



Butterflies wrestle in my stomach as I fidget with my bikini bottom, tie my hair into braids, and adjust my paddle for the 10<sup>th</sup> time. The swell today is bigger than I had anticipated. As I gaze out at the waves I ask myself again, "Am I ready for this?" I know that my procrastinating is getting me nowhere. Another beautiful set comes pounding in. My pulse quickens.

(Inset) "I am lucky to share my life in the jungle with my father, 'El Tigre,' my mom 'Jungle Judi,' and our yellow lab 'Pancho.' When the morning sunlight hits the palms we're ready for whatever adventure the Tailwind Jungle Lodge might bring. Today we can hear the swell pounding the coastline and I see the anxious excitement in my parent's eyes as we load our boards and Pancho into the Jeep. As we approach our favorite break, Mom declares the sup day has begun; a reminder that this is a sacred time where business talk is not welcome. These are cherished hours on our paddleboards—they have become an essential element of our jungle life. For me personally, this dynamic sport is where I find inspiration, balance and strength that fuel my dreams to lead the life I love. Sup keeps the 'me' in me!" -*Tamara*

# LIFE, LOVE AND PADDLEBOARDING

By Tamara Jacobi

On the sand at my feet, my brilliant yellow paddleboard—which I've fondly nicknamed Sunny—glares up at me, eager to get going. I crinkle my nose. "Don't look at me like that," I mutter. Sunny is always anxious to leave the sand and head out. My paddleboard and I have an unusual relationship.

I close my eyes and take a few long, deep breaths, clearing my head of thought. Suddenly I'm in motion. Before I know it, I'm paddling out to the break. My nervous legs are wobbly and I have to try hard to gain my balance and composure. I focus on the rhythm of paddling to help calm my nerves. I pause for a moment, eyeing the small

waves that are breaking close to shore. I'm tempted to stay here, well within my comfort zone. I glance out towards the main break. My dad waves his paddle, gesturing for me to join him.

A sea turtle pops his head up quickly, eyes me for a moment in surprise and then disappears into the blue. Given my love of sea turtles, I decide this is a good omen. My intense grip on my paddle loosens slightly and I head out to what has been nicknamed "the big boy's sandbox." I'm definitely on my way to playing with the big kids now.

For the moment, the ocean is calm. My dad gives me the thumbs up, happy to see



**JUSTIN BASTIEN** (Spread) **Mary Osborne, Raratonga** "The ocean's colors are a variety of beautiful blue hues as far as my eyes can see. I am beginning to find the perfect rhythm with my paddle as I move it through the water beneath me. The temperature is ideal. My body becomes sun kissed. The air is clean, fresh and still. It is right now that I begin to feel completely free, embracing the moment.

"Raratonga is a petite, rustic island surrounded by a large lagoon extending more than a hundred meters to the reef, then steeply dropping into deep water. In the distance, whitewater crashes upon the outer reef. When I turn my board inland I see stunning, eroded, volcanic peaks covered in dense, green vegetation. Native birds are singing, echoing throughout the valleys. I'm paddling completely alone, until the coolest dog swims nearby and jumps aboard for a ride! His curious eyes moved quickly from side to side, tracking the colorful fish swimming below us. There is an instant bond between us as I teach him what walking on water feels like in one of the most beautiful places I have ever paddled or visited." -*Mary Osborne*

that I've joined the line up. I also notice a few eyebrows raised in my direction. I smile in return, hoping that I look more relaxed than I feel. There are only a handful of surfers and standies in the water; most are locals that I recognize. I am quick to notice there are no girls. This is definitely "the boys' sandbox."

Being the lone girl on the water is nothing new, yet as I stand tall on the paddleboard I feel a bit like I'm on display—eyes are on me. I hope my bikini is covering the right places. Of course, I also know that my butt is not the only thing that's being evaluated. I'm sure the guys in the water are wondering the same thing I'd been pondering on the beach. Am I ready for this?

