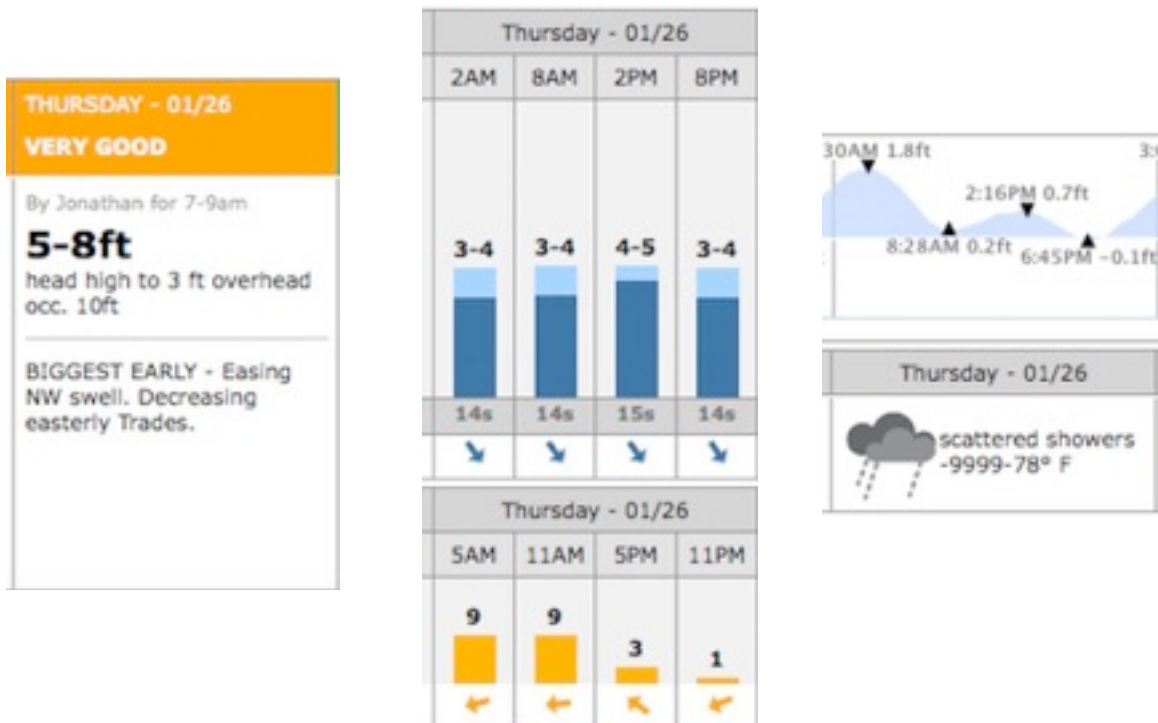


# A Surfer's Mental Mistake

Yup, it was a great day to be alive, but as you will see, I made a mistake!  
I am sharing this story just for entertainment. When boring, just delete.

Ron and I try to surf on Thursdays much as many others would get together for golf. We usually surf anywhere we can find surf in the morning, then eat a nice lunch with a beer, then run all our errands in the afternoon. I usually visit with my mother for a few hours every Thursday afternoon and fix things, paint, etc. But that is another story . . .



The surf report looked to be very nice and much smaller than last week. So we arrived at Maili Beach at 8:30am and we stop to decide on whether we will go here or hele on to another spot. Other surfers are coming in and we gather info from the dawn patrollers. (A digression: Last week, I got a little spooked here because a surfer that I had met a few months back at my office regarding braces (but we talked surf too) is a physical therapist that surfs the big stuff. He had told me how one day he tore his bicep off of his arm during an awkward wipeout! This guy is built like a body builder with a 6 pack and no fat at all! So when he tells me, "Hey doc, it's fun, You should go out!" I think to myself that fun for him may be a bit different league than fun for me.) Back to my story: Ron was on the phone to his dental lab squaring away all his lab work while I watched the surf intently. It is solid overhead at the point and Maili is a left so I am intensely wary. Backside is spooky even on a smaller wave! But eventually Ron and I decide to go out, watch each other's back, and if it gets too hairy, we'll go to lunch.

The surf was dropping quickly as was the tide and so it looked to be very manageable. Last week, I forgot to bring my GoPro, but this week it was mounted on my fun-board that I use when it looks to be more forgiving and playful. Last week I took my big pointed gun!



Photo credit: Dr. TJ Cleveland. He and Dr. Swaja are the chargers that have no fear.

It was pretty playful and fun and I really enjoyed being out in the water on such a perfect day. Of course I went left, but where I was surfing it was fat and slow enough to make sweeping roundhouse turns back into the peak then cut left again. Here I am having a blast!



