

SURFER GIRLS-II
An interview by Paul A. Dolan

April 7, 2003

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I am Paul Arthur Dolan, a member of the Outrigger Canoe Club's Historical Committee. For sometime the Committee has been conducting oral interviews of prominent members of our Club. Today, it is my pleasure to interview Evelyn Jane Black and Stephany Louise Sofos, both long time members of the Outrigger Canoe Club and were accomplished surfers in the 60's and 70's. We are in the boardroom of the Club on this beautiful Hawaiian day.

PAD: Good day ladies.

SLS: Hi Paul

EJB: Hi Paul.

PAD: Right on...Let's get to the meat of things. You were both born in Hawaii?

SLS: Yes.

EJB: Yes.

PAD: Schooled where?

SLS: I went to St. Andrews Priory and then to the University of Hawaii. I majored in history and minored in economics. Evie and I are born on the same day, September 16th and I'm one year older than she. I'm the good looking one. (laughter)

EJB: I was also born and raised here. Initially attended Hanahauoli till sixth grade. I then transferred to Punahou and graduated from there and attended the University of Southern California for three years and transferred to the University of Hawaii and finished there on my teaching degree.

I then went to law school at the University of Santa Clara where I graduated in 1987.

PAD: Super! Your present employment?

SLS: I am self-employed. I am president of a small real estate consulting company. I have been self-employed for seventeen years. Before that I was in corporate America with real estate companies like Chaney, Brooks, Inc. and Blackfield Hawaii Corp. and Aston Hotels. I am a real estate consultant, broker and appraiser. I buy and sell real estate properties and business's and I do expert witness testimonies in real estate matters in valuation for federal and state courts.

EJB: Stephanie also writes for the newspapers.

SLS: I am also a published author.

EJB: I am an attorney. I handle exclusively maritime and admiralty cases and have practiced law since 1987, but in 1996 I set up my own adjusting firm and ran that for two years. My firm was subsequently acquired by John Mullen & Company, which is the largest adjusting firm in the State. I've been working there since 1998 as director of marine claims and supervise the claims department for maritime claims.

PAD: That's super! Well, does your present employment allow you to go surfing still?

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SLS: Yes, as long as I can set the time by and can do that. I don't surf as much as I used to. I bodysurf still and I go to Sandy Beach and Makapu`u, because it doesn't take the effort to carry a board and paddle out there. I kayak surf and canoe surf about once a year now.

EJB: I don't surf anymore, primarily because I ran my own business and I didn't have time then. I really have no excuse now other than I've had too much sun growing up here in Hawaii and have had bouts with skin cancers. So I try to be careful about being out in the sun. But my goal is to get out and do some surfing and probably surf early in the morning or late in the afternoon and get back into my favorite activity.

SLS: I bodysurf about once every three weeks.

PAD: Good. When, where and at what age did you start surfing?

SLS: I started in the summer of 1968 when we moved from Kaneohe to Diamond Head. My family did. I was thirteen years old. It was so fascinating and I first learned at Tongg's Beach and Hotels, Rice Bowl's and at Old Man's.

I became an Outrigger member in 1969 and that first year in 1968 they had the Felipe Pomar, who was the 1965 surfing champion, was part of the Wallace surfing school and he led a bunch of 20 or 30 kids here at Tongg's and taught them how to surf. I can remember how handsome and buff he was at surfing and if that's a world surfing champion I'm going to be one of those guys one day.

EJB: OK! That's hard to top that one.

I've been a member of the Outrigger since I was twelve and I think that was in 1967. I started surfing a year after that in 1968. I started in that famous surfing spot called Tongg's where most

of the Outrigger kids learned how to surf after we moved from the old club to here and also at Old Man's

PAD: That's super!

SLS: That's where I met Evie. (Laughter) She was surfing and I saw her and I thought: "She's pretty good." She wouldn't talk to me at first, because she was one of those really good surfers and I was one of those really bad surfers.

I kept coming by and going "Hi!" Finally, she thought this person won't go away so I might as well say "hello" to her and so we started talking.

EJB: (Laughter) She has a much better memory than I have.

PAD Well, you started surfing in the age of high tech board, didn't you?

EJB: It depends on what you call high tech...

PAD: Well, not a redwood plank.

EJB: No, but I had a balsa board.

PAD: Yeh, but balsa and fiberglass....