Someone whistles and I turn to see the set approaching. Yikes, the waves look even bigger out here. I forget about my bikini and the nervousness in my legs returns. I grip my paddle tightly. There is silence as the waves draw nearer. The anticipation is broken when Dad takes off on the first beautiful wave. I marvel at the motion of the shimmering water as it builds to a spectacular curl, the offshore breeze showering me with the wave's spray as I pass over it and down

the backside. Two more beautiful waves pass and then I get my chance.

I turn my board around and paddle to build my momentum. I'm in perfect position. I feel the wave rising behind me but the power of it catches me off guard. The force of the water punches the board out from under me and I'm thrown backwards.

Now underwater, I surrender to the power of the wave. It churns me up and then spits me out. The message is clear: respect Mother Nature and paddle harder. Got it. I get back onto my board, rattled, but undeterred. I snort the water out of my nose and tug my bikini back into place. My nervousness is gone, replaced by determination. I will not be denied.



**KEVIN TIGHE** (Left) Dunedin, Florida's Karen Mirlenbrink "Mom was our phys ed teacher and movement was a family requirement. I went on to pursue competitive synchronized swimming through high school, then it was paddling canoes and being around all things 'water.' Today, I've translated that love into a profession as a certified strength and conditioning specialist, so my 'SupPassion' is also my business: supilates.com." -Karen

**RON DAHLQUIST** Gliding on Glass: Maui's Sharon Dahlquist and Paddle Bud Kelly Reuter, Lake Powell, Southern Utah "After a day of cruising on Lake Powell, we chose this side canyon to anchor our houseboat and spend the night. Being married to a photographer has helped me appreciate this time of day even more. The evening glow was incredible, so Kelly and I decided to explore. We grabbed the boards, threw them in the water and meandered through the twisted canyon, marveling at the majestic walls and the oily-calm water; a great time of reflection for both of us." -Sharon

The wait for the next set feels endless, but finally it arrives. Before the boys have the chance to wonder if I'm going to squander another beautiful wave, I find the sweet spot and begin to paddle. Actually, this time I dig. Hard. I *want* this wave and I know that this time I *need* to catch the wave instead of it catching me. I once again feel the power of the wave behind me. This time I'm ready. I fly down the face, overwhelmed by a sensation of pure euphoria.

**Life: Standup as the Metaphor**

As I ride this glorious wave, epiphany strikes. I suddenly recognize that my ordeal in the waves is a metaphor for the path I've chosen in life! It seems that I'm a glutton for challenge. Time and time again, I take a beating in the waves, but I am quick to learn my lesson, and even quicker to go back for more. Of course, part of me wants to sit safely on the beach and sun my buns while I watch others take on the waves. But, for better or worse, this is simply not who I am.

I often find myself in complete despair, overwhelmed by the challenges in my life. My mother gently reminds me that if it wasn't a challenge, I probably wouldn't have even bothered in the first place. As I ride this perfect powerful wave, I suddenly understand what she means. It appears that I thrive on challenge. I'm in competition with no one but myself and whether I like it or not, I'm a sucker for the hard road and the exhilaration that comes with riding that perfect wave.

Paddleboarding in the waves is definitely the latest physical embodiment of my addiction to challenge. But truthfully my fixation spills over into all aspects of my life. As a senior in college, I created a plan for the business of my dreams. I had a vision. I turned down a comfortable desk and salary in NYC and I pitched my plan to my adventurous parents. We soon found ourselves in the middle of the Mexican jungle, attempting to get an eco-lodge started. It was immediately clear



that this was going to be far from easy. I was nicknamed "la jefa," which, roughly translated, means "lady boss." It occurred to me that I was attempting to create and manage a business that seemed, well, unmanageable—the "mañana" culture (it'll get done tomorrow), the endless maintenance that accompanies jungle living, and the dynamic of a family business had me tearing my hair out.

With each daily challenge I found myself losing hold of my dream. This wave of life had definitely caught me off guard... and I was



**DICK TILLOTSON** (Left) Sporting her well-worn "You just got passed by a GIRL!" t-shirt, New Englander Carly Tillotson says, "Racing is my new favorite part of sup. I've met some amazing people, and it is a great feeling of accomplishment to cross the finish line."

