

Surf Buds



A special mahalo to [Neal Miyake](#) for the great photos for today's column.

About three plus years ago, when I first started surfing seriously, I pretty much stayed to myself and tried to learn everything by trial and error. I watched a lot, and read a little, but it became clear that I really needed to start asking questions. (Maybe it was that time I tried to duck dive by pushing my board down with my forehead that clued me in?!)

The guys at my break were wonderful. I am so appreciative of their patience and good humor; I made some appalling mistakes in my early days. Once I even dropped in on a shortboarder and got 'hooked' onto his board -- he just stayed on the wave dragging me along while I looked up apologetically. I also think that I was very lucky because I learned at an 'integrated' break. None of the 'stand ups' ever gave me any grief about being a sponger. I learned - and still learn - so much from the regulars at my break. Much of my love of surfing is about connecting with surf buds out there on the reef.

Still, the surfers of my heart have to be my online friends. Over the years I have slowly come to know the quirks and craziness of my one online newsgroup, alt.surfing. Through this Internet connection I have met some of the finest people I have ever known.

My first 'face to face' encounter with alt.surfing people was about two years ago when some of the Hawai'i posters emailed me an invitation to dawn patrol at [Diamond Head](#).



I was still quite a newbie, but was familiar with the break and was comfortable with the forecast (low enough wave heights for me!). These were serious surfing guys -- North Shore surfers, long time surfers. [Neal's story](#) about the meeting still makes me grin. [Bud](#) and Neal quickly became my favorite people online. Always generous with their support and advice, they helped me begin to really think of myself as a surfer.

This weekend I had another session with Neal and Bud ... along with Bud's brother, Rich, and, added in -- two more visiting alt.surfing buddies! Denny, ["The River Rat"](#) was visiting from Kauai and Evan ["Wavslav"](#) was in town from Santa Cruz. This was a special meeting - a ho'ike - I have been typing at these guys for three plus years; they watched me go through all the angst and ecstasy of becoming a surfer.

I arrived at Diamond Head before seven, but was not thrilled with the scene -- heavy clouds, brisk winds blowing up whitecaps and the waves from the lookout view looked sadly mediocre. By the time I paddled out, I was marveling at the 'optical illusion' of the cliff view. We had some [juicy chest-high sets](#) coming in! (that is Bud in the pic)



I saw that our "team" was dominating the outside break -- these are all powerful surfers: three longboards, two shortboards, at least four who had been competitive surfers. Even though the wind kept us paddling to stay in place, everyone was in high spirits and catching some awesome rides.

I generally feel happy if I catch two waves per session at Diamond Head ... partly because it is a right break (I pathologically favor lefts) and partly because the lineup always intimidates me. There aren't any newbees at this break. It is a long paddle out after a long hike down the cliffs. The 'deep ocean' waves are not forgiving. There were about ten wave-hungry surfers when I paddled up; I was the lone sponger and woman.

I enjoyed myself, nonetheless. I loved meeting the new (old) friends; hanging with the guys and talking about babies (yeah, that was the main topic of the day with all the new dads!) -- but I did hang back from the waves. Neal saw this and began egging me on. At one point (camera in hand) he was yelling "Go for it! Go for it!!" ... and I did. I found myself looking down a steep caving wall, and so ended up twisting, soaring out into space -- airdropping, and then doing that 'rag doll' thing in the whitewater. Neal was bursting with applause as I paddled back out; I told him, "That isn't surfing; that is sky diving!" He was all happy about it just the same. Later, he watched a wave coming toward me and once again started yelling, "It's all yours, Süs!" It wasn't. (Why do I trust this guy?) The [shortboarder on my left](#)



was skilled enough to sweep just under my takeoff as I yelped ... and I got caught in the whitewater again. (I definitely have to learn to look left when taking a right break!) I apologized to the guy later and told him I don't usually try to be a target. He laughed -- who could have missed my 'coach's' antics?

I did spend a lot of time paddling out from not-so-hot rides, but one great advantage was that I got to watch the others coming in on a lot of really great rides. Bud and Rich did a [dance](#)



on a shared wave -- so close and so coordinated that it looked like a show (and this was after Rich's board had lost a fin!). [Denny](#) had the old style longboarder grace -- straight up and almost statue-like on even the most sheer drop. [Evan](#)



was carving with his longboard -- swerving, and sliding up on the shoulder. Neal did a dolphin spin dive into a wave at the end of his ride. (Perhaps I will have a link to that photo next time when Bud gets his photos scanned.)

A beautiful day! And I even got twice the quota of rides I expected. Many thanks to all my surf buds!!

a hui hou!

Süs

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