This is actually me turning “turtle” and letting a wave pass. Then paddling out in the whitewater. It is boiling and I like these photos just because I can relate to them. Maybe you can too? It’s a part of surfing.



Time for lunch. Ron had gone in a few minutes earlier and I can see him walking up the beach so I decide to just take **any** wave, boogie in and oooOOOOPPPPPsssss!

This is actually a repeat of a rookie mistake that I made here about 11 years ago. I apparently lost my bearings and went in to the right of the big rock marking the tip of the reef and ended right on top of the large reef shelf Maili is famous for! As soon as I saw the reef boiling up through the foam I bailed off my board but - too late, I got rolled onto the prickly exposed reef. Between waves it was from dry to 3 inches deep! I tried to stand up but it was super sharp and pokey and I was trying to look for the vana so I wouldn't step on them or put my hand on them but the waves kept knocking me down off my feet! As you can see I am encased in a rubber suit, so I decided to just roll with the waved over the reef since I couldn't walk on it. I tried to not put my hands down into holes where the vana was. Been there and done that.



I kept getting knocked down with succeeding waves washing over the reef.



Pretty ugly, inglorious tumbling and rolling all the way over the reef for about 30 yards until I dropped off into deeper water.





Happy to be on the other side and in deeper water I examined my hands for vana, scrapes, and punctures.



Creeping back on the rocks towards shore I put my hand up to turn off the camera which recorded the whole embarrassing episode! Ha! It is hard to see clearly but there are only very small puncture wounds and a few scratches on this hand. Same for the other hand and my feet. The biggest scrapes were actually on the back of my right hand and on my legs. The next day at the office everyone noticed the blood clotting on the back of my hand and the wounds that I quickly covered with my gloves. I realize that I have been super fortunate. I have seen people with reef rash and it is usually bloody and with much torn flesh. But as you can see, I was covered in rubber like a seal and you can bet that I will continue to surf that way - especially after this incident.





Notice my hand, not much damage, and the very shallow ankle deep water. It was a minus tide.



Yes we all know that surfing can be dangerous, but we surfers like to think that we observe the waves first, taking stock of where the dangers lurk, then make calculations enough to satisfy ourselves that it is actually safe to go out. We don't intentionally put ourselves in danger. But things happen! In this case it was a mental mistake. Possibly I'm getting old and feeble minded. I really thought that I was heading for the channel and I use landmarks to guide me when out in the water. I made a judgmental mistake! Wake up call!

But OK! I'm ready to go to Las Vegas because my luck is very good right now!

1) Lucky because it is amazing that I didn't get hurt when I was first surprised by the reef. I wasn't expecting it because I actually thought that I was going into the channel. This was a paradigm shift of immense proportions and the adrenaline shot through my brain almost but not quite instantly when it sunk in that I was really seeing dry reef where I didn't think that it should be! OMG!

2) Lucky because it is impossible to walk over this reef without slicing up feet so I elected to roll over and over until I reached the shallow pond on the shore side of the reef. I am extremely lucky that there **was** a shallow pond on the other side and it was not just reef from here on in! You need reef walkers to walk on this stuff without getting cut up. Lucky I had rubber on my body and there were no puncture wounds in my wetsuit nor in my body - just tiny ones mainly on my hands and the bottom of my feet. Today as I write, they are mostly small scabs.

3) Lucky because my surfboard appears to have come through unscathed! No visible dings! If anything there are some slight scratches, but I get those all over the place. I know how lucky I am because on my last experience on that reef the very first time I surfed Maili in 2006. That was also the very first time I was riding my brand new 6'5" Aipa Swallowtail - a retro with a bird beak! Loved that board but it now has a war wound from the very same Maili reef. Nearly an identical grounding. It feels stupid to make the same mistake twice.

Below is Ben Aipa delivering that board in to me in 2006. This is me surfing it 7/30/06 at Toes in front of Niu Valley. Yes it has a small ding on the nose from my Maili encounter. Wow, it's amazing how much younger we looked. A decade passes far too quickly. Sadly, I heard a rumor that Ben may be aged and infirmed. He was always such a tough and fit guy at every age! I hope it is not true.



So as you can see, I'm still having a great time surfing. However, if these mistakes keep on happening I will have to admit to the vagaries of age, hang up my boards, and start gardening.