**JACK PIMA** (Above) 16-year-old **Vanina Walsh, Waikiki** "What's nice about sup surfing is that girls who are intimidated by bigger waves can pretty easily go out and catch small waves. Then they can progress into the larger waves if that's what they want to do. Sup is giving women opportunities to stay fit while living the surfer-girl lifestyle. And on the racing scene there's a lot of talk lately about it becoming an Olympic sport. I think that would be awesome. Opportunities for women in sup are growing just as fast as the sport itself. Lots of my friends want to jump on my boards and give it a try. I would encourage any girl who wants to either get into sup racing or sup surfing to try it out. I love it!" -*Vanina*

floundering. I looked to the ocean for sanity and clarity. The surfing culture here was very new to me. I had grown up in the mountains on skis and the ocean was a new experience.

I quickly became a water girl. My sea kayak allowed me to spend much of my time exploring the spectacular coastline. Yet, kayaking lacked the thrill and spontaneity that

I was accustomed to on skis. I soon found myself in the waves toying with a surfboard (paddleboards had not yet arrived on the scene). My new love of the ocean and the waves buoyed my spirits and kept me from giving up on my entrepreneurial pursuit. I certainly never expected that the ocean would return my love in a rather surprising way . . .

**MARGARETA ENGSTROM**

"Margareta and me with another absolutely stunning sunset aboard the Tui Tai Expeditions boat—my first visit to the Fijian Islands. We girls would hit the waves all day long and celebrate our experiences with a drink afterwards. Lots of smiles on the water and just as many on the boat here (with the funniest, nicest group of friends and Starboard crew).

I felt and remember to this day 'being alive in my dream.' I still wear that necklace with the two shells that I found here in Fiji. To me they represent paradise, good vibes, clear water, stunning reefs and epic warm-water waves."

-Anne Marie Reichman



**DUKE BROUWER Puerto Rico's Savannah and Heather Baus, 2011 Battle of the Paddle Hawaii**

Savannah won the kids age division and Mom won her age class in the Hawaii Kai downwind race on a stock 12'6", and was 4th overall woman, while taking 7th overall in the BoP elite race the day before. "This was our first time to Hawaii and we did everything from eating shaved ice, making leis, ukelele lessons, hula dancing and of course surfing every day. Not much can top this kind of Mother and Daughter adventure and time together. So much energy, excitement and love all around!"

-Heather

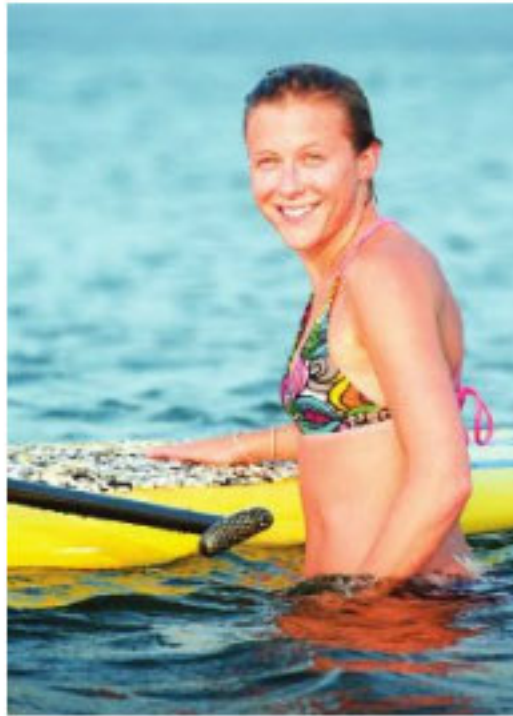
Ed Note: Heather and Savannah also make and sell ultra cool, customized board bags; check out: [boardbaggies.com](http://boardbaggies.com)



**MEGAN HAYWOOD-SULLIVAN**

Summertime on Nantasket Beach, Massachusetts: Dani Schmidt cooling off from a good sup yoga burn.

