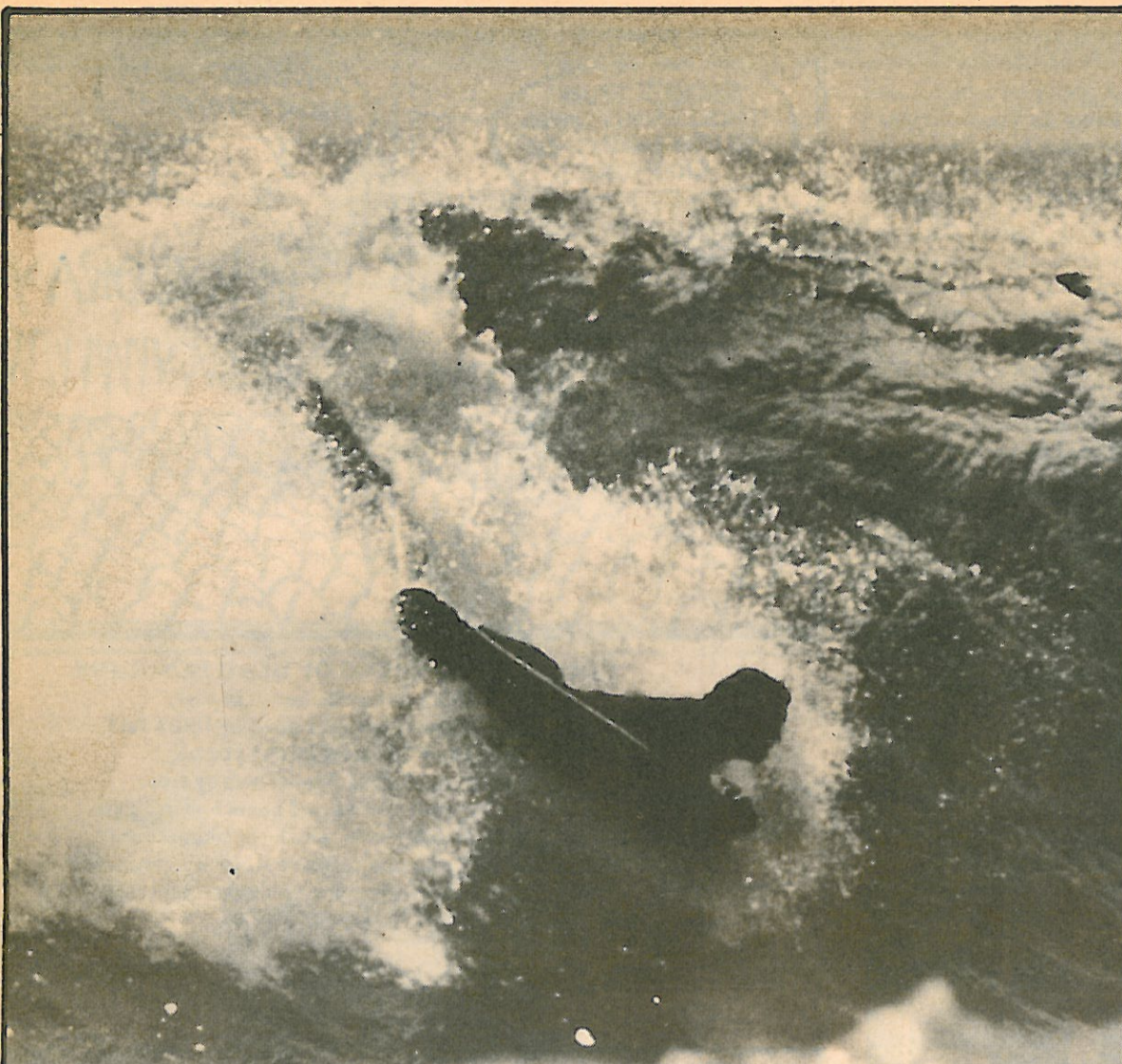


Frank Pithers



Mat riding in Victoria has, within two years, developed into a form of surfing that is definitely worthwhile. It has all the possibilities of boardriding and only needs kids to explore them. Whether it be a two foot cylindrical tube or an eight foot power wave, mats can leave a track that anyone would dig following.

My first knowledge of mats came from an article written by John Witzig, but seeing them was something else. Wayne had the first good mat and rode it at Winki. I felt like saying "What's the world coming to!" Until by chance, I used it one day. It was an American design and was worth every penny that I paid to Wayne.

After eight months of surfing my mat, I found that interest was being aroused and with two other Torquay guys, I began designing an entirely new mat. It became the prototype of what I am riding now.

