

# SURF RIDING

By Jack Densham.



SURFBOARDING. TWO EXPERTS OF THE FOURTH DIVISION.

The art of surfriding on a board is learned and obtained only after much hardship, and the least of the hardships is the genial joshing that comes from the kamaaina experts who float gaily past you, while you are vainly struggling to recover from the effect of your board striking the sand and a big wave washing over you at the same time.

The first step toward learning to ride the surf on a board is to join the Outrigger Club. The next is to obtain a bathing suit, and the most important is to pick a good cicerone. There are all kinds of cicerones. They may be divided, roughly, into four classes. The first is the kind that has forgotten the time when they learned how to balance themselves on a board and have no use for clumsiness; pass them by and look for another one.

The second variety has lately learned and is very enthusiastic. He gets you in one corner of the grass hut and gives you a long and scientific account, including angles, balance and momentum. He stays with you while you make two fumbles and then goes on to enjoy himself. Pass him by also.

The third kind comprises that practical joker who selects a much too small board and enjoys endless fun and innocent merriment every time you vainly endeavor to keep on a board that is meant for a ten-year-old kid. Do not pass him by; but, if you be a good enough swimmer, dive for his legs and upset him with force and unction. Do this while he is laughing at you and watch with joy how he splatters when salt water enters the grinning orifice of his food-chute.

But the fourth kind. There are very few of them. They are the ones who, having had a hard time in learning themselves and being really anxious to put you wise, spare no trouble or pains to select the right kind of a board and show you just how to work the start.

I have had experience with all four varieties of cicerones, and the fourth and good kind came at last. I will not mention his name, because I have a hunch that he would be swamped by requests for tutelage, but you will find him, or some others like him, if you only look long enough.

#### Beware the Cynic.

There is one class of surfer that you must look out for if you ever try the game. Beaming with enthusiasm at having hit a wave right and having followed it with several more successful attempts, you reach the club house and change your clothes. Unable to keep the delight of the thing to yourself you tell about your success to some guy from whom you expect appreciation if not congratulation. He looks you straight in the eye and says "Say, you don't imagine for a minute that you can really surf-ride do you?" And, oh, the way he says it. There is only one defense, you must smile at him and look pleasant.

The first attempt of the novice is made in the small surf which breaks on comfortable sand half way between the Seaside hotel and the Outrigger club. Here there are some hundred and fifty bathers, more than half of whom have surfboards. And they all ride the surf so easily, so lightly and with such expert methods of steering that you ask yourself "Is it possible that there is any difficulty about this thing?" Is there? Just ask me.

#### So Easy for Mr. Expert.

The cicerone—that is, the fourth kind—explains that you must save way on when the wave strikes you. He shows you how to pull the board toward you to give it impetus and then leap onto it just as the foam reaches the end of the board.

"Oh, so easy; just like this"—and he skins away and deftly leaps to his feet on the board. Then you wait for the next wave. You give the board a violent jerk, jump clumsily onto it in spread-eagle fashion, and the end of the board burrows into the sand and you go head over heels with the wave breaking all over you.

Nil desperandum Cicerone duce, however. You try again. This time you get a fairly good start and you feel the first ecstasy of the swift movement on the crest of the wave—but, alas! it passes you and you are left wallowing in the following trough.

#### The First Success.

By this time that good instructor has returned to you, vigorously hoisting his board. He tells you to wait until he gives the word and then to take a start. Along comes a rather high wave, not breaking, but curling ominously. The expert sees that it will break at the right time and he calls to you to

be ready. He gives the word and you give the board a vigorous push, alighting on it easily with the recent practice you have had. Then something comes up behind you and the first thing you are swishing along at a terrible speed with the roar of foaming waters in your ears and the first crazy delight of success seething in your brain.

I suppose that the man who hears the call of "Author" for the first time, the man who notes the mystic sign, "Senior Wrangler" against his name on the door, or the nail-booted climber who reaches some first-climbed peak, feel pretty good, but commend me to the sensation that comes when you hit the first wave properly on a surfboard.

#### If Only It Would Last.

The speed is great, much greater than most people imagine; but the sensation of speed is increased out of all proportion by the rush and roar of the water round you. You seem to be going a hundred miles an hour, and the beach rushes at you until it seems that you will certainly rise and skim through the air over to the mountains. The figures of the other surfers who are struggling out for another start flash by you like telegraph poles on the railroad seen from the windows of an express train, and, when the wave at last dwindles out, you feel the same sense of something gone out as when Kabelek passes his last career over his fiddle strings.

#### And Then the Big Surf.

Afterward, when you have learned to steer and hoe vehemently without floating on the board, you go out to the big surf. While a trifle alarming at first, this is really much easier than the small surf. You do not stand on the ground, as the water is too deep, but lie on your board and, when a good wave comes along, hoe hard to give yourself way enough to make the wave carry you along.

Take it easily at first; get one of the fourth variety to show you how to do it; make up your mind to keep cool, and you will find surfriding the most exhilarating and the most health-productive of sports. But carry the big motto with you—"Nil desperandum Cicerone duce."

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