EJB: It was not mine. It was a relative's board that I used.

SLS: My first board was a Dewey Webber, a 10'1". I remember because it was so big. It was hard to carry. I was 5'2" at the time. Actually, I've grown two inches and I'm 5'4" now. It was carrying that damn board that was so heavy.

EJB: I think the Club had boards as I recalled. They were red and white and I think that was what I started out in, because I didn't

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own a surfboard. Actually, I got my first surfboard from Frank Fasi's son. He used to manufacture and sell surfboards.

SLS: I got my first surfboard from Fred Swartz from Surf Line Hawaii. He was my neighbor and was my sponsor to the Club. He was an old time surfer from Malibu who moved to Hawaii like so many others.

PAD: So you really started surfing at the new Club. You never had the experience of using the "Old Club?"

EJB: Well, I did. Actually, as a child my dad was a member many many years ago he had a surfboard. There was this Percy Kinimaka, who ran the pool at Princess Kaiulani and he taught me how to swim when I was three or four years old and I remember him taking me out surfing and putting me on his shoulders out at "Canoes." I really didn't surf; I was just sitting on his shoulders. So that was probably my first surfing experience when I was a child.

PAD: I remember Percy at the Kauai Surf Hotel when he had the beach concession. We had worked together on the beach.

EJB: I think his son has taken that over.

PAD: Oh, that's great. Well, I see that you girls are very well verse in the names of the surfs. Can you rattle off the different surfs that you surfed and you can go to the lee shore and north shore?

SLS: I pretty much stayed to the south shore. I have surfed at Pupukea and Pipeline when it was really small and I surfed in Makaha a lot, but my expertise is at the south shore.

EJB: I've surfed all over this island, also outer islands and the mainland in competition. On this island I've surfed the entire

south shore. There are just too many places to name from Diamond Head all the way down to Kewalo's.

Starting off on the Waianae and Nanakuli coast, I surfed that entire coast all the way down to Makaha.

Going to the north shore, I've surfed Haleiwa, Laniakea, Chun's Reef, Sunset Beach. I don't surf Pipeline...I'm not that stupid. (laughter) I know that people have gotten their heads bashed on the reef and my dad warned me never to go surfing there. So I never did.

SLS: Well, excuse me. I have never surfed Kewalo's, because there are big fish out there and they like white people like you. (laughter) So I decided not to go out there.

EJB: I didn't finish... Continuing around to the Laie side there are some surf spots out there when the wind is right that you get really good surf on that side of the island.

I have surfed off Flat Island, the Mokulua's, Makapu'u (to the left of the bodysurfing beach) and then I've surfed all over the island of Maui, the island of Kauai and the west coast of the mainland in lots of different places.

PAD: Really! That's pretty remarkable.

SLS: Aren't you waterlogged by now? (laughter)

When I surfed Makaha Rell Sunn was the lifeguard and she was so nice. She was warm to everybody. She loved everybody and she never gave me a hassle. You know Evie you were competing against her.

EJB: I surfed against Rell for years and fortunately I won when I went against her. I think there was some animosity there

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unfortunately. She was really nice, but there was a lot of competition there.

SJS: Absolutely. For me, I was always going over the falls she was like: "Are you alright, Girl?"

EJB: She had a totally different style. She was more into fluid and graceful motion and I was of an aggressive surfer. I surfed more like the guys surfed rather than the way the wahines were surfing. It helped me be more successful in the contests, because I was not just catching the wave and going straight.

PAD: Can you remember what your best ride was in your life?

SLS: I can tell you my scariest ride, not my best ride. I was at Ricebowl's when it was a big day. I had been at outside Tongg's and I coming in and I was really tired. I had been surfing for four or five hours. I was paddling in and all of a sudden a big set came up and it must have been eight to ten feet, to me it looked like twenty. I was more of a small wave rider; my waves were in the six to eight foot category.

I remember thinking: "I'm going to die, I'm going to die." I was so scared. I was just paddling and I couldn't get out of it and I got caught in the set and it started to break. I held on to my board for dear life and I said: "Please God, I promise you I'll be a good person if you let me live."

As I caught the wave coming in the coral heads were coming up at where Hotel's was. Miraculously, I rode over the coral heads and everybody is clapping and saying: "You're doing fabulously." I didn't stand up--I just held on. It scared me and I didn't go out for a week. I don't need to do that. (laughter)

PAD: Evie, your best ride?

