net drift predominates.

The sand drift, which is concentrated in a narrow band in the surf zone and more concentrated in the breaker zone, moves fiercely and can lose or gain hundreds of thousands of cubic feet of sand in a couple of days. If man interferes by building any protruding artificial structure into the sea like a harbour break-water, pipeline or jetty, the sand drift will be cut off in the up-drift direction and will cause an accumulation of sand, thus spoiling the natural flow of sand in that direction.

Durban suffers from this problem. The sand that collects south of the South Pier entrance to the harbour has to be dredged continually. This has resulted in a starving of sand on her beaches. Other currents are shifting sand northwards, causing water to swell and encroach and erode her beaches.
Authorities have tried to prevent this by dumping sand a kilometre off-shore (called off-shore mounds). This has proved a failure, but if the mounds had not been put there the condition may have been worse. An artificial sand pipeline has also been used to pump feeder sand along Durban’s main stretch of beach, but the pump has been out of operation for about two years. This unnatural flow of sand in and out of Durban has caused erratic changes in surf conditions.

Most areas along the Natal South Coast, especially those behind promontories, such as Scottburgh, are also suffering from loss of sand.

There is one form of current in the surf zone that can be dangerous to an inexperienced surfer but which can be made use of for paddling out. This is the tip current. It is formed when waves break on a shallow underwater bar in rapid succession. The water they throw shoreward in foam lines cannot easily return seaward along the bottom but piles up inside the bar. This excess water is supported there slightly above sea level by the continuous addition of water from more waves. During this excess of water inside the bar, a current starts to flow seaward across the lowest part of the bar. As it moves, it erodes a channel and from then on there is a continuous flow of water called a rip current. The channel may be narrow and cause strong-flowing currents to flow out to sea.

Rips are supplied with water by feeder currents (side washes) inside the bar, which collect the water from incoming waves and flow laterally along the beach. Out beyond the breaker zone, the channel abruptly widens and the strength of the current diminishes. Waves normally peel into the channel because the water is generally deeper there than in its surrounding area.

Keeping in mind the physical geographical aspects just explained, we may now plunge into the various places to surf in South Africa.
The main centres will be discussed, as well as the more popular spots. The numerous other places are pin-pointed on the published map. Remember all surfing spots indicated have their moments. South Africa is a clean and beautiful country and it is worth visiting these places.

It is just a matter of catching them under the right wind and wave conditions. The places are so numerous and the population of surfers relatively small that many a break will serve you alone. It is just a matter of getting to them.

Those places written about and those indicated on the map are not all that sparkle on our coastline. Many others may be known to surfers as “secret spots” and there may be others yet undiscovered.
CAPE TOWN: This little hook-like land at the south-west tip of South Africa is probably the most prolific surfing area, in relation to its size, in the country.

Most of its surfing breaks lie outside the central city zone, making her environmentally the most beautiful and cleanest surfing city in South Africa with her flour-white beaches, bordering the contrast of intense crystal clear waters on the one side, and the clothed colour of Table Mountain and its extensions on the other.

Cape Town’s peninsula is surrounded by two oceans, the Indian (warm) and the Atlantic (cold), with its prevailing winds blowing from one side to the other. There is always an off-shore caressing some Cape Town spot. So winds are not a problem. It is the swell that determines the place or places to ride and the south-west swell prevails generally throughout the year.

The south-easterly is the prevailing summer wind, bringing sunshine to surfing breaks on the Atlantic side. Being situated in the Mediterranean Belt, Cape Town receives rain in winter, the prevailing breeze being the north-wester with off-shores on the other side. It is also frequented by south-westers that at times deflect through the mountains to an off-shore at such places as Sea Point and Llandudno.

Spring and Autumn are the seasons to be in Cape Town for good surf. The water on the Atlantic side is normally freezing cold, so it is advisable to have a wet-suit and booties to acclimatise yourself. The Indian Ocean is warm. Most Cape Town spots operate best when the tide turns to incoming, but places like Scarborough Point and Inner Kommetjie are high tide spots because of exposed kelp that clog the areas at low.

The city’s most popular surfing spot is Long Beach with the adjacent super fast break, called Crons. Sunset, a big wave break divides Long Beach from Kakapo or Noordhoek Beach. Kakapo itself, normally produces cool, crisp, fast-breaking tubes. The ‘ ‘Hoek’ ’ or ‘ ‘Comer’ ’ lying below Chapman’s Peak
Drive sends super cylinders shorewards, providing some of the best surf in Cape Town. Muizenberg, on the warm Indian Ocean side, provides smooth spilling waves generally sought after by the beginner.

It is essential to own a car in Cape Town to be able to keep checking for the best breaks. The distances between the areas are quite petrol-consuming, but time and money are usually well spent. Awe-inspiring scenic drives accompany you there. Check the published map for the numerous surf-breaks in Cape Town, and take your pick.

**PORT ELIZABETH**: This is the best situated city in South Africa for weekend travels to three of the country’s finest point breaks, Jeffreys Bay, Cape St Francis (Bruce’s Beauties) and Seal Point, all between about 40 and 60 miles away.

But surfing in the city itself should not be brushed aside. Port Elizabeth caters adequately for three types - the beginner, the advanced, and the suicide surfer. Gentle breaks are enjoyed by the beginner at the Fence, left of Kings Beach, but Millars point is for the most experienced.

The third type may choose between sharks or jagged rocks - Port Elizabeth has them both. The most notorious is the reef off Cape Recife, with both rocks and sharks. No wonder only a few people have dared to ride there.

Port Elizabeth has a homely group of surfers who are just as ocean conscious as their counterparts in other centres.

Four winds affect the city, the SE, SW, NW, and NE. More than half her breaks are situated in the Algoa Bay, which mainly work off-shore during a NW. The others lick the shore on the Cape St Francis Bay side, and are kissed by off-shores when the NE blows.

Strong south-easterly winds normally supply the city with a strong swell and good surf. At times, when a cloud moves out to sea, a storm forms and
generates a swell toward the land and strikes at either Port Elizabeth or Jeffreys Bay or both.

The city’s most popular break is Millar’s Point, situated close to the suburb of Humewood towards Cape Recife Lighthouse. The waves break off a rock and coral reef at the head of the point, and on a very good day surfers experience rides up to 500 yds. When Jeffreys Bay closes out beyond 12 feet, the place to be is Millar’s when the waves push through at a height of six to eight feet working best at the in-coming and out-going tides.

The map of Port Elizabeth will point out her other breaks.

**EAST LONDON**: East London is Nahoon Reef. Without this power-packed point, the city would be a non-starter on the South African surfing circuit. At it is, the so called Reef, although it is a point break, provides all the juice, excitement and exhilaration of size, speed and strength which places it prominently among the best of its breaking brothers in the country.

Randy Rarrick, from Hawaii, after surfing at Nahoon Reef, described it as the closest to the famed Sunset Beach power-surf of the Islands.

East London contains a warm community of surfers, who also enjoy the beach-break at Nahoon, that caters for both the experienced and the beginner.
The city’s breaks work consistently throughout the year with big swells in winter and summer. The best tide times depend on the swell direction eg: at the Reef, if the swell comes from the east and the waves are small, it operates only at low tide with waves fading into a gully at high. But with a swell wrapping from the SW - the predominant swell -it breaks well at both tides; but with a big swell, it is probably better at high tide because more water is around it and the swell seems to come in faster with more speed and power.

The prevailing off-shore winds are the SW and SE, and the on-shores NE and NW, the latter two ruining surfing conditions.
The only other place worth mentioning in East London is Eastern Beach, the main city break, which is a larger more powerful break than Nahoon Beach, but not as consistent. It is mainly a winter spot with a good right-breaking wave off a rocky bottom. In summer, sand covers the reef and creates an ordinary beach-break, which will work in any off-shore breeze besides the SW.

*Durban in the early fifties – long, heavy, square-railed boards, “birds”, and a race “all the way” to the beach*

**DURBAN:** Durban is essentially a beach-breaking city with no exhilarating point breaks, except for a reef break on its Bluff side, which has only been utilised in the last few years. Yet the city has produced more top surfers than all the other centres put together. Why?

Mainly because it has a large surfing population with easy access to the beach. It has also been described as one of the most consistent beach-breaking areas in the world. The basic pattern concerning the surf is that it
constantly changes because of the reliance on sand-bars that are forever shifting.

Durban is situated in the warm temperate region and experiences subtropical conditions, and is renowned for its warm weather and water.

Although members of the other centres would not care to agree, Durban surfers have been the most advanced in surfboard design, innovative styles and general attitude towards surfing. This applies mainly to the period of the sixties. Things have levelled now with positiveness prevailing throughout the country.

As South Africa’s most popular seaside resort, Durban has become synonymous with the sea. Most Durban residents at some time in their lives have at least tried surfing, especially the younger generation. As a result, Durban’s surfing areas are somewhat overcrowded. Being the biggest harbour in South Africa, many ships are continually anchored at the roadstead off the most popular beaches. These contribute to the polluting of these areas. Therefore, Durban is good for surfing, but lacks environmental beauty.

The NE that normally generates a strong east wind swell is smoothed by the south-wester - the two winds prevailing in Durban. The SW blows at its off-shore best between South Beach and Addington. The city occasionally receives a buster because of the low pressure belt that sits off the coast. The oncoming of a buster or almost any off-shore wind can be detected by the approach of a dark bank of clouds on the western horizon and a red light (the buster warning) that shines from the top of Port Captain’s office at the Ocean Terminal. “Old Faithful” - the tall chimney of the incinerator on the North Pier, that smokes almost continuously, is every surfer’s guide to the wind direction and wind changes.