**SAGE BURGESS** "Strongwater shop co-owner and Montana river guy KB Brown's great-grandma, 100-year-old Alvina 'Al' Sharp is living proof that age is only a number. Alvina sup'd this past summer for her first time on Big Sand Lake, near the small town of Remer, Minnesota (It was also the Remer's 100th birthday and Alvina was a guest of honor in the parade!). Sporting her Minnesota Viking's-colored Strongwater t-shirt, she quickly found her balance and we were all smiling ear-to-ear, amazed at her confidence and the amount of strength and energy she still has at 100 years old. Great-grandma Al was an inspiration to all that day in that she is still willing to try something new and adventuresome. It was awesome getting to share with her the love we have for standup. Now, whenever we're asked if paddleboarding is hard, we tell them, "KB's 100-year-old great-grandma does it! Anybody can do it!" -Sage



**Love: That Fateful Monday**

I admit that my dating life in the jungle was rather bleak. I suppose that I did make a couple feeble attempts. I flirted with the local surf guide, I smooched partying gringos, but none of this ever lasted long and in truth, I had high expectations. Yes, I'm a blonde girl, but I'm also a bit of a jock. The guy in my life would need to keep up. I was getting frustrated; my Prince Charming was nowhere to be found. I began to dread the spring. With springtime came spring fever, which meant that all the twitterpatted jungle creatures would be out singing love songs (*Bambi* was a Disney favorite). I pulled my curtains and told the flirtatious birds to go away.

I was losing hope. My mom even suggested that I try online dating. Online dating for someone who lives in the middle of the jungle is about as productive as trying to catch a wave into the beach when the ocean is flat. I busied myself with the eco-lodge and surfing. I decided that I didn't need a guy anyhow; I was just fine on my own. Perhaps this was one challenge I was not ready to face.

Then of course, I received "the e-mail." It seemed that some friends of friends were visiting the town just to the south of where I lived and wanted to know if I would take them surfing. I had no idea who these people were but I was always looking for surfing buddies, so I responded, "Sure! Meet me on Monday at 9 am at the Choco Banana and we'll head to the surf break. If I don't show up . . . I'm sorry, something came up. If you don't show up, that's okay too!"

On that fateful Monday, my mom and I loaded up the surfboards and headed to the Choco Banana Restaurant. Three good-looking guys hopped into the back of the car. I then recalled something in their e-mail had mentioned that there were two couples and one single in their gang. Clearly the girls had decided not to come along and I didn't know which guy was single, but I *did* know which one I wanted.



My luck was turning. As the day progressed, it became clear that "the single" and I had chemistry. As we played in the waves, we chatted endlessly about our passions—surfing and skiing. I immediately knew that this was a guy who could keep up. Neither of us was very good at surfing, and I was thrilled to realize that neither of us seemed to care.

I could tell from his determined grin that he was simply thrilled by the challenge and had a pure love for the ocean. This was something I could relate to! Casey and I were bonded by our day in the waves together.

His love for challenge was confirmed when he returned to Mexico that spring to stay a week in the jungle with my "loco" family and my even crazier business. He already deserved a gold star and an award for bravery. This wonderful new guy not only allowed me to join the twitterpated animals of the jungle, he also bolstered my confidence in the path I had chosen for

my life. He was in awe at the eco-lodge that I had created and provided endless encouragement.

**Paddleboarding: There's No Stopping It**  
Of course, now that love was in the air there was no stopping it. This sport was new to the area and I was immediately in love. Within

hours of first stepping onto a paddleboard I rode my first wave. After that, there was no turning back. This was a perfect blend of my

favorite water sports—kayaking and surfing! That winter we went on a ski trip to New England where my family and I bought several boards from Liquid Dreams, a progressive surf shop in Maine, and drove them all the way home to Mexico. We simply had to add these to our eco-lodge toy chest. We began spending all of our free time out on the water. People were intrigued by our giant boards; quite the conversation piece.