EJB: I'll talk about the best ride and leave the dangerous one for later.

I used to live on Maui back in the late seventies and I taught school during the day as a substitute teacher and worked at a hotel at night. The days I didn't teach school I surfed. It was great.

I loved to surf Honolua Bay and I'll have to tell you that Honolua Bay has the most beautiful right slide that you can imagine. When the surf is about 8' to 10' it breaks way outside and you don't have a lot of little "grummies" dropping in. This is back in the days when Gerry Lopes used to live on Maui. We would sit way out and catch the really, really beautiful waves at Honolua Bay.

PAD: This was before "tow in?" (Using a jet ski to catch super big waves)

EJB: We are not talking about 20-foot waves, we're talking about 8' to 10' waves or a little bigger. "Tow in" is like places such as "Jaws" off Maui. Honolua is on the north side. It just wraps around that point and it builds and one catches just outside these rocks and then from there one slides right and it one of the longest ride I've ever experienced. I have to say that was my best ride of my life. I've had more than one, but by far that the best spot to surf if you're a regular foot, one can just go forever.

PAD: Your most dangerous ride?

EJB: This is kind of interesting, because I surfed backed in the days when people like George Downing, Buffalo Keaulana, Rabbit Kekai. We would go to Makaha when it was fairly big. I have to say that 6' to 8' and 10' waves.

One day I got stuck at Makaha. We were sitting outside of the bowls and I was there with Rabbit Kekai, George Downing, Ben

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Aipa and Buff Keaulana. I'm out there with these old time surfers and I was the only wahine out there and it starts to get really big like 12' to 15'. This is really scary the bowls are closing out.

This is probably around 1972-73 and I thought I really couldn't handle this. I was scared. George or Buff said there is only two ways in. One way is to catch a wave and the other is to get a helicopter to come get you. It was really to make "a__" if you took the helicopter ride. They said we'll let you catch whichever ride that looks the safest. They all backed off this one wave and told me to "go, go, go." I remember these guys....

PAD: They baited you... (laughter)

EJB: So I took off and I don't think I stood up and I proned it, somehow I survived, but I thought I was going to die. I made it in and the shore break was big. With 12' to 15' waves the shore break is about 8'. I remember the shore break and I just went airborne. I took my leash off because if I fell or let go I didn't want to get dragged by my board. I just let my board go and I swam in and lived.

PAD: When did leashes come in?

EJB: I think there were in when I started, probably late 60's or early 70's.

SLS: I remember having a leash. I never used a leash.

EJB: I remember having a leash from the beginning. I always used a leash. I hate swimming.

PAD: Have you ever experienced getting hit by a big one and you're under water and wondering which way is up?

SLS: That happen to me when I was canoe surfing. One year we were canoe surfing and Brandt Ackerman, who was a fabulous surfer and “Baby” Dave Rochlen, who was one of the best surfers from Malibu and I decided to enter the canoe surfing contest at “Ole Man’s”.

I was in the front and “Baby” Dave in the middle and Brandt was in the back and we caught a wave, it was huge, it must have been 8’ and we started to “pearl” and Brandt said: “Bail, jump, jump.” “Baby” Dave, with his girth, he jumped and that just made the canoe go faster. As I tried to jump my knee got pinned and I could not get out of the boat fast enough. I went straight down with the boat in the depths and I went down and got out and they tell us that the boat went straight down, went straight up, and Brandt was catapulted 30’ in the air and he was like superman with his paddle in hand. It was spectacular. I was probably down 15’ and I got tumbled and I was trying to get out. I should have watched where the bubbles were, but you know when the bubbles are all over the place you can’t tell where they are. I had lost all air and starting to drown and just as I started to panic I hit the surface. That was a very scary feeling. We got back in the boat and went out and caught more waves. You cannot look like a woose when you’re with big guys. (laughter) Evie can tell you when you’re with Rabbit or George Downing or Keoni Downing or whomever; you cannot be a wimp when you’re surfing with the boys.

EJB: That’s true.

PAD: Evie, did you ever have an experience like that?

EJB: Oh yeah, lots of times. I used to compete a lot of times. I would go out when other female surfers wouldn’t go out in. Sometimes, there would be ten women entered, but two would go out because the waves were maybe 8’ to 10’ or little bigger, on the north

shore in particular. Back in the days when I surfed not too many women liked big waves. They all liked 3' to 4' maybe 6' waves for competition.