Besides the wind swell, Durban also receives a strong swell from the south, mainly in winter, and the occasional cyclonic seas from the east. Of the swells
that push into Durban, 38 per cent come from the east; 30 per cent from the SE, 25 per cent from the south and one per cent from the SW -the latter three being more intense in winter (figures from C.S.I.R.).

Although Durban works favourably throughout the year, the best compromise seems to be during the spring and autumn equinoxes with both good swells and weather.

The general bank pattern at the summer solstice is a shore-break developing with a deep inshore channel moving onto a shallow bank. The waves will break on an outer bar if the swell is big enough, with the shore-break closing out or containing super-hot sections for fire fun. In winter, the channel generally moves out, producing one break.

Durban’s most stable and stimulating break, is a reef break, Cave Rock, next to Brighton Beach, which is hit directly by a southerly swell. The Rock only operates on a rare light easterly breeze, and when it does, it is bliss. Another popular Bluff spot is Ansteys Beach, left of Cave Rock, which, like the Rock, has a sucking effect on the rough reef. Eighteen feet high waves have been ridden there.

The waves off Durban Central normally become progressively bigger in size from Addington to Country Club Beach. The best wave is where you find it. It is a common feature for Durban surfers to travel from one end of the wide stretch to the other and pick their spot. The map will pin-point them.

**SOUTH AFRICA’S COUNTRY AREAS:** Travelling from one end of the country to the other, you not only come across a wealth of surfing spots, but the added attraction of colourful coastal scenic beauty.

Moving through South Africa’s splendid countryside pumps loads of inspiration into any surfer, which explodes in the surf on his arrival there.
Surfers throughout the world visit South Africa just to spend a few days or weeks in bliss at one place, which is:

**JEFFREYS BAY**: This classic right-breaking surfing point is what surfers dream about - endless spinning “down-the-line” waves which pump through with incredible consistency.

The point is a 40 minute drive from Port Elizabeth and it caters for any type of surfer, with three distinct breaks peeling off its long rocky beach. The breaks are: the Point, Tubes and Super Tubes. The latter is called by that name because everything about it is absolutely super. It works best on a powerful southerly or south-westerly swell and when this swell pushes through, the spot is only handled by the more experienced surfer.

*Mike Esposito sitting in the swirling tube in Durban*

The take-off spot is about 20 feet off the head of the point. To get there you have to wait for a lull in the surf otherwise you are caught in a violent inshore rip that drags you down the point and when the waves come pounding
through they bounce you on the rocks, and once the waves subside, the rip
tears you over the mussel-laden rocks. It is thus advisable to wait for the lull
in the swell before paddling out, even if it is for 15 minutes.

This happens mainly at high tide. The best way to describe Supers is to put
you onto one of the waves. Immediately after your turn at the take-off area
you are faced with a long round wall vibrating with speed. Your automatic
turn into this wave is a fast one that sends you on your swift trip down the
line. If the wave is big enough - six feet plus - you track through from bottom
to top. Then you reach the “graveyard” or “boneyard” area which sucks out
with stupendous speed. Few people make it through, but anyone can if he
has the right positive approach. Your kick-out after another section called the
“bowl” is accompanied by that shaky, limp feeling of complete stokiness. And
when you cast your eyes toward the take-off area the riders there look like
ants.

Tubes is less exciting, but anything just less exhilarating than Super Tubes is
still very good. And so it is with Tubes, also an advanced rider’s break. Then
we have the Point at the foot, with invariably gentle-breaking waves that are
enjoyed by all surfers. The rides are up to 200 metres long and are the most
consistent of the three places along the point.

Jeffreys Bay is consistently good throughout the year. But there is no set
pattern. It may have runs of excellent surf up to six days or maybe two
weeks, and conversely, it may have a lull for a similar period. The prevailing
off-shore breeze is a SW. Super Tubes works best at low tide.

Another Jeffreys Bay break around to the right of the head’s corer is
“Magnitubes”, which only works at eight feet and over. It is a reef break with
classic tubes. “Kitchen Window” is a spot where fishermen launch their boats
in the township.

ELANDS BAY: This is South Africa’s premier left-breaking point break which
rolls her spinning wheels in the icy water of the Atlantic Ocean.
The spot is about a two-hour drive north from Cape Town past colourful countryside, through finely cultivated farmlands and fields of wild flowers in spring.

Elands works best when the swell is about eight feet, with waves breaking into strong-flowing channels that prevent the wave from closing out. Its only hazard is kelp.

CAPE ST FRANCIS (Bruce’s Beauties): This is probably the most perfect-breaking wave in South Africa - when it works.

The waves only cylinder through about 25 times a year during freak southerly swell conditions. According to Mr Leighton Hulett, who owns the land around the famous area, it is unusual for the off-shore to blow when the southerly swell pushes through. It could happen any time of the year.

Surfers may also find the place working during a very big south-westerly swell, but when this swell is small, Bruce’s Beauties is like a lake - a sight that disappoints many surfers.

The prevailing winds are the off-shore west and the on-shore SE. Of the winds that blow during the year, 75 per cent more westerlies blow than easterlies. There are also many windless days.

And so, when Bruce’s Beauties is flat, there is invariably a wave operating at a neighbouring reef break, called Huletts, where the fishermen launch their boats. The waves break right towards a clean white beach.

Bruce’s Beauties was the place that put South Africa on the world surfing map when American film-maker, Bruce Brown, captured the best footage for his famous film, ‘‘Endless Summer’’, that tagged this break as the most perfect wave in the world. Hence, the name, Bruce’s Beauties.

The trip to Cape St Francis from the National Road at Humansdorp is along a rough gravel road but, according to Mr Hulett, the present road that also
winds through a pass - the total distance being about 20 miles - is being replaced by a nine mile tarred road that will lead across the Krom River from Humansdorp. Construction started this year and the road should be completed in three years.

At the Cape St Francis lighthouse is another eminent right point, called SEAL POINT. It is more consistent than Bruce’s Beauties but less consistent than Jeffreys Bay. The main take-off spot sucks over a notorious rock called Full-stop. When the swell is bigger, the take-off is beyond this rock and many rides end at Full-stop, sometimes with disastrous side-effects. Off the Seal Point beach, an exciting left whips towards the rocks.

VICTORIA BAY: Vic. Bay is an ideal spot situated in a small bay surrounded by towering cliffs that virtually drop into the ocean. At the foot of the right-breaking point is a verdant valley that twists up to the national road and then it is only nine miles along the picturesque Garden Route to the town of George.

The best surf at Vic. Bay occurs during the winter months when the SW wind blows offshore usually wrapping big consistent swells into the bay. A typical ride is a hairy take-off close to the rocks and then a tube ride for about 20 metres. After bursting through this section, a cut-back puts you back onto the rocks in place for another tube ride, hotter than the first. Popping out after another 20 metres and executing another fade toward the rocks positions you for a fast wall suitable for weaving, hot-dogging, tracking or dropping-and-climbing manoeuvres. A NW berg wind that occasionally funnels through the valley in winter blows directly off-shore. Vic. Bay can only contain a swell up to 12 feet. From there on it closes out.

YELLOW SANDS: It has been only lately that surfers have become aware of this right point break and have heralded Yellow Sands as one of the top spots along the coast.
Situated about 15 miles north of East London, road-signs marking it as Kwelera Mouth, its waves peel off from a reef at the head of the point and it could be described as a compromise between Tubes and Super Tubes, of Jeffreys Bay. The off-shores are SW and SE which funnel through a river valley at the point’s foot to create direct off-shores.

The beach has a small but perfectly formed left and right break which seems to last forever.

**ST MICHAELS-ON-SEA:** St Mikes, as it is called, has all the juice of a fabled Natal South Coast wave and it takes sheer guts to surf it when it breaks over ten feet.

But surfers of the calibre of Springbok Antoni Brodowicz and Nigel Heath handle it well. Powerful South Coast swells break on three distinct reefs off a promontory. The first reef works about four feet straight off a rock pool, the second, which produces the best surf, at about six to eight feet breaks opposite the swings, and the third reef handles the heavies up to 15 feet off the bush. The latter two breaks are, as indicated, direct breaks onto rocks. But an off-shore current normally catches a lose board and swings it around the point without it being damaged. Occasionally an unlucky surfer may have his board battered on the rocks or splashed into the pool.

St Mikes works best in winter, with strong southerly swells refracting into the area and a south-westerly wind blowing almost every morning. The offshore breeze is also swept through a valley to create direct land breezes onto the surf.

The area accommodates a warm positive-minded body of surfers.

The two most natural coastlines in South Africa - the **WEST COAST** and the **WILD COAST**: Both these areas overflow with comparatively untapped surfing breaks. A few surfers have explored them and have always returned with interesting tales of their adventures into the wilds.
There are about 15 known spots along the West Coast, most of which do not have names. They are nearly all left breaks because of the lie of the land and the southerly swell that automatically lends itself to this type of break.

The spots along the Wild Coast are innumerable. Waves similar to Super Tubes have been ridden there. Two hazards keep many surfers away - sharks and its virtual inaccessibility by road. However, where there are roads, these are of the gravel variety and pass through some of South Africa’s most unspoilt lands of grandeur. The drive alone would make the trip worthwhile. To reach the Pondoland coast one has to travel through the small towns of Bizana, Lusikisiki or Flagstaff. Most of the places may be entered, but to stay overnight permission has to be granted by the magistrate at one of these towns.