## But not yet!

Saturday 1/28 noon: The surf is too big north and west; flat south; and onshore east; basically no surf for me - so I went to meet with my newest shaper, **Mike Casey**. He appreciates my business. I like the way he handles the rails and curves on my latest boards. In case you did not know, a shaper is really a **sculptor** of useful art items. They are artists in 3D! Ever tried to sculpt something? If you did, you know how truly skillful a shaper must be. They are bonafide artists! They have to find their benefactors like any artist must. But I value the sculpting of a surfboard and I am willing to pay for his artwork. I actually liken it to my own profession in that "I am a sculptor of smiles". I am an artist and thus I can appreciate him as an artist. Most of his customers are older men like me, but Mike is a an icon from the 60's and 70's and is a legend shaper. He has shaped for many professional surfers and recreational surfers alike. He is Dick Brewer's "ghost shaper" and that means that he can sculpt foam with the best of them. Mike's

buyers are quality oriented and want a custom job. I love that he is a real craftsman's craftsman and that he not only has an eye for the lines and curves of a board but understands how those things work in fluid dynamics. He is skilled (of course) and loves his job enough to put his heart into every board. So, I'm putting in a plug for Mike because he is AWESOME! Check him out if you want something special!

If you are observant, you may have noticed that the colors on my favorite 2006 Aipa board are now resurrected in my current 2014 Mike Casey surfboard in the photo below! Yes, I deliberately colored them the same. I love the way they look and maybe it affects the way they ride - who knows, but I ordered another one today! Acknowledging my limited lifetime left to surf, I ordered a new 10' "summer board" off of the same template. I will take a week to decide on the colors though. Hmmm, do I go samo-samo, slightly different, or radically different?

Mike keeps the measurements of every board in his "magic book" just in case you find that it was the "magic board" and you want the shape duplicated. He shapes by hand so the measurements are recorded analog into his book. To be sure, I still bring in my current ride to make sure that he has a mental picture of what I want. Really, so far every board that I have ridden shaped by Mike Casey has been "magic." That is high praise and an endorsement from me - someone that has probably been through more surfboards than most. But who's counting? If it is what you enjoy, then don't let the numbers get in the way!



We had fun talking and Mike shares a few stories. Surfers **all** have stories - as you obviously can tell cause you are reading one! There is obviously a "surfer mentality" that is real and has evolved into surf culture. Feel it and be a part of it - after all, it is home grown! Hawaii is the birthplace of surfing! And although it has a sometimes unsavory reputation, it is not only sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Surfing is like yoga to me. It is taking the time to breathe, to contemplate being, and as the Campbell Brothers espouse, "to be mindful." Inner peace is what you feel after you commune with nature. I really love that part of surfing. I always feel content and happy after a session.



I gotta say that I also really love the back road haunts of the surfer community in Waialua on the North Shore. It is just so laid back, so country, soo sooo cool, and possibly it is because to me it is super RETRO! It reminds me of the 60's and 70's. It reminds me of old Maui - my grandmother's house and her upcountry farm. Mike and several others shape and build surfboards in these unmarked warehouse buildings. My visits with Mike transports me to a different place and time. Waialua is like a time machine and I love it!



My hairstylist is also a surfer and he recently told me that the best thin crust pizza is at Jerry's pizza in Wailua! What?!?! Is he kidding? Sue and I love thin crust the best. So of course I have to check it out. Again, Jerry's Pizza reminds me of upcountry Maui. They actually have a sit down area so I sit. They sent me across the street to the liquor store to get a beer though. Pizza w/o beer? Wazzup wi DAT?

I tell the lady at the counter to give me their "best pizza!" Stupid me, "they are all good she says!" OK give me the "most popular pizza you sell!" And this is what she brought me. A classic "meat lover's pizza" but I never even looked at the menu and apparently it was loaded with garlic! I took Sue to see the movie Hidden Figures that evening (last night) and she told me that there was some really stinky guy in the theater! It turns out it was ME! Ha! She said that I reeked of garlic and warned me never to eat that on a Thursday when we have patients on a Friday because I reek! Yup, I just checked the take out menu I brought home with me - garlic! It should read "stinky garlic" so it would catch my eye! Oh well, I will be aware of this next time.



Very thin crust! Next time I will get a Margarita Pizza to showcase the thinness. But I still give it the thumbs up.

No, I'm not Yelping it around. Not Facebook. This is a Mike Wall recommendation directly to you!

**So as I am finishing up I wonder what the point of my blogs are anyway? Why do I do this?**

I guess that it is because it gives me pleasure to write this. It is like my daily journal. Remember when we did that back in Intermediate School? Similar concept.

I get to re-live the experiences as I write: I think about the beautiful day and how it turned into a near disaster with the rolling and the poking of the reef.

I ended up reminiscing about my old shaper, Ben Aipa and my old Aipa surfboards, and how I wish him well.

I relish the happiness of ordering one of my last 10-20 surfboards - after all, who really knows how long we have left or how long we will be healthy? Aging sucks and is inevitable! But injury and illness is worse.

Finally, I guess it is because I am happy to be alive and I want to share that happiness in spirit with **YOU**.

I honestly am very happy. Life is good . . . for now, at least.

I appreciate sharing my life with you on this planet.

Have a great day today, tomorrow, etc.etc.etc.

Mike