

NEIGHBORS

WHAT'S UP NEXT DOOR AND AROUND THE CORNER

LONG BEACH HERALD — JULY 31, 2008

Water in their veins

Skudin family boasts three generations of surfers, swimmers and lifeguards

By ARIELLA MONTI

Members of the Skudin family spend so much time in the water that they may have been born with gills. The family tree includes all-American swimmers, professional surfers and synchronized swimmers. Last in the long line of water-lovers, their children are keeping the legacy alive.

All four Skudin boys, David Joseph, 27, Cliff, 26, Will, 23, and Woody, 17, make the water a part of their lives, but three are using it to make a living. Will and Cliff have taken on the family business, running the Long Beach branch of Skudin Surf and Swim. Their parents, David and Beth, run a school in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. In its first official summer, Cliff and Will have nearly 40 students a week being taught by 12 local surf instructors.

Cliff also volunteers his time by working with special-needs children with Long Beach Surf Pals. The organization holds clinics multiple times during the summer teaching the children how to surf. He attends Hofstra University and is finishing up his masters in physical education with a certificate that specializes in phys. ed. for special-needs children.

Will is an accomplished professional surfer, riding waves as tall as 70 feet. He's a member of the Zoo York surf team and a three-time contender in the Billabong XXL biggest wave competition. As the youngest east coast surfer to ride big waves, "he just kept pushing himself into the sport and took

it to a new level," said his father, David.

David Joseph has no problem letting his business degree from the University of Hawaii collect dust. He is a lifeguard for the city of Waikiki. Unlike lifeguards across Long Island who are part of the parks department, lifeguards in Hawaii are a part of the emergency response system and are treated like firefighters and police officers. Retiring after 20 years and a pension are some of the benefits he will look forward to in his later years.

Woody, the youngest of the bunch, looks to make a career in the military; but his namesake comes from Long Beach High School swim coach Woody Davis, who coached his father David Jacques and uncles Michael and city Beach Supervisor John Skudin. They consider the legendary coach a part of their aquatic family.

The water gene that runs in their veins comes from a long line of water sports enthusiasts on both their mother's and father's sides of the family. For father David, water was a way of life since the very beginning. Before moving to Freeport, he and his brothers called Texas home, and John recalls being thrown off a diving board and into the pool by his brothers when he was four. Even at a young age he was able to swim, alone, to the side.

"Water has always been a part of my life," said John. A familiar face in Long Beach, he is the former chief of lifeguards. While his brothers have since moved away from Long Beach, he continues to call the city home. "This is where I grew up," he said fondly.



DAVE AND WILL SKUDIN surf in tandem in Lido Beach in 1992. Will, now 23, is the youngest east coast surfer to ride waves as tall as 70 feet.

His twin sons, Ian and Michael, 19, are both Long Beach lifeguards and help their cousins, Cliff and Will, instruct at their camp. Michael is working on a teaching degree at Hofstra University and Ian, who is undecided, goes to Hartwick College in Oneonta.

Cliff insists that his mother's family, the Boltons, also played a large part in the family's affinity for the ocean. His grandfather, Dick Bolton, was a lifeguard and his grandmother mother, Marie Manion, a synchronized swimmer. Cliff's mother, Beth, recalls her mother and father producing water extravaganzas and surfboard ballets at the Jones Beach swimming pool in the 1940s. Dick also shaped and designed surfboards for Jack Hannon and hosted surfing legend Duke Kahanamoku at their home in 1968.

While she would never list her accomplishments, Beth is a legend in her own right by being one of the few female surfers of her time. Between 1985 and 2000, she only taught

surfing to women in an effort to draw more females to the sport. Surfing is a way of life for Beth, who said, "For me, the mission is to keep alive what he [my father] has done."

In 1976 she won third place in the Honolulu Rough Water Swim and went to Bethany College in West Virginia on a men's swim scholarship. Her three oldest sons were all born in Hawaii and she had them learning to swim as infants.

In the present the family can be found teaching a new generation of surfers to respect the waves, and keeping the beaches of Long Beach safe. For more information on Skudin Surf and Swim contact Cliff Skudin at 516-318-3993 or visit their Web site at skudinsurf.com.

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Courtesy Skudin family