CHAPTER SEVEN

For The Beginner - and others

“Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm.”

Publilus Syrus (ist. cent. B.C.)

Sitting on a hot beach opposite a crowded surfing area, you may see lots of surfers carving smooth tracks in cool surf.

At a superficial glance they seem to be simply a group of people riding waves on different coloured surfboards.

But take a closer look at the waves and boards, and the people riding them, and you will be struck by the vast variation among them. In fact, the only thing relatively constant is the condition of the surf that rumbles and hisses before dissolving into a million tiny bubbles.
But if you are really observant you will notice that the surf, as well as the colour of the sea, change slowly as the day moves on.

One may wonder why a particular surfer out there is ripping lit up and why another is constantly battling to catch a wave, and when he finally does he wipes out. The answer is that the former is an advanced surfer using the right type of equipment for the particular type of wave, with confidence in his
ability, while the latter is someone new to the sport who is either excited by merely floating on the ocean, or lacks the skill to get his board onto a wave. It is also possible that the beginner’s equipment is not right, firstly for his body weight and secondly for the type of surf he is riding. He probably thought he could grab any old stick and handle the heavies as if they were “going out of fashion”. That is like a blind man trying to find his soap box in Hyde Park Comer. He needs direction to find the right box on which to express himself.

A surfer is someone who expresses himself on the waves, but in order to do this he needs direction and the right box on which to stand. Therefore, the board becomes his most important possession - the medium between himself and the wave.

A fine board is a truly unique object - a functional piece of sculptured art, designed to blend with the natural curves of a wave. Because the wave has flow, so must the board, its flow-lines in complete accord and unison with its wet companion. A short fat board in big surf will bounce out of control - but small fun surf, it will handle more efficiently, the width giving it manoeuvrability and stability and the shortness giving it more freedom.

A surfboard, from beginning to end, represents thousands of decisions ideas, skills and understandings. All these are acquired through painstaking research, trial and error (as revealed in the History chapter), and years of consummate experience.

An experienced surfer will probably have a slight V running along the bottom of his board from the back to about two feet from the front for extra manoeuvrability, or a super-flat bottom with soft sides or rails for ultra-speed and manoeuvrability. He may have a concave top deck making thicker rails, thus harder turns.

Soft rails or hard rails; convex, concave or vees; pin, square, round, fish or swallow tails; single, double or triple fins; thin or fat; long or short; double-ender, semi-gun or gun; the list is almost endless when you become more
advanced and want that little extra to reach your own particular ultimate. Every innovative idea when applied to a surfboard becomes the answer until something new to take its place evolves. This has, however, brought about tremendous improvement in board design, especially in the last decade. If you flew back in time and told surfers 10 years ago that people today were hitting the lip on six feet boards, they would probably have thought you were mad (see History).

There remains one board ideal for all beginners and for the type of surf they are likely to ride. This board is also preferred by many experienced riders for the same surf. It is a simple standard shaped board that gives you most of what you will want out of surfing - and that is pure fun.

The flow-lines on a standard board will take a beginner through many levels of enjoyment and provide almost unlimited areas of expansion and expression.

Many beginners ask: “But what about the length?” This depends on your weight. The following table will provide a guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Beginners</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80-100 lbs</td>
<td>6'-6'4&quot;</td>
<td>5'7&quot;-5'11&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-120</td>
<td>6'4&quot;-6'8&quot;</td>
<td>5'10&quot;-6'3&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121-140</td>
<td>6'8&quot;-7'</td>
<td>6'2&quot;-6'7&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141-160</td>
<td>7'-7'4&quot;</td>
<td>6'7&quot;-6'11&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161-180</td>
<td>7'4&quot;-7'10&quot;</td>
<td>7'-7'4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181-200</td>
<td>7'11&quot;-8'4&quot;</td>
<td>7'6&quot;-7'10&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-220</td>
<td>8'4&quot;-8'10&quot;</td>
<td>8'-8'4&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Obviously, if a 6'6" tall person weighs about 100 lbs, he will have to make a compromise - probably get a longer but lighter board than that specified for the average rider.

The place to acquire the best board is a recognised surfboard shop where a beginner will be assisted in making the right decision. Any surfer in the vicinity will tell you where to find the local “surf-shop”.

There are also a number of “backyard” builders in South Africa who sometimes produce premium grade surfboards.

Those who have creative skill and like working with their hands may feel that the way to avoid alienation from something material is to make that something themselves. It may give confidence to the creator just to know it is his craft floating along the waves.

It cannot be too strongly stressed, however, that you will be almost guaranteed a good board at a proper “surf-shop”. By proper, we mean a shop run by people who constantly relate their manufacturing activities to what is happening on local and overseas beaches with regard to board design, attitudes and general innovative trends. Because of all these factors, it is rare to find a good board made by someone not involved in the sport. A good second-hand board that was originally built by an experienced manufacturer is also worth purchasing.

“Making a board is fun. It may be a painstaking task but at least you can see it actually taking shape. You enjoy it because when you go surfing, you know that you put something into it and you think it really is going to make you surf better - it becomes more a part of you,” - said former top board-builder in Durban, Darryl Holmes.

The first requirement is premises. A car garage is adequate. Then come the tools.
You will need two trestles on which to place the board while it is being built. These can be made by filling two drums with concrete and while it hardens, you insert upright T-shaped wooden supports in each. Soft material, such as foam rubber, is placed on top of the T to provide comfort without damage to the precious object to be placed on it. (There are other ways of making similar types of supports if one thinks about it).

The instruments and materials of your craft are: a woodwork saw for cutting the polyurethane foam blank if need be, and for placing stringers (strips of wood) through the centre or sides of centre for added strength, weight or smartness. Any woodwork glue or resin can be used to keep the wood and foam together, but clamps will be necessary to bind them in the initial wet stage.

For shaping the rough blank, an electric planer is ideal but a hand planer will suffice. A surform, rasp or sand-paper around a block of wood about 8" by 4" will provide the finer touches in the shaping process. A measuring tape is handy.

A sharp hand blade is used to trim the edge of the glass cloth when laminating the board. Masking tape is used for the trim-line.

You will then need brushes, rollers, buffing compound, resin, pigment (if colour is required), catalyst and hardeners and mixing containers. An electric sanding machine will save time and arm power because hand-sanding is a long and tiring process. However, many boards have, in fact, been sanded down by hand. A tin of acetone or detergent soap cleans you for surfing.

Your homemade board should cost less than half the price of a new one purchased at a surfboard shop.

Materials may be obtained from various places, but again the best place is a surfboard shop, or you can make enquiries there as to where materials can be bought. The goods may be more expensive at the “surf-shop”, but you will
be sure of buying the correct material for surfboards. There are different
types of resins and cloth for all sorts of other commercial undertakings.
Remember: Materials are always cheaper in bulk.

An outline shape of your required board may be taken from a template of a
board on the beach or you can think out your own design. This outline is only
10 per cent of the final shape. The rail or edge, and top and bottom shape,
together with the fin, will decide the board’s flow and performance.

An average bottom shape will be flat, providing speed while the low soft rails,
flowing back into hard edges in the tail, bite hard and release easily. The top
can be a slight curve down to the rails or concaved for thicker rails and thus
harder turns. A surfboard should flow from nose to tail. The widest point
being its thickest. A slight kick-up in the front will help avoid nose-digs after
taking off on a wave. Lightness around the nose helps manoeuvrability.
Average width will be about 20 inches and thickness about 3 1/2 inches.

The above should furnish the basics for a good general board providing both
manoeuvrability and speed.

Fins are important too. They ensure that a board has good directional
stability, meaning it will travel in a straight line efficiently. They also make
turning movements more controllable and the board can be turned in a
smooth arc without stalling. There are many theories relating to fin shape,
but the average board’s skeg will have a base of six inches, length nine
inches, a 13 inch top curve from base to a rounded tip and 10 inch inside
curve.

Once all these requirements have been met the assault begins! If stringers
are required, although they are not necessary, split the foam blank from top
to bottom, face up the sides, smear with glue and clamp them together. For
the rocker or kick-up in the nose, the stringers should be shaped into the
required rocker and the foam glued to this shape. A plain blank rocker can be
attained by placing a weighty object on the board after applying the first
layer of glass cloth with resin, taking care not to damage laminating by placing plastic sheeting under the object.

Draw the top shape using your template. Otherwise make sure both sides are even. Following the flow-lines already described, you shape the board using the appropriate tools.

All foam particles should be swept from the shop before fibre-glassing. The bottom deck is glassed first. But before placing the blank bottom deck up, you place about two inches of masking tape an inch from the entire circumference of the board. This is for the overlapping of the wet glass cloth when wrapping it around the bottom.

Turn the board over and spread a piece of eight ounce cloth over the surface. The same weight cloth will be used for the top deck together with a 3/4-length from the tail for added strength where the body weight will be when lying and standing on the board in motion. Then mix two per cent of hardener and two per cent of catalyst to your laminating resin of proportionate quantity. Resin is highly inflammable when in contact with these mixers, so you must ensure that the correct quantities are used. Colour pigment can be added to the resin if required.