I do remember being in a contest where the waves were 8' to 10' at Haleiwa and I went over the "falls" with my board. We were paddling out and one thing about Haleiwa there are sea buoys (to mark the channel into the small boat harbor) and whenever you see the buoys going way down and way up that means there are huge set of waves coming. One starts paddling for the horizon because if you don't you're going to get trapped.

I remember paddling out and I didn't paddle out fast enough and I got caught inside and I actually went over the "falls", holding on to my board and it hit my face. I don't know if I got knocked out or what, but I remember tumbling, because I had my leash on and I grabbed my leash and pulled myself in the right direction. The surfboard being buoyant it has to go to the surface... I remember someone on the beach saying: "What happened to your face?" It turned out that my nose was broken, because I got hit so hard with the force of the wave hitting my face when I was "turned turtle." I ended up having my nose fixed, because it was pretty badly damaged.

PAD: I broke my nose out surfing too.

EJB: It's amazing. I only have had two injuries and they were not life threatening. I split my lip one time and that was it.

PAD: Do you remember the names of other wahines that surfed in your era?

SLS: Well, the girls we all surfed together in those days were Heidi Hemmings, Sharon Bintliff, Kaiulu Downing, Kisi Haine, Evie

Black and Tracy Phillips, but my two heroes were Evie Black and Tracy Phillips. I was a great admirer of them. I saw Rell Sunn surf at Makaha. I liked her and she was one of my heroes too, but the two all time were Evie and Tracy.

EJB: I surfed with Stephany. At the Club it was Kaiulu Downing, Stephany Sofos, Heidi Hemmings, Tracy Phillips and Kisi Haine. Kisi was younger than we were.

Outside competition was Laura Blears who is “Lord Tally Ho” Blears’ daughter, she was at Makaha.

My first contest I surfed against the three Sunn sisters. Rell, Annella, Star and Lynn Boyer. Just a bunch of surfing wahines that were well known at the time.

PAD: The competitive events for women—When did they start?

SLS: Evie can answer that better. She was doing it in the late 60’s. I started competitively surfing about in 1970 to 1978. No, I stopped in 1979. So I did it about 10 years. I did bodysurfing. I was in the state championships at Sandy Beach in 1973, I came in third. There wasn’t much competition since there were only five of us. I always competed in the Outrigger tournaments down at Old Man’s. I didn’t do the big surf. I was one of those girls that were comfortable in three to five foot waves. When it got bigger than that I didn’t feel comfortable. I got scared. I’ll admit it.

PAD: Wow!

EJB: Let’s see, I started surfing in 1968 and started competing in 1969. I did pretty well in most of the contest I was in. One year, I can’t remember what year it was; I won the U. S. Surfing Championships. I went to the World Surfing Championship sometime in the early ‘70’s and got third.

I was going to turn pro and my grandfather who was a very wise old man, his name was E. E. Black. He was a very strong

believer in going to college. In 1973 I graduated from Punahou and I was already to turn pro and my grandfather said: “Well, you can be a beach bum or you can go to college and I’ll pay for it.” (laughter) So, it was a tough choice, because they had me going away, they didn’t want me to go to school here in Hawaii. I tried to talk my parents into letting me go to Pepperdine, but of course, anybody

who surfs knows Pepperdine is right above Malibu and they saw right through that.

I did choose to go away to college. I gave up the possibility of turning professional and by the time I was through four years it was at that point that I lost my interest in competition. I never did turn pro and I just went on to college and went that route.

SLS: I competed until I was twenty-four. I never won I was always coming in second, but mostly third or fourth. I have a lot of trophies, but never the big diamond.

PAD: Let’s get back to the Outrigger Canoe Club—What are some of your best experiences. What do you think of the Club?

SLS: My best experiences were the comradery that I have had with people I’ve grown up with. Some of those experiences and the people will be for all my life. Evie and I met when she was thirteen and I was fourteen and we’re still good friends.

I became a member in 1969 and Fred Hemmings had been the world’s surfing champion in 1968. In 1970 he was like a god, a big surfer dude. He and Johnny McMahon.

One day I said to Fred: “You know I’d love to know how to canoe surf.” and Fred said: “OK! Let’s go!” He stuck me in the canoe and off we went. No preparation, no mind set, we we’re off.

PAD: He was a waterman.

