

I don't really remember ever not surfing. When I was very young, my dad would float on his back and I would try to climb up there and sit on his big fat belly. He would start to sink, and a wave would come, sending me tumbling, laughing and screaming into the foam that that I thought came from the mermaids below, washing their clothes.

We always tried to catch waves, even when we were only allowed to go out as deep as our knees, a rule we breathlessly broke, as soon as they weren't watching. Then, there were those blue and yellow blowup raft things.

John Rayno was a big influence on me. He knew all about surf culture, who was who and stood for what. He had subscriptions to surf magazines and a California custom board by Harbor. I think it was a Harbor "Cheater", if I remember right.

I built my first board on my own, without any guidance. It was hollow, made from plywood. I glassed the rails and painted it red with a white diagonal stripe. I was so proud, and it really did look great to me. Turned out it was completely unstable. The first time I sank the nose and hit the sand, the glass cracked all around the rails and it sank straight to the bottom. Pearling we called it, after the beautiful spray of water that would come up on top of the board as the nose dug into the wave.

The Bernsteins had the Sun and Surf Shop and would hold boards and baggies, and let us pay whatever we could, sometimes a dollar a week in my case, until we paid enough to take them home. I still carry the scar in my head I got from Mark's fin on a contested wave.

Rick Shiver was good, part of that awesome cadre of goofy-footers St. Augustine produced at that time, for some reason. He went on what might be considered the first "pro" East Coast contest tour. I remember they were kicked off the New York throughway, because of the surf shop advertising on the side of the van, no commercial traffic allowed.

BJ challenged me again and again ever farther and farther towards the nose.

Elaine, of course, sleek and sure and switch-footed.

Bill Eicholz was fun to watch. He would stretch up and up, seemingly become weightless, and stay on the nose with his wobbly knees for unbelievable lengths of time.

I remember when Skipper and Barry and those guys came back from that first trip to California, all of them with innovative new boards. They had definitely improved to whole new levels of skills. Skipper bought a yellow tinted Greek "Eliminator" out there. It was the first step-deck board that I had ever seen or heard of. I later bought a 9' 8" Greg Noll "da Cat" step deck design,

from Sun and Surf, my first \$200 board.

Alvin Farmer came down one day from Jacksonville with a Challenger "Micro Mini Model" about 8 feet, 6 inches long. We all rode it and were wowed by the turns it made us capable of.

John Bromirski was so good on the nose. He came back from California with a station wagon full of unbelievably short 7 foot "V-bottom" boards by Surfboards Hawaii. The Bromirski's started the Shore Surf Shop and formed a team, John, Elaine, myself, Jimmy Price - brown as a berry - who was the hottest of the younger guys, I thought anyway, I can't remember who all, and truly ushered in the short-board era in St. Augustine, in my opinion. Elaine didn't want a V-bottom, though. She had Dick Brewer shape a pintail for her, kind of a really short longboard. I had one made a lot like that later, for myself.

Everyone idolized Frank Emerson, farther down the beach, by the ramp, doing spinners and skeg-first take-offs (which were the ancestors of the airs people are doing today, looking like nothing so much as the jumping dolphins who used to play with us in the waves,) while most of us were too close to the pier, giving the lifeguards fits, trying to win contests and respect.

Biddy was a bud, who gave me lots of pointers, but he thought I became too wild and erratic looking when we moved to short boards.

I have never seen anything, before or since, cooler than Pam Herndon in her Stingray, surfboards sticking up out of the back of the seats.

There were so many teachers, but to answer the question, as far as who I wanted to look like on a wave, it had to be Elaine Davis and Bill Eicholz. Thanks