Glassing is done by hand with a piece of cardboard, rubber (squee-gee), plastic or roller. You should ease the cloth as close to the foam as possible eliminating all air bubbles but still having enough resin to completely saturate the cloth and not having it dry - filling the weaving in the cloth. While squeegeeing, be careful not to starve the resin which may cause the cloth to lift under stress.

You overlap the wet cloth at the rails and allow it to fall over the masking tape on the top deck. Snipping the glass cloth at critical curves and at bottom and top, ensure smooth overlapping, thereby preventing air bubbles. Before the wet cloth gells, trim the underside by cutting along the rail side of the
masking tape. Then peel off the masking tape and presto! a trim line. The same procedure is followed on the top deck, once the bottom has dried.

For sanding, 60-grid paper is workable with a machine. But without one, you use a coarser 35-grid and work down. When hand-sanding, you will find it easier to wrap the paper around a block. After sanding, you finish off with about 1/2 lb of sanding resin which is brushed over lightly with sand-paper before applying the finishing coat of resin. For a super smooth finish, 600-grid water paper does the trick and for the final shine, use ordinary rubbing compound used for cars.

To place the fin, you draw the base about four inches from the tail of the sanded board and then chisel or rout it out. Place the fin, making sure it is exactly centre and square to avoid induced drag while surfing. Cloth is about the strongest for sticking the skeg down. Chop-strand (loose pieces of glass) and roving (strips of glass) may also be used. A fin may be made by laying about 38 layers of eight ounce - depending on the thickness you want your skeg - on a window-pane type glass surface or on some form of releasing agent such as wax-wrap. Soak it with resin using a brush or roller, making sure to squeeze out all the air-bubbles. A light wood shaped into a fin and then covered with cloth can also be used.

If you are an artist, you may allow your creative energy to spill onto the finished board. But for plain stripes, the procedure is to place masking tape of preferred thickness on either side of the required line - then paint between the tape and before it gells, peel it off.

Max Wetteland, of Durban, at one time employed an artist to paint beautiful pictures on his customer’s boards. I once bought one of his new Farrelly models and asked him to surprise me with a picture of his choice with only one stipulation -to place the painting on the top deck up front so that whenever I paddled my board, I would have added pleasure and inspiration by having it face me. For about a year after receiving my board, my surfing
was accompanied by a bare-breasted mermaid sitting on a rock, surrounded by a purple castle set in deep mist, ancient sailing ships and other mystical messages.

Precautions: Remember that resin is inflammable - some of the first glass boards made in South Africa caught alight (see History). When mixing resins, air temperature must be taken into account. It takes longer to harden in cold weather, therefore a little more catalyst may be added.

- Beware of hot days when two per cent hardener and two per cent catalyst will be sufficient.
- Some people are allergic to resin, so gloves may be needed.
- When bending the foam for rocker, be careful not to snap it.
- While sanding, it is strongly advisable to wear a breathing mask over your nose and mouth to avoid inhaling the fine dust.

If your board is damaged or dinged in the water, it is important to have it fixed as soon as possible because the foam may absorb water through an open hole which could cause the glass to lift or peel off. Body filler such as Pratleys putty may be used before having your board properly fixed. Taking your board to be fixed at a surf-shop is expensive, so it is advisable to fix the ding yourself. It is not difficult:

Make sure the ding has dried, then roughen the edges with sand-paper. If the hole is deep you may fill it with resin or a piece of foam. Sand this to the shape of the board and then apply cloth. Sand smooth. If colour is required, mix some colouring essence with the resin.

Surfboards are generally not tough. In fact they are fairly brittle or fragile, yet they have to endure much wear and tear. A surfer should take care of his board. Besides fixing dings immediately, a surfer should keep his board out of the sun as much as possible.
LINE-UP AREA WHERE SURFER WAITS FOR WAVE
DIRECTION OF OUTWARD PADDLE — Path of least resistance.
A, B and C — The three major surf breaks in South Africa:
A — Peak surf breaking on reef: Thick, powerful and hollow. The wave fades in deeper water and reforms in shallower water, normally in the surf zone, known as a REEF BREAK.
B — The surf-zone "home" of the BEACH BREAK: light weight waves breaking over shifting sand bottom.
C — POINT SURF: Long, lining hollow waves breaking over a rock bottom.
Surfboards are usually subject to tremendous temperature changes. Result: constant expansion and contraction that certainly weakens a board over the years. On a sunny beach a dark-coloured board may heat up to 150 degrees and the next moment it is in surf at a temperature of 60 degrees.

Before a would-be surfer enters the water with a board, he must be able to swim, and be fairly well acquainted with the sea.

There are many small wave fun spots where people of all ages may catch gentle slides in tame waters. But once experiencing this type of wave carrying you and board, you will want to venture into the more exciting stuff and that is when knowledge of the sea is essential.

Most experienced surfers started body surfing before they picked up their first board. The sport of body surfing requires you to swim in swirling surf to the outside breakers, thus developing shoulders and breathing ability. Surf swimming is different to that done in a pool. As you swim to the outer waves, many other waves will dash you. But this need not happen. As a rushing roller approaches you, you take a deep breath and dive under it. It will brush over your head because the main turbulence is normally at the surface. Once it has passed, you surface and continue swimming. You may dog-paddle to retrieve your breath.

While waiting for waves, you tread water. Always stay in the breaking area because that is where you will be pushed to shore. When a wave looms, you swim with it and take your body ride to the beach - the closeness to the wave is super fun, in fact, many surf-men stick to body surfing. Your experience in this kind of surfing will be invaluable after your first spill or wipe-out while surfboard riding. After losing your board, your knowledge of body surfing will help you to the beach more quickly.
The ocean is unpredictable and can be a savage beast if you bungle in blindly; this, of course, applies to the experienced surfer just the same. Therefore, it is imperative to study conditions before entering the surf. This not only ensures finding the right spot to ride - studying the way the waves come in, the pattern, frequency and number of waves in a set -and the easiest place to paddle out, but also builds up an exciting feeling within your body, and a certain peace of mind by putting shore things behind you as you gaze deep into the sanity of the open sea.

This studying is essential before entering all types of breaks - point, reef or beach. The latter is the most important because it is forever changing due to the continuous shifting of the sea bottom (see chapter six). All places contain rips, back and side washes, which should be checked. Communication with surfers familiar with the area will help.

Because a surfboard has a glassy surface, it becomes extremely slippery when in contact with water, just as water on a window-pane. To avoid slipping while paddling or riding, candle or paraffin wax (slip-check) must be rubbed on the entire top deck of the board before a surfer enters the water. If the wax surface becomes smooth while the rider is in the surf, he may roughen it with sand.

Approaching the surf, you should walk into the path of least resistance for your outward paddle. This may be straight out in a back-wash formed by deep water at the edge of a sandbar, or it may zig-zag out past a number of inshore sandbanks.

You may be lucky enough to paddle straight out without being “caught inside”. That happens when a larger wave or set of waves break in front of you and try to throw you back to the shore or rip the board from your hands while you clutch on desperately.

But paddling should not be a frantic procedure. It is easy once you know how, and acquire ability through practice (in the surf). This will be a tremendous
time and energy saver, thus enabling you to enjoy more waves in your physical capability time.

The latter phrase refers to the time relative to your experience and fitness. Obviously the more you surf the fitter you will become. A beginner may last only 15 enjoyable minutes in the surf, whereas a Springbok would be able to surf and paddle almost constantly, even in raging surf, for up to two hours.

With boards shorter, all paddling is done lying down. Your board must be evenly balanced when you are in the prone position. Too many beginners make the mistake of lying too far back thus making little headway because of drag. The board must plane smoothly across the surface with about an inch lift in the nose. If the nose dips due to a slight chop in the water, raise your chest or grab the rails of your board and shift a fraction back. Holding the rails will always steady you. You paddle the same way as swimming free-style and it is important to stroke constantly, even if your arms feel like dropping off - you can rest once outside. Perseverance will get you there.
There are a number of ways of pushing yourself through rushing white-water. The most common and probably the best when perfected is the “roll” or “turtle”. Remember, waves can approach the beach at all angles - although the predominant one pushes through parallel to the shore - because of rips and washes. A wave may approach diagonally from the left and immediately afterwards another diagonally from the right. No matter which way it comes, you must hit it head-on. It will hammer you if it catches you side-ways or broadside.

The roll is done by simply clutching tightly on to the rails near the front of your board, holding your breath, and flipping over a fraction before the wave claws you. You are now under your board with its bottom deck facing skywards. You let your body hang like an anchor and pull the board under by pressing it to your head. The board must be on your head by the time the wave reaches you, otherwise the white monster will place it there for you with a bump.

As the line of froth passes, you will automatically surface through a field of bubbling and sizzling white-water. The sound is your cue to turn your board around quickly and continue paddling. The waves will persist in pushing you in, but you must fight against this, by keeping constantly on the move. This way, you always overcome opposition. When encountering smaller mounds of white-water, simply lift your head and chest from the board and let the wave go under you.

Paddling out also allows you the opportunity of watching better surfers riding in. By watching others you learn a lot whether you are paddling out or sitting on the beach. Studying both surf and surfers spells success.

Once beyond the breakers, you must watch constantly for approaching swell rises at sea. Often you will find yourself sitting in a lull and waiting for a wave with a number of other surfers, when suddenly an experienced rider whips to one side and picks up a wave that you never thought was there. He has
developed sharp wave judgement and would not miss the slightest swell. It is just a matter of being totally aware out there.

When you see a wave approaching, turn your board by dropping the back of the board and pulling it around with one hand, and then lie in the prone position and paddle hard.