SLS: He was a waterman and Aka (Hemmings) has taken me out a few times and we’ve learned how to surf along with Heide (Hemmings). There are just so many people, Kaiulu Downing. There’s just the commadrie,.

What do I think of the Club today? Too many children, (laughter) but other than that I still like it.

PAD: It is a family Club you know!

SLS: I know, but the children are noisy, just noisy. (laughter) I was a perfect child, just ask my mother. (laughter)

EJB: Well, I think my history of the Club started a little bit earlier than Steph. I started out at the old Club when my Dad was a member there. My grandparents were members. We used to go there and have dinner.

I remember to become a member one had to be twelve (really ten). I think I joined at twelve. It’s the best thing my parents ever did for me, because it only cost \$75 for initiation and I used the Club all the time. For my business, I bring people down here all the time. I use this Club more than any other club. It’s the best place to bring people for business, pleasure--Out on the lanai. Sometime it gets crowded because we have a lot of reciprocal members. I’m glad we have reciprocals because I travel I can use their clubs.

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This is a really nice Club. I've lost contact with some of the people here that I used to hang out with. All of that is the growing process and getting involved in business and just not having the time I used to have.

But I still maintain contact with Stephany and I'll call her and say: "Hey Stephany, let's go have a drink or let's just together for breakfast.

SLS: We got together for breakfast. That's because I like her husband. He's sexy.

EJB: Oh, gees!

PAD: Tell him!

SLS: You know the Club is really wonderful because you have some great friends and you go surfing and you paddle together and you bitch to each other about who's in the canoe and whose not.

PAD: Just general politics.

SLS: We also paddled together. We didn't just surf together.

EJB: Gee, we've been through a lot.

PAD: Just the paddling experiences are going to be a story of their own.

It's been a pleasure interviewing you both...It's also been hilarious.

EJB: Thank you very much for putting up with us...

SLS: You can say a lot about us, but **we are** entertaining. (laughter)

PAU !



Stephany L. Sofos participating in an outrigger canoe regatta – 1973

Below –
Louise
April 7,

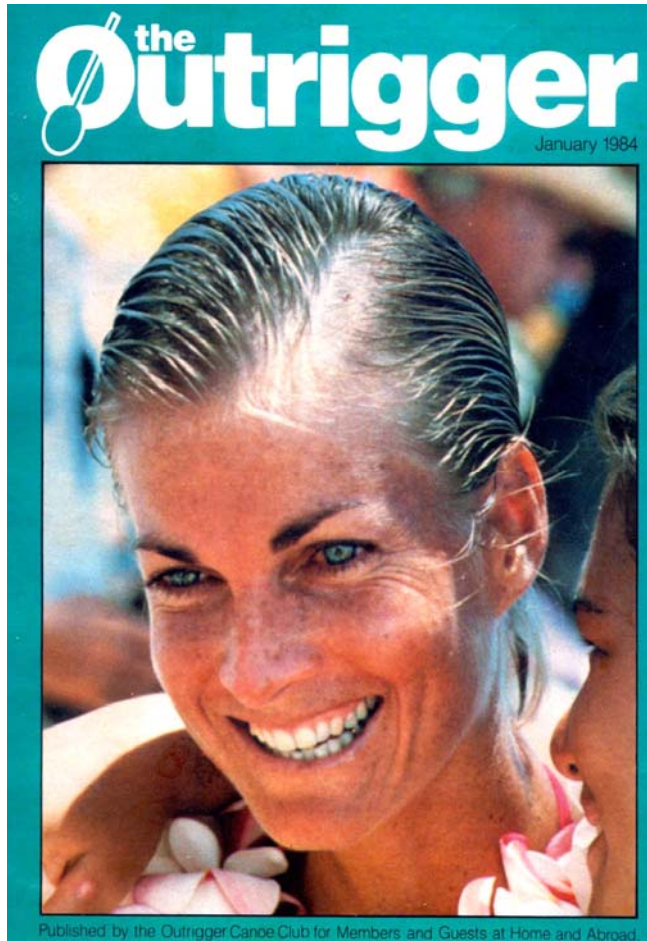
Stephany
Sofos –
2003





Evie Black hanging ten on a right slide at Haleiwa, Oahu, Hawaii – 1972
Below - Evie and her surfing awards and trophies – 1972





January 1984
Below – Evie Black – April 7, 2003