The next time Casey came to visit, I was

**"Walking on water is where I am the most at peace. It is breathtaking... and very cleansing."**

*-Kanoë*

# Art in surf

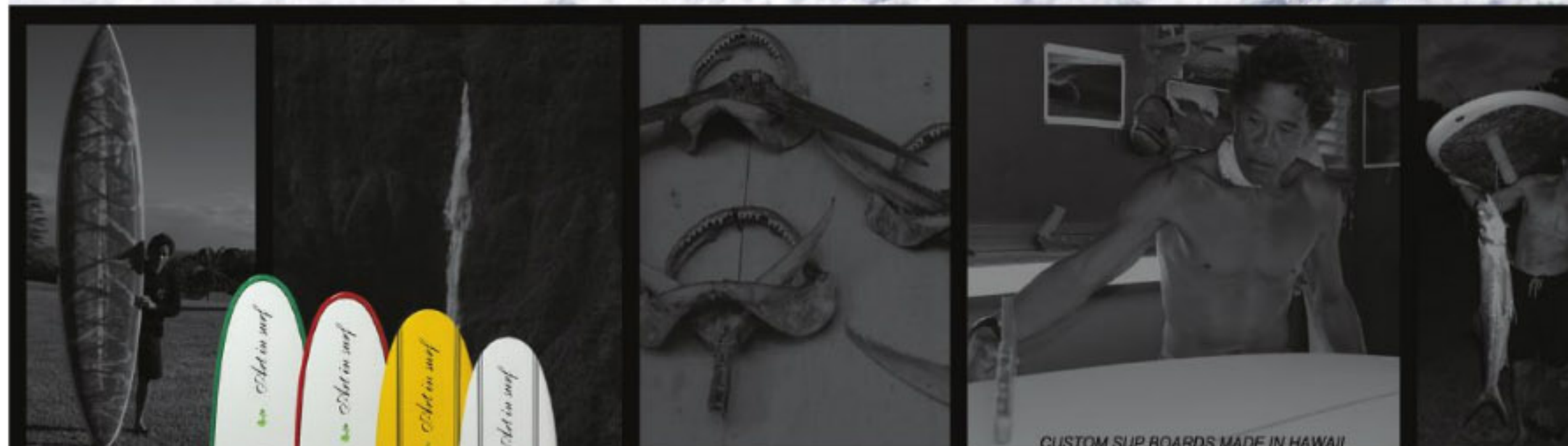
photo: Brav Ellis



Hawaiian Waterman Terry Chung in his element



**JEFF BERTING** Kanoë Kaupē-Mahi Garcia at Puaena Point, Haleiwa, Oahu "This particular day, my oldest daughter Corinne and some great friends and I were out standup paddling in our front yard—perfect 2-3 footers... so much fun; so fortunate to score days like this! I was born and raised on the island of Kauai, or I should say in the waters of Kauai... and am now living on Oahu. Coming from an ohana [family] that has spent the better half of their lives in the water, being married to an amazing surfer and waterman, Kai Garcia, and being 'Mom' to three keikis—all of them were raised in the ocean and are surfers who can truly hold their own out there—is what keeps our ohana grounded and energized! I started standup paddling after Uncle Terry Chung of Kauai, who was one of the first here in The Islands to experiment with sup and to this day still fine-tunes awesome boards [See more on Terry in this issue's "Being Laird" feature]. Terry and my father-in-law Daniel "Tuba" Soong—both amazing watermen—got hooked on sup and told me I had to try it. I started out on a big 11-footer and did flatwater runs for cross training... I then had the privilege of having Blane Chambers sponsor me with some higher performance PSH boards, which allow me to experience great wave riding. My favorite right now is my 9'2" swallowtail, the board I'm riding in this photo. I have been very blessed and grateful to experience this sport that I continue to love, love and share with my ohana and friends!" -Kanoë



CUSTOM SUP BOARDS MADE IN HAWAII



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"I tug my bikini back into place. My nervousness is gone, replaced by determination."