The initial propulsion will be your own by stroking. You will then feel yourself being pushed along by the swell. Keep pad-idling until your momentum is taken over completely by the wave motion. Then you stand up. Many beginners lose waves by standing up too soon. Others fall off by standing too late.

You must paddle positively until the wave takes you - you will feel it pushing you.

Once into the wave, it is best to do a push-up type motion, much like going through a wave on the outward paddle. Spring to your feet and place them firmly on the board. Do not take your time standing as this will cause the board to wobble out of control. It is better to stand more toward the back of the board than too far forward.

The latter will cause a nose-dip or pearl. Once standing on the face of the wave, you may regain a central position and push on. Most advanced surfers find their equilibrium naturally. But they also began like you.

Once up, it is best to keep your feet about 14 inches apart and keep your knees bent. Do not bend from the waist with your legs straight. With your knees bent and your upper body straight, your knees work as shock-absorbers. This will enable you to resist bumps, sometimes caused by wind or washes.

Your shock-absorbers will also be invaluable when you attempt to hit the lip. If the lip is there, hit it. You may be thrown off your board, but it is only by
trying that you will succeed. Do not be afraid. It will only mean swimming in
to fetch your board and although this takes up time, it is healthy. A good
swim keeps the sparkle (and the salt) in your eyes. But hitting the lip
invariably comes after you have accomplished the basic manoeuvres - and by
then you will have observed experienced surfers doing it.

After taking off on your first wave, it is easiest to angle i.e. following the
direction of the breaking wave. The waves may move right or left. If a
natural-footer, standing with your left foot in front, your easiest slide will be
to the right because you will be facing the wave.

The left breaking wave, will be preferred by the goofy-footer, normally a left-
headed person, whose natural stance will be with his right foot forward.

To turn your board, put your back foot slightly toward the rail in the direction
you want to turn, and apply pressure.

Angling or turning will get you where the action is, and that is the curl. Your
front foot puts your board where you want it. To cut-back or fade-back into
the wave after moving along its face, you press down with your back foot and
pull the board around with your front foot.

For a slightly smoother fade, you apply pressure with your heels on the
outside rail and push it smoothly round. Once around and back into the
breaking part of the wave, you lean forward, press your toes onto the inside
rail and whip the board around to the traverse position.

But here again, you may press your back foot down and bring the board
around with the front. The same applies with a kick-out.

You push hard on the back of the board, which lifts the front pressing it
against your front foot which then kicks it out of the wave, like doing a super
hard and aggressive turn.
A surfer’s style - the outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace - is developed only once a rider has passed the elementary stage and is on the road to creating new lines on his moving picture. Do not concern yourself with achieving a style in the beginning, it will come naturally later. Most great stylists in the world of art are first schooled. Don’t we all have to be? The great sculptor, Rodin, had to go through with the basics at a school of art before aspiring to great works such as the Thinker and the Kiss.

Place your surfboard on a pool and see what happens. It will sink immediately wherever pressure is applied. Thus, wave motion gives you speed which, in turn, provides stability and manoeuvrability. Once you have that board going, it is just concentration, drive, determination and positive thinking that help you achieve heaven.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, surfing is fun right from the very start. You are not going to ride like a Springbok the first few times in the water, but
you will certainly enjoy getting there. There will also be moments of frustration, fear and probably thoughts of the futility of it all when things do not go as they should. It is that one good ride which keeps makes you dream and draws you back.

On the city beaches there are areas reserved for bathers which are out-of-bounds to surfers. A whole beach like North Beach, in Durban, and Muizenberg, near Cape Town may be banned to surfers throughout holiday seasons and weekends. It is best to make enquiries from the local surfers as to where Surfing is prohibited.

By law you must keep 46 m from either side of the beacons demarcating the bathing area. The same applies to bathers.

They must swim between the beacons. Consideration on both sides prevents injury which could be caused by a loose surfboard. A surfer’s immediate reaction after taking a wipe-out, should be either to grab hold of his board if possible or to keep well clear of it, with his hands covering his head and face as a second precaution. And, while swimming for his board, he must be aware of his surroundings.

It is a surfing ethic and an unwritten law not to drop into a wave when someone else is on it and heading in your direction. This is not only good manners, but it prevents injury from two riders colliding. One may be travelling at a speed of about 30 km/h.

Most sports have their dangers. Big surf and other riders out of control in mind and body are surfing’s greatest hazards. When learning how to surf it is best to keep away from crowds and go to special beginner’s spots Renowned for more gentle, easy-riding and fun surf. Each coastal city has such places, for example the beaches around Muizenberg in Cape Town; Gremmies beach, right of Addington Beach, Durban; the Fence, left of Kings Beach, Port Elizabeth; and Nahoon Beach, East London.
Surfing gear for warm waters is a pair of baggies or surf-trunks - an Australian Speedo swimming costume is probably best for underwear - and a wet-suit and rubber booties for colder conditions and protection at rocky breaks. For car owners, surf-racks are needed for the roof for tying their boards and “rubbers” with which to secure them. All may be bought at surf shops or sport shops.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Other Forms of Surfing

“Wouldst thou . . .

Learn the secret of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery!’’

Longfellow - The Secret of the Sea.

A simple definition of surfing is man using a surfboard to ride waves within the surf-zone. This is how we understand it.

Surfing, however, covers a wider field. Firstly, there are its close relatives: body surfing, knee boarding, belly boarding and surf catting - all utilising the surf. Free boarding and wake surfing are undertaken on a flat watery surface, but because a surfboard is used, they are included in the family.

The original, on which this book is based, is by far the most popular. The other forms are done out of preference or simply for fun. Surfing’s closer relatives, body surfing, belly boarding, knee boarding and surf catting, usually have their own dedicated following.
These sports cannot be regarded as secondary to surfboard riding. In the final analysis, it boils down to what gives the most enjoyment.

In **BODY SURFING**, speed and manoeuvrability are sacrificed, but the ultra-involvement of bodily contact with the wave is something the strictly board-surfer will not fully realise.

![Max Wetteland at Durban’s South Beach](image)

It is necessary to distinguish between body surfing as a Sunday afternoon plop in the waves - riding foamies with head down and arms outstretched until it drops you off at the shoreline - and body surfing as the skilled manipulation of a wall of water, something that can take years to perfect.
No surfer or body surfer will ever be able to describe adequately the magic that is a perfect wave ride - one that has been thoroughly exploited, milked, until it fades and becomes just another memory.

To body surf, the necessary equipment is basic. A pair of flippers and light baggies. But peak fitness, and fearlessness of the sea are essential.

Before entering the surf you will have to decide where you are heading - shore break, mid break or backline. Swimming out is usually no problem. As the wave approaches you dive deep, grabbing the sand so you are not washed shorewards.

Once at your chosen spot, it is important to seek out a land mark and stay level with it. Odd little washes can come out of nowhere and make it very dangerous, especially if there are submerged rocks in the area.

A wave looms. A practiced eye will tell you which way the wave will peel off (if at all), whether it will dump or slide. If a section builds up to your right, the wave will peel off to the left and vice versa. You must position yourself with flipper strokes so as to be just to the side of the breaking wave, with a smooth wall “open for occupation.”

Split-second timing is necessary here, because if the wave actually breaks on you, it is very difficult to get into it. Very few surfers master the art of catching foamies. Veteran Springbok lifesaver, Eric Carlson, has sometimes pulled off incredible wins in surf swim races, simply because of his fantastic ability to get into a broken wave.

Here you are, nicely positioned to take off. Whereas your legs were either behind you in the swimming position or straight down in the treading position, you have now thrust them in the direction from which the wave has come and are lying sideways waiting for it to reach you.
As it arrives, you thrust strongly with your legs to get into the downhill portion of the wave. With experience, a body surfer will take off almost parallel to a wave, depending on its shape of course. But these intricacies come like everything else - with practice.

Depending on the steepness of the wave, the body surfer can skim sideways across the face of the wave as long as he stays in front of the breaking water. Sometimes the wave simply closes out and he has the choice of simply kicking out (a somersault is the best way) or riding the foam until it peters out.

In keeping in a steep wave, some body surfers will stretch their arms along their sides, others will “ride high” on one hand, almost planing down the slope while some will steer themselves with an arm used like a sweep oar.

A good way to stay high up in a steep wave is to thrust one arm out in front of you and drag the other like a tiller. It is a method that works well in a steep, but sliding wave.

Some Americans are riding waves with a body skeg, a rudder strapped around the waist. At the time of writing, this technique had not been used in South Africa.

An advantage of body surfing over surfboard riding is that it may be practised in both on-shore and off-shore surf conditions.

**BELLY BOARDING** is probably the easiest form of board riding. It simply means swimming out with your craft, normally about four feet long, and catching a wave in the prone position.

Its unique thrill, however, is being face to face with the wave while travelling at a terrific speed.

It is strongly advisable for a belly boarder to don a pair of flippers or swim fins because his only form of forward propulsion is that created by the kick.
His hands are normally on the board, but hand paddling can, at times, be done.

In paddling out, the belly board surfer goes through the oncoming waves in a similar fashion to that of the surfer (explained in Chapter seven). At the take-off area he waits for his wave. When he sees it building up, he holds the board in front of him, as people do when learning how to swim with a board in a swimming bath, and starts kicking. The board partly supports his upper body.

