Evolution Of Surfing Essay, Research Paper

The Evolution of Surfing to what it is Today.

Primitive man used surfing in the fifth century AD to facilitate his fishing capabilities and to enhance his religious experiences: now with more time at their disposal, he uses it for different purposes: challenge and recreation, consequently, as society changed, surfing evolved. Early societies that centered on survival used surfing as a means of spiritual and physical survival. Societies that no longer, as a whole, concerned themselves with survival but have more time for recreation modified surfing to encourage it as a pleasure sport. As the society became more affluent, surrounded by more conveniences and technologies, people needed more challenges as a result, surfing evolved once again and this time from recreation to a profession or occupation.

Early societies that centered on survival used surfing as a means of spiritual and physical survival. In Hawaii, local fisherman first used surfing, but these fisherman rode waves in outrigger canoes. It was necessary for fisherman to ride the waves to shore, because some times regions of the island shore in Hawaii were unreachable due to coral reef, and the only way through these reefs was through the break water where waves broke. ?The first surfers were probably ?unconscious surfers?: island fisherman who used waves as the fastest means of getting their canoes over the coral reefs with their catch? (Quot?d in Young, ed. 19). In Hawaii surfing also became a significant part in the Kapu religion. Unlike fisherman who rode the waves in outrigger canoes, those who surfed for religious purposes rode waves