(Main image) "Shannon Askay and her daughter Sole in northern Sardinia. Italy's Mediterranean waters offer excellent conditions to ride waves or just cruise the coast." -Carlo Rotelli, Moki Sup Co. DAN McCARTER (Above left) Is Santa Barbara area-based Carbonerro's new double-bladed paddle such a hot idea that paparazzi are turning out to snap shots during the co's secret testing inside the harbor? Maybe so... but as local paddler Monique Ruiz also recounts, "Paddleboarding with a sea lion is a fascinating and once in a life time experience that I will never forget. It was a beautiful day. Some friends and I had just paddled back from the one mile marker when a young sea lion began following us through the harbor playing around our boards. I noticed him approaching me. As he came closer I realized he was about to hop on my board. I began mentally and physically preparing myself. I tried to keep calm while maintaining good balance. Once he was on the board with me we paddled around for a couple minutes. I could not believe what was happening: a wild animal was acting like he was a pet going for a ride. He was extremely relaxed as though he was sunbathing. He never once appeared aggressive or made me feel threatened. He was my sea buddy! Overall, it was a captivating experience having our worlds come together—who knew that sea lions enjoy paddleboarding as much as I do!" -Monique PETER SPAIN (Above right) What started out as a mutual passion for sup has turned into a booming business for Northern Cal's Dave and Trish Meyler, founders of Boga and Boga Yoga Paddleboards. Boga's designs are the result of Dave's background as a surfer, designer and "outdoor junkie," and Trish's experience as a yoga instructor. The Boga family is the perfect example of the many "sup ohanas" of our sport and lifestyle.

anxious to introduce him to this new sport. I was surprised when he resisted, unwilling to let go of his surfboard. After some coaxing, cajoling and kisses, he eventually agreed to give our big boards a try. He mastered the flatwater quickly and then aimed his board towards the break. I gave him all the pointers that I could and I set him lose. I winced as he crashed time and time again. He'd come up

cursing, spitting and muttering to himself. Just when I was sure he would snap the paddle in half over his knee and send my beloved paddleboard out to sea, he caught his first wave. From the look on his face, I knew that he was sold. I think he also felt that he'd passed some sort of test; he knew my love of paddleboarding and he'd felt the pressure to perform.

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Paddleboarding has become one of the cornerstones of our relationship, reminding us of the simple pleasures and challenges of our life together. When we're not riding waves, we're often reminiscing about the waves we've ridden. We've also begun to explore standup in the rivers of Colorado, where Casey is from. Paddleboarding gentle rapids or even downstream paddling on flatwater is a new addition to our summer activities.

**“Online dating in the middle of the jungle is about as productive as trying to catch a wave into the beach when the ocean is flat”**

So, since the day of my epiphany on that sweet wave, I've done some thinking about my life. The challenges that I've faced had driven me to the brink of insanity and back again. The powerful waves of life have caught me off balance time and time again. I feel lucky that I've been able to rise to the challenge. My jungle business has slowly become successful and I'm happy to report that my love life is all good.

I'm currently riding the sweet wave of life, but I know that this may be a fleeting moment in time. As I reflect on my life of challenge, I wonder what I've learned. I also wonder if the hard road is a healthy and sustainable way to live . . .

In search of clarity, I take Sunny for a paddle on a still, glassy, ocean. I breathe deeply and listen. I don't have to wait long. Sunny seems to be whispering to me, “Balance.” That's it! When I'm on my board, I am balanced, both physically and emotionally. Through the dips and rises of the ocean, balance is the secret ingredient.

Perhaps this is the missing piece in my life! I close my eyes and tune into my balance on the board. I find a trifecta of harmony—mind,



**MAXIME HOUYVET** France's **Nicole Boronat**, **Selvagens Islands, Atlantic Ocean** “It's so nice to see that every time we meet someplace new, the sup skill levels are higher than before, and there are more women and more kids going off on their standup boards. And sup brings together such a mix of different sport athletes, also. Amazing! How lucky I am to surf, travel and discover such nice places around the world as this island far to the west of Morocco... paddling out, watching the surroundings, green cliffs, clear water, catching nice waves with friends and locals, being a witness when the sky goes orange and disappears into the infinite blue—and being part of the local culture... trying to understand more of the world and our lives. My boyfriend Stephane [Etienne] and I feel so fortunate. This photo comes from our boat trip to the north shore of the Selvagens Islands. What an awesome session in the middle of August. The

water is so clear and warm, and the atmosphere is peaceful, with glassy waves that break both left and right. This left I'm on has a little tube section to play with. Whenever I see this picture it brings back the same feelings: beauty, peace and fun at a very 'end-of-the-road' type place. Sup is about gliding and having fun and my standup board is the most appealing toy for that because anyone can feel the glide on any piece of water: lakes, rivers, and ocean... and your age does not matter. These are the moments of freedom that we all live for.” —Nicole