He should kick until he actually feels the wave taking him. He then points the board in the direction he wants to go. The board’s very small whetted bottom area means that it will plane at higher speed, but also that it will stop planing very easily - the body also creating drag - and must therefore utilise steep, unbroken water to the fullest.

The **KNEE BOARD** is similar to the belly board, but a bit longer. Basic swimming-out and take-off techniques are the same. As the name implies, these boards are knelt on once the surfer is in a moving wave.

Here again, the rider is very close to the wave - the nearest he can get while travelling with his body out of the water. This is one of the special pleasures of knee boarding.

Many knee boards are thick for floatation, and feature scooped out decks, allowing the rider a lower centre of gravity.

Some of the longer knee boards, in excess of five feet, are stood on once the surfer is planing across the wave.

The belly board and knee board are ideal items for the beginner. They are perfect vehicles on which to experience the first sensations of sliding in a prone position, edging into a turn, and remaining there or getting to one’s
knees. They are small enough to carry on a bus, bike or hitchhike to the beach.

*Terry Prins rides the back of the ocean on the one hull of his surf cat during his journey to the outer breakers of Nahoon Reef, East London, from where he will return to the beach along the face of a wave.*

**SURF CATTING** is a new dimension of surfing that has been sailing with great speed into the surf-lands of South Africa within the past few years.

Surf catamarans handle hard-breaking waves as gracefully and smoothly as surfboards and as ruggedly as landing craft. It is a sport that is trying the skills and courage of local watermen.

The sleek bi-hulled yachts, called Hobie Cats, are built in Cape Town from specifications imported from the sunny beaches of California.

After their introduction to the shores of South Africa by Cape Town sea doyen, John Whitmore (the writer of the foreword to this book), a few aspiring surf yachtmen demonstrated to the public how functional and
versatile these craft are, and the surf cat movement sprang into life to become one of the fastest-growing, popular and prestigious sports at the seaside. Prestigious, because a surf catamaran is so costly.

A regular ride sends you flying, crashing and bouncing through the turbulent surf and then a turnabout for an exhilarating speed trip on a wave back to the beach.

An interesting feature of the 14 ft craft is the asymmetrical hulls which eliminate usually troublesome centreboards. This also enables them to sail through kelp, grass and shallow waters, in fact, any depth of water more than eight inches.

Controllable kick-up rudders allow positive lowering and raising by the tiller handle rather than climbing around and setting by hand. The rudders kick up automatically when beaching.

Once on a wave with sails breathing-in a fresh breeze, the cat is able to travel at a speed of up to 40 km/h. A crew is not needed to help sail the craft, but passengers may accompany the operator through crashing surf by sitting and clutching to a large trampoline wing stretched between the two hulls.

According to John Whitmore, the Hobie Cat attains super speed in two ways. “You can launch it from the beach and fly out in unbelievable-sized surf or catch waves like surfing. In other words, you can race it like a normal yacht and surf it,” he said.

The moulded fibreglass hulls with vacuum high-density foam sandwich throughout and the specially designed mast make the boat unsinkable. After capsizing, it may be righted easily by one man.

Specifications of the cat besides its length which has been mentioned are: beam 7'8"; draft 8"; sail area 110 square feet; mast height 22'3" and weight
fully rigged with sail about 215 lbs. When dismantled, no single part weighs more than 55 lbs.

The Hobie Cat has proved fun for the novice, yet is refined enough also for the sophisticated sailor. Prerequisites for aspiring cat-men are a basic knowledge of the sea and its unpredictability and sailing skills.

FREE BOARDING is a pleasant pastime for stokies on the Reef. It may be practiced in any lake or dam and keeps participants in touch with the planing motions of a surfboard.

Free boarding is a contradiction in terms since you are not riding the board free. It is actually waterskiing with a surfboard. After a little practice and with basic surfing abilities, a free boarder can accomplish many manoeuvres.

The simplest way to start is to lie on your board, holding a ski rope handle. A twin handled rope is easier to use than a single bar. Once the operator of the boat has taken up the slack in the rope, he may pull off at any speed. He need not pull off fast as in water skiing because the rider is already afloat before taking off.

Once the boat is moving, the rider clutches both handles with one hand while the other helps him up, firstly into a kneeling position and then onto his feet. The board may shoot from under you. If it does, keep trying. You will easily overcome it.

Retain a normal surfing stance, as explained in the beginners’ chapter, and start manoeuvring the board. Cross the wake for bouncy excitement and remember to lean away from the boat during fast turns. From there, you play it by ear.
In **WAKE SURFING**, a rider also travels behind a speedboat, this time without the aid of a ski rope. The main requirement is a boat that produces a large wake about 10 to 15 ft astern.

The length of the tow-line rope should keep the surfer within the wake when it is created. The take-off is the same as that experienced while free boarding. The boat should move off fairly gently while the surfer clutches a taut rope. He kneels, then stands. The wave he pushes himself into will be similar to that of a white water wave formed in ocean surfing. Once in this wave, the rope slackens. The surfer should make sure that he is, in fact, in the wave before throwing away the rope.

He then trims facing the boat. Wake surfing then becomes relatively easy to those accustomed to riding ocean waves. Practice will soon tune others in. Basically, if a surfer wants to gain speed he should lean forward or press the back of the board if he wants to stall.

If the driver of the boat has to turn, he should do so slowly towards the surfer. If the turn is gentle enough, the surfer will be able to carry out the movement without having to retrieve the rope.

The only real danger of wake surfing is coming into contact with the propellor/s of the boat. Mutilating accidents could occur if safety measures are not carried out strictly. If a surfer falls from his board, there is the chance of the board flying into the back of the boat. After a wipe out, the driver should accelerate.

The object of this chapter is to give readers a general outline of the “other” main forms of surfing - to whet appetites. There are a number of other forms that give people enjoyment in waves, like surf skiing and slalom kayak surfing. The best thing is to go to the beach, look for surfing possibilities, obtain the equipment and become involved.
Surfing has many sidelines and the most common of these have been chosen for this general round-up.

Three topics sum up the “story” of surfing in South Africa, as John Whitmore puts it. They are: dangers, artificial respiration and international visits.

The three main DANGERS in surfing are the intemperate weather and sea conditions, and loose surfboards.

The first of the sea creature category is the shark. According to expert skin-diver, George Askew, of Durban, surfers are bait for sharks. Bare legs dangling over the side of a surfboard give a glowing effect, especially in murky waters, and are likely to attract a shark’s attention. To a shark, the “luscious” leg could be a dead or dying fish wallowing at the surface.

At the time of writing there has been only one shark attack on a surfer in South Africa. The victim was a university student who was attacked at Mossel Bay in the Cape. Apart from receiving lacerations to his leg, he escaped unharmed. He still surfs.

Many bathers have been attacked, some fatally, in unprotected areas especially in the warm temperate waters of the Natal South Coast. Surfers are also warned of the prevalence of these man-eaters off the Pondoland Coast, south of Natal. Sharks are among the few remaining creatures that
remain a threat to man. Whenever a human-being is in the sea, there is a chance of his being attacked.

Most popular beaches today, however, are netted and reports nowadays of shark attacks are few. The purpose of introducing sharks into this chapter has not been to scare surfers, but to make them aware of the dangers. Surfers love escaping to virgin spots that are unprotected. As Springbok surfer, Antoni Brodowicz, says: “If you are going to surf in shark-infested waters, you must watch out! Keep your eyes peeled.”

Antoni often surfs in unprotected areas. His home is on the Natal South Coast. The problem is not as bad in the Cape but surfers should always be on their guard.

Powerful perfection at “Crons” Long Beach, Cape Town
Gunter Rohn rips off the bottom with albatross fluidity
Back to the leg dangling bit. Contrary to popular belief, most sharks do not cruise on the surface with their fins announcing their presence. Ninety-nine per cent lurk deeper down, and will streak to the top to have a bite. Fortunately, most sharks approach their food cautiously and if the water is clear, an observant rider will see it.

He should then either catch the first wave that picks up or paddle calmly and cautiously to the beach.

If he loses his surfboard after a wipe-out and has to swim to the beach to retrieve it, he should do so slowly and smoothly to create as little noise and vibration as possible. This danger is accentuated if surfing near river mouths, since these are favourite foraging grounds for sharks.

It is a fallacy that sharks will not be in an area where porpoise are seen. Reliable books written about sharks and various divers spoken to say that sharks and porpoise can be in an area at the same time.

Bluebottles, or Portuguese men-of-war, are another problem. While the body can absorb countless stings the venom often accumulates until finally even a mild sting may cause agonising swelling of the glands at the base of the stung limb, and sometimes paralysis. Nausea and lassitude are other reactions, and without assistance one can easily drown. When it is this bad, an anti-histamine injection is necessary.

The worst anyone can do if stung is to rub the affected part with sand. The pain is aggravated and as irritating as a hundred mosquito bites concentrated in one part of the body. People automatically look for something with which to scratch it. Sand seems ideal but this only irritates it more.

In fact, it rubs the sting deeper and the pain takes longer to ease off. For minor stings one may use aloe leaves, beach figs or meat tenderizer. If these are not immediately available, one should leave the water and just endure the pain without touching the place where one has been stung. The pain is
agonizing, but it usually wears off within a minute or two. Some people are, of course, affected worse than others. Liquid ammonia is also used to ease the pain - rubbed onto the affected area - by professional lifesavers.

Jellyfish are not as dangerous. Most people think only the tentacles sting but a hard blow from the head or dome of the bigger ones can cause painful bums. The treatment is the same as that for bluebottles.