In good surf my first mat had enough speed to make the most of our fast tubes. The mat shape was almost square looking, with a heavy fabric which meant it was quite rigid. It was hard to work your way out of the white water if you happened to get into it, but on the face of the wave and around the tube my mat felt as good as any board I had ridden.

With our first attempt at producing a new mat we found that our ideas were sound but the practical application was very

difficult. By September, 1970 we had a usable mat. My first time at Rincon in small glassy surf proved to be very rewarding.

The new mat would possibly open up a style of surfing that would be more aggressive, more demanding, more pleasing to the eye, and satisfying for one's own involvement. We had used a light-weight fabric coupled with a better shape. This helped the mat move more rapidly on the water surface. Lightness aided manoeuvrability. The shape enabled the mat to dig deeply into waves, therefore getting power and movement into turns. Our satisfaction in completing this task only widened our views to its future possibilities.

Some of the possibilities have already been drawn on to help in our quest to dig mat riding more. My degree of involvement in surfing has been increased greatly by the mat's potential. Physical efforts put into manoeuvring and turning, and at the same time the mental impression on the mind, have helped me obtain a tremendous amount of enjoyment from mats.

At times I am aware of the movement of water underneath me, giving the impression that no barrier exists between me and the water. This closeness of the body to the wave is good for it adds to the greater appreciation I have obtained of earth, sky and sea and their relationships to living and surfing.

# VIOLENCE

There is a subtle form of violence afoot in the land. Nobody gets beaten up, no teeth are lost nor bones broken, but in a less spectacular way is done far greater harm to the individual, it's called cool.

A style of interpersonal behaviour seems to be evolving which has as its principal feature of contact between people, a kind of mutual ignorance, this is charlie, he's cool. It used to mean it's OK to keep passing the joint, but somehow it now means ignore charlie, everyone maintain the same mental attitude, don't make an effort. It's an insularity of outlook, a big wall that people put up around themselves or around small groups, an unwillingness to adjust to new conditions and heads are very good at it. Like when you walk into a room where people have been turning on and you don't know some of them, and perhaps one guy you know says howdy and that's about it. You have no chance of establishing yourself in the group situation or of finding where the other people are at 'cos they often just do not make the effort. How much crap is spoken about "can't talk now, too stoned". No one wants a bloody dissertation, just a simple hullo makes contact, establishing a bond. The all too frequent denial of this contact is a negation of a person's existence, an act of incredible violence.

A long time ago when turning on was all the rage, there was a feeling of illicit brotherhood, of shared secrets too mysterious (and dangerous) to disclose abroad. People got stoned in small groups, everyone knew each other well, they shared the experience either verbally "wow I've got red sky" or in metacommunicative grunts, gestures and expressions, but everybody knew, or rather understood what was going on for the other guy. In such a situation the phrase "it's cool" was appropriate as the intimacy of friends ensured that intra personal experience, was communicated to and felt by others.

But it was a very light scene; the jargon, the expressions and emphases were relevant only to that small group of people. In the big world outside, nobody understood and the establishment seemed very antagonistic, consequently the in-groups became more close knit; smoking dope is such an easy way to be entertained that heads became lazy in their dealings with the straight world, and especially with straight people who just don't understand, and as a result develop a "cool" attitude towards them. I guess a parallel exists in life in the big city where you have your own scene and ignore the other 99%, but in this case the facility of communicating with the excluded 99% remains. Where the head seems to lose the wish ever to expand beyond the well tried communicative style of his small circle of friends, it's just too much of a hassle. Now it seems that there are a lot more people getting stoned than there were, say, two years ago and one is much more likely to come into contact with such souls.

It is in these circumstances that the violence of being cool is most marked and most tragic. For instead of a feeling of something groovy shared, there is simply a series of unrelated people, not wanting to share experience (being cool) or, more common and more disturbing, assuming that experience is being shared when in fact all that's going on is people talking at each other in their own stoned styles and not understanding, falling into silences (but that's cool) and perhaps hostility. It's a kind of gross selfishness, that my stone is more important than yours, that you **must** understand my stoned experience because you're stoned, and that if you don't lock into my scene I will ignore you because it's too much hassle.

To sit and smoke with anyone and then lay that kind of thing on them is heavy violence beyond words, it's the good old double bind; I acknowledge that you're there but I negate your existence, and you can't say that I am negating you because I'm talking to you, ain't I? And that way lies insanity, brother.

The weed, like surfing, is a selfish thing. In both instances one becomes self-oriented, alone. Unlike the surf, stoned self directed experiences differ amazingly between people and are not easily communicated, the moral of which is that when you're smashed there is not much point (initially) in being with people other than the guys with whom you first coughed your lungs out. And when you stop meeting new people, you're dead. The violence cuts both ways.

MICHAEL COLEMAN

# CARE....who will if we don't?