*Ed Note: Nicole took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the women's division at the La Torche Standup World Tour in France this past spring. You can view the Canary Islands-based couple's many adventures via a web search for “Stephane Etienne & Nicole Boronat blog.”*



(Previous spread) Anne Marie Reichman, Swimming Pools, Namotu, Fiji "After going out to experience the fairly intense wave at Cloud Break on this morning, Swimming Pools (just off the shore of Namotu) is a much mellower, fun playground where all of us on the trip would end up at some point in the day, sharing waves and goofing around 'til our arms and legs would fall off. This place is like an aquarium, so pretty! One day, I remember not being able to spot the waves coming because it was so glassy that the ocean blended into the sky... what a problem to have, eh? :)). Australia's Dave Muir was with us, and being a goofyfoot rider just like me, he became my new backside-riding inspiration. He has such a powerful, committed style. I had moments where I felt just like him!" -AM

DANA EDMUNDS (Top) Laura Birse testing herself on the biggest day of her life, North Shore, Oahu. JOSE FUENTES (Above) Kym Freeman churning hard in the elite class at last October's Paddle Royal in Puerto Rico. Originally from California, Kym has lived in Puerto Rico for many years, and is the island's number two racing woman, right behind Heather Baus [See [paddleroyal.info](http://paddleroyal.info) for full 2011 results and info on this year's event]. We at first thought this was Candice Appleby in the photo, so we sent her the shot and asked her to write a caption. Candice let us know it's not her, but asked if she could write about Kym. Sweet! Candice writes, "I met her last year and she's a super fit, friendly, stoked wahine paddler. Great personality and such an awesome ambassador for sup and Puerto Rico." -Candice

ROBERT SULLIVAN (Right) "Brenda Lowe, former Miami Dolphins cheerleader and contestant on CBS's Survivor Nicaragua surveys the standup paddleboard clinic that she led for the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Miami. About 50 kids from Big Brothers and Big Sisters were given standup paddleboard lessons as part of the Orange Bowl Paddleboard Championship at Bayside in Miami. Brenda's star power contributed to a nice turnout since the Survivor season in which she starred had concluded only one month prior to this event. Although I took more than a few shots of her throughout the day, I really like this candid shot with the golden glow of the setting sun on the water behind her." -Robert

"Paddleboarding empowers me for so many reasons. For the obvious ones of health and fitness, it's one of the best workouts I do all the time and as light or vigorous as I want. For many women, building strength in your body is a great way of feeling empowered. But my favorite reason comes from a place of tranquility, adventure and peace that many busy women need more of. It's the best place to be; we should start a paddleboard revolution!" -Brenda

DAVE WOLF (Far right) Summer Wolf, at age four, walks squarely into the "I can do it myself" generation, thanks to having her very own sup board. Dad Dave says, "This is Trout Lake, a few miles from our home near Telluride, Colorado. The lake is high, almost 10,000 feet. We go there constantly in the summer. Last fall we had Summer's birthday party here and two big moose showed up sporting full racks! Suping has really boosted her self confidence. All the kids want to do it when we go up there; it is so fun for everyone."



body and the world around me. In this moment, I realize that I feel completely, utterly content. I marvel at the sweetness of this sensation.

**I'm Excited At This Discovery**

I am now acutely aware that two things have been missing from my life: balance and a genuine appreciation for what you might call natural nourishment. I now understand that instead of blindly pushing forward in my life, looking for the next challenge, it might be useful for me to slow down a bit and sniff the daisies; take in some natural nourishment.

I consider the mosaic of my life—the remarkable people, my unique work in the jungle, and even all my twitterpated jungle friends. I realize that

all of these things nourish me and play a tremendous role in keeping me balanced and happy. I feel my paddleboard smiling up at me. I whisper a quiet "thank you" to Sunny for the wisdom she has provided me once again.

Don't worry, when the next swell comes through, I'll be there, ready to ride the euphoric waves that life might bring. In the meantime, I'm content to find balance on my paddleboard and soak up some natural nourishment. -Tamara