Every surfer should have his own medical kit, especially when travelling on a surfing safari. The basic items should include a bandage, plaster, mercurochrome, cotton wool, zinc ointment or some cream such as Nivea.

On a surfing trip one almost always encounters a rocky point break, and the chances of being cut on rocks cannot be ignored. It so often happens. Fresh cuts should be nursed immediately. If not, they can become septic which may lead to blood poisoning.

Hiding between the rocks are nasty, spiky objects called sea urchins. These are blighters. If a surfer tramps on one, he can receive from 10 to 50 of their little spikes in his foot. The tiny brittle objects break off after penetrating the flesh.

A surfer may continue surfing, but as soon as he returns to the beach, he should get to work immediately with a sterile pin and pick them out. If he delays for longer than a day there is a good chance that inflammation will set in, leading to blood poisoning and a swelling in the groin.

A surfer can save a visit to the doctor if he removes the spike when the swelling first occurs.

Surfers will find that wet-suits and rubber booties will save them from being cut while being bounced or dragged on mussel laden rocks.
The hidden peril revealed. These rocks at South Africa’s most phenomenal point break, Super Tubes at Jefferys Bay are covered by the surf at high tide and if a surfer is wiped out, he is invariably torn over them. Here two of Durban’s hottest young surfers, Wayne Shaw (left) and Chris Knutsen prepare for their entry.

The sea should, at all times, be respected. A surfer should never be too confident when approaching the water, especially when the waves are big and wild. An Aran island fisherman in a conversation with John M. Synge, in 1888, gave a note of warning when he said: “A man who is not afraid of the sea will soon be drowned, for he will be going out on a day he shouldn’t. But we do be afraid of the sea, and we do only be drowned now and again.”

Some surf spots are more dangerous than others. This is mainly due to the lie of the land and the manner in which the area receives the swell. All places experience inshore currents, rips and various washes. Surfers should ask the locals where these are most prevalent. Otherwise, they should make a point...
of finding out something about the various sea phenomena and study conditions before entering the water.

The physical geographical aspects chapter may give surfers a better understanding of such features.

When a strong offshore wind is blowing, there is the danger of a surfboard being washed out to sea after a surfer has a wipeout. Nothing will stop surfers from entering the water if the waves are good. If they do so under these wind conditions, they are taking a chance. It’s a gamble. One does not normally lose one’s board under such conditions but if one does, it is put down as bad luck.

A crowded surfing area with loose surfboards flying out of control has been explained by many surfers as being more dangerous than riding in raging waves at an uncrowded spot. Every rider, no matter how good he is, is wiped out and this means loose surfboards. Surfers should be constantly on the look out for these riderless boards.

If one approaches a surfer while being pushed along by a wave, the surfer should either paddle out of the way if he has the time, or he should dive under water, even if it means losing his own board. It could save him a crack on the skull or something similar.

Some riders prevent their boards from being washed from them after a wipe-out by making use of a dog leash.

The question whether surfers should use leashes has probably been the most controversial of the seventies. The dog collar is tied around a surfer’s foot and attached to it is a cord, normally rope of about four to six feet long. The other end is tied to the back of the surfboard.
Brian Miles contemplates a low tide surf at his home point
Victoria Bay near George in the Cape

After a rider is wiped out, the board is washed away from him only as far as the cord stretches. Leashes seem to be the answer, especially when surfing off a rocky point break. But there is the possibility of the board bouncing back and hitting the surfer like a cork popping out of the water.

Most top surfers ride without leashes. There is also a psychological factor surrounding their use. The will to stay on your board through a tricky wave section is lost when one rides with a leash. If a rider with one wipes out, he surfaces and his board is next to him. Without a leash he normally has a long swim to the shore. Therefore one will be more determined to conquer that tricky section if one realises that the consequence of a wipe out usually is a swim.

There may come a time in a surfer’s life when he has to save someone from drowning. As we have noted, many mishaps can occur in the ocean If
someone is in trouble a surfer should know what to do. There have been many cases of surfers helping others in distress.

Two artificial respiration methods have been chosen to refresh the memories of those who have studied resuscitation and to furnish others with a slight insight into this lifesaving necessity. The first method is the plain mouth-to-mouth and the other is the Holger Nielsen method now adopted by the Royal Life-Saving Society and the St John’s British Red Cross organisations. I refer to Pears Medical Encyclopaedia, by J.A.C. Brown.

Firstly, what are the medical reasons for drowning? They are violent changes in blood chemistry and blood volume that cause the heart to stop. When a drowning victim runs out of air, he begins swallowing water. His lungs flood. Water and blood do not mix, and so there is a massive destruction of oxygen-carrying red blood cells. This causes dilution of other essential blood elements followed by irregular heartbeat and finally heart failure.

This whole chain of medical events may take place in two or three minutes after the lungs are flooded - so prompt resuscitation is essential.

If a semi-conscious person is hauled out of the water and he is still breathing and coughing, it means he probably has not inhaled much water and will be all right without any resuscitative measures. Take him to the nearest hospital for a chest X-ray and blood studies. He will never forget the experience - but at least he will be alive to remember.

**Method I**: If the victim is not breathing, do not delay. Start mouth-to-mouth breathing. Do not waste any time trying to empty the lungs of water.

Tilt his head back as far as possible and lift the jaw forward to open the air passage. Place your lips in a tight seal around the victim’s mouth - then blow! If the victim’s chest expands, release and blow again. And keep it up. If the chest does not expand, use a finger to clear any obstruction in the back of the victim’s throat. Hold his head back, his chin forward and blow again.
As soon as the victim’s chest is expanded with your exhaled air, place your finger on the side of his neck. If a jugular pulse is felt, continue the mouth-to-mouth breathing until help arrives.

If no pulse is felt in the victim’s neck, try external heart massage. Place your hand just below the centre of the breast bone and compress it toward the backbone - four or five times after each “blow”. It is useful to have someone to help when you are giving a chest massage - someone to hold the victim’s head back with chin forward and check the neck pulse while you continue to compress the sternum. Don’t be afraid to push hard - firm compression is necessary if you’re going to get the victim’s heart started. This compression should be done in short, sharp jolts.

The pressure kicks the blood out of the heart chambers. The heart will then expand, sucking in more blood into the veins. If this procedure is successful, the timing mechanism in the heart may pick up the rhythm, and the old pump may go back to work.
Method II: In this the patient is laid flat on the ground face downwards with false teeth and anything obstructing the mouth and throat removed. The arms are placed forwards on each side of the head and the elbows bent outwards so that the hands lie palm downwards, one on top of the other, beneath the forehead. The back is then smacked hard to bring the tongue forward. The operator kneels on the right knee in line with the patient’s head and facing his back, the left leg being placed with the heel near the patient’s right elbow.

The hands are placed on the patient’s shoulder blades and the operator leans forward until his straight arms are vertical, causing the patient to force air out of his chest. This takes a couple of seconds and the hands are then moved along the arms until the patient’s elbows are reached; done slowly and deliberately this should take one second. The arms and shoulders of the patient are then lifted upwards until the weight of the chest is felt but without moving either chest or head and this causes inspiration lasting a further couple of seconds. The elbows are then lowered and the operator’s hands move back to the should-blades to repeat the cycle.

To digest these few facts may save a life - knowledge well worth acquiring.

We have seen throughout this book that South Africa has something to offer “surfing-wise” to international visitors. Surfing has also a sort of international code - many things that apply here apply to the rest of the surfing world.

Africa, with its heart pumping strongest at South Africa’s Mecca, Jeffreys Bay, has attracted many overseas surfers, especially from the U.S. and Australia. Two main factors draw the internationals - the surf and the comparatively untouched and beautiful countryside. Once here, the visitors meet the locals and good vibrations flow.

At the time of writing, a list was drawn up of the more famous surfers who have plunged wildly in our waters and exploded in our waves. These names
will probably mean nothing to the uninitiated, but will remind or inform those already involved, of such visits.

The “500” series of professional surfing contests have also attracted a number of overseas “stars”. These will be mentioned first. They are: Midget Farrelly, of Australia; Eddie Aikau, Hawaii; Randy Rarrick, Hawaii; Peter Drouyn, Australia; Brad McCaul, California; Billy Hamilton and Jeff Hakman and Jimmy Blears, both of Hawaii.

Others are: Dick Metz, California; Endless Summer crew, Bruce Brown, Mike Hynsen, Robert August, all of California; Rod Sumpter, England; Joey Cabell, California; Mike Tabe-ling, Florida; Mike Diffenderfer, California; Nat Young, Wayne Lynch, Ted Spencer and Paul Witzig, all of Australia; Joyce Hoffman, of California; and last and definitely by no means least is Micky Dora, of California.

Four of the above, Nat Young, Midget Farrelly, Joyce Hoffman and Jimmy Blears, hold world titles.

Instead of an ending:

SURFING

(Still the beginning)

A rebirth in time
In the womb of the earth
Through splashing consistency
In waves of persistency.

A pattern in rhyme -
Turning, tucking and driving
Through tunnels sparkly
Releasing so lively.
It’s the wine of the shrine
The fresh, fertile surf
Rumbling, bubbling, so exciting
Staring at us with eyes inviting.

(Written during the research on this book. After a surf in Cape Town).

...............and “Good Surfing!”

Cornel Barnett (author)

Glossary

All-time: great, fantastic.
Arch: a back bend used mainly in turns.
Back hand: a turn in the opposite direction to which the body is facing.
Backie: a big wave that builds up outside, normally bigger than the rest.
Baggies (or surf trunks): loose fitting pants-like costume.
Beach break: wave that breaks off a beach.
Belly board: an average four foot surfboard ridden in the prone position.
Body surfing: swimming with waves and riding them with the body.
Boneyard: dangerous inshore wave breaking onto rocks - the location being the boneyard. A place where bones could be broken if a surfer falls off his board in the area.
Bottom configuration: contour shapes of ocean bottom on which waves break.
Bottom turn: a turn executed at the bottom of a wave.
Broadie: (archaic) to ride across or traverse a wave.
Choppy: rough sea conditions.
Chop strand: loose threads of glass fibre for general usage in fixing surfboards.
Climbing and dropping: riding up and down the face of a wave.
Close-out: an unridable wave with no face to traverse.
Concave: a functional concave shape on a surfboard placed where a surfer feels it fit.
Convex: same as above but curved outwards.
Crest: the upper breaking part of a wave.
Critical: any dangerous part of a wave, normally the area top to bottom when the wave first breaks.
Crouch: a surfer bending in the crouch position on a wave, mainly to gain speed.
Curl: a cylindrical wave.
Cut back: when a surfer changes direction while cutting across the wave’s face in order to get back into the fastest part of the wave - the breaking section.
Deck: either the top or bottom surface of a surfboard.
Ding: a dent or break in the board.
Double-ender: the front top shape being the same as the back top shape of a board, hence board called double-ender.
Down the line: a long wave face on or through which a surfer travels.
Drac wave: (archaic) terrible wave. Word from Dracula films popular at the time.
Drop-in or dropping in: when a surfer trespasses on another’s wave when the other has the right of way.
Dump: normally a violent wave that breaks near the shore or on to the sand, usually unsuitable for riding.
Elephant gun: (archaic) According to Springbok Dave Hanssen, who is our elephant expert, there used to be one in East London. Big wave board.
Face: the smooth surface of a wave.
Fade: same as cut-back.
**Feeder current**: strong inshore side current that feeds into an out-going current.

**Fin**: keel or skeg of a surfboard.

**Fins (flippers)**: splay-footed rubber shoe worn by surf swimmers or body surfers for better propulsion.

**Forehand turn**: turning on a wave in the direction in which body faces.

**Free boarding**: water skiing with a surfboard.

**Free fall**: a perpendicular drop from top to bottom of wave.

**Fun surf**: usually small easy-riding surf giving surfers the opportunity for tomfoolery like standing on their heads while riding a wave.

**Gear**: clothes worn in or out of the water.

**Glass-off or Glassy**: smooth, mirror-like surface of sea.

**Goofy-foot**: left-handed surfer, one who rides with right foot forward.

**Graveyard**: an area, usually at a rocky point, where waves break very dangerously. Surfers who ride in this area usually end up in the graveyard.

**Greenroom**: sometimes the clear part of a wave is a greenish colour. As the wave curls over, a surfer may manage to tuck himself inside this curl while riding, therefore he is, in fact, visiting the green room. Normally a pleasant place to be.

**Gremlin/Gremmie or Kook**: beginner.

**Gun**: big wave surfboard, usually for waves over 18 ft. Semiguns for waves between about 8 ft. and 18 ft.

**Hang Ten or Hang Five**: (archaic) Standing at the front of a surfboard and hanging ten or five toes over the front, while travelling along a wave.

**Head-dip**: while traversing, a surfer may dip his head into the wave’s face.

**Highway surfer**: someone playing the image of a surfer when in fact he does not surf. He feels he will impress by riding his car with an unused surfboard strapped to the roof. Generally, anyone who pretends to be a surfer when he is not. Found at parties as well, where there are females to impress.

**Hitting the Lip**: riding into the crest of a wave. An explosive manoeuvre.

**Hodad**: similar to highway surfer.

**Hollow wave**: a wave which, if frozen, will look like a pipeline.

**Hot**: something or somebody with positive quality eg: good, vibrant.

**Hot dog**: manoeuvre in which surfer executes a series of smooth top to bottom turns while traversing.

**Impact zone**: area in the sea where the wave plunges, usually onto a shallow bank or bottom. Dangerous to be hit by wave when caught on the impact zone. Here it
breaks its hardest.

**Juice**: a part of a wave containing much power. Exciting to ride.

**Kick out**: when a surfer pulls out of a wave by kicking his board over its back.

**Kick-up**: when the front of the board is lifted up - shaped thus.

**Knee-board**: also called knee machine. Board about five feet long, ridden while kneeling.

**Leash or board cord**: short rope tied from surfer’s ankle to back of board to prevent it being washed in after he falls off.

**Lip**: crest of wave.

**Locked in**: when a surfer is completely covered by a hollow wave.

**Lunch-time**: a bad wipe-out.

**Mouth**: open part of hollow wave.

**Natural foot**: a right-handed surfer. Surfs with left foot forward.

**Nose**: front of surfboard.

**Nose dive**: when the front of a surfer’s board dips into the water, usually after a rider takes off on a wave.

**Off-shore**: wind blowing from land onto the sea, ideal for surfing because it smooths the surface.

**On-shore**: wind blowing from sea onto land. Creates rough surf conditions not good for surfing.

**Peel off**: the progressive breaking of a wave across a wave’s face.

**Pearl**: when the front of the board dips into the wave’s surface, resulting in a wipe-out.

**Play**: (archaic) for good, nice or similar attributes.

**Plough**: same as pearl.

**Pollywog**: mythical surf creature that licks wax off surfboards at low tide. Beware!

**Pocket**: hollow part of breaking wave.

**Pos**: (archaic) for position.

**Rail**: side edges of a surfboard.

**Reef**: shallow inshore rocks on which waves break. Or the Reef, being the Witwatersrand in the Transvaal.

**Rebound**: riding into a wave section, like the crest, and being bounced off it, hence rebounding from the lip.

**Re-entry**: flying over the top of the wave and turning your board back into it.
**Refraction**: wave swells bending on the continental shelf.

**Ripple King**: (archaic) for person fond of small waves.

**Roll (or turtle)**: turning board over while paddling out so that a wave may brush over it and not wash it to shore. The rider anchors under the board while clutching onto the rails near the front.

**Roller coaster**: after kicking out of a wave, a rider may quickly turn his board around and roller coaster over the top and head back down to the wave’s bottom.

**Roving**: strips of glass fibre used mainly for securing fins to boards.

**Safari**: surfing trip away from home.

**Speed board**: a surfboard designed for speed, normally long and fairly narrow.

**Set**: a group of about three, four or five waves which roll toward the shore one after the other with intervals of a few seconds - normally.

**Shore break**: wave breaking close to the shore, normally about 10 to 20 metres out.

**Shoulder**: the clear part of the wave next to the breaking white-water.

**Snaking**: manoeuvring like a snake along a wave.

**Spilling wave**: gently-breaking wave.

**Spin out**: when a board’s fin loses its grip in the water, sending the board out of control.

**Stalling**: manoeuvre that slows the board down at times to a standstill.

**Stick**: surfboard.

**Stoked**: key word in surfing, meaning an ultra-exhilarating, pleasant, aesthetic feeling - call it what you may. It’s just good to be stoked.

**Stokie**: keen beginner.

**Surf cat**: a specially-designed catamaran which handles the surf.

**Surfs up!**: the cry when there are good waves.

**Switch foot**: changing stance from natural footer to goofy, or vice versa. Very few people master this, but it is fun to try now and gain.

**Tail**: back of surfboard - can have various shapes, according to a surfer’s requirements.

**Take-off**: a surfer catching a wave.

**Take-off spot**: normally a constant spot where the waves originally break. However, does shift with variables like tide changes.

**Toes on nose**: (archaic) standing on the front of the board while it is in motion.

**Topography**: ocean bed contours on the continental shelf.

**Top turn**: turning at the top of a wave.
**Track:** to glide in definite line across a wave - the line can be curved.

**Trick board:** (archaic) name of board in South Africa’s history. Has disappeared from the scene.

**Trimming:** maintaining the board in a balanced state on a wave - a trim is normally the position when the board is parallel to the wave line.

**Tube:** same as hollow wave. To be tubed is to be caught inside a hollow wave.

**Tuck into wave:** trimming very close to the wave’s face in a crouch position - could lead to becoming tubed or locked in.

**Tunnel:** same as hollow wave.

**V or Vee:** a slight V-shape normally on the bottom deck of a surfboard, mainly there for manoeuvrability.

**Wake surfing:** surfing the wake of a speed boat.

**Walking the board:** (archaic), walking up and down the surfboard while it is in motion. Practised when the boards were more than nine feet long.

**Wave hog:** person who continually interferes with others’ rides. Also known in a milder form as a hassler.

**Wax:** paraffin wax mainly, rubbed on the glassy surface of a surfboard to prevent a surfer from slipping - a slip check.

**Wet suit:** a suit made of neoprene, worn to protect surfers from the cold water. Also booties for the feet, enabling a better grip on the board. Comes in different sizes, like a Long John which is a full-length; and the half-length. Comes with or without arms.

**White-water:** the frothy, bubbly, turbulent part of the surf.

**Colour white.** Sound, a rumble or a hiss.

**Wipe-out:** when a surfer is knocked from or simply falls off his board while riding, and invariably loses it to the shore. 360-turn: a complete tracking circle on the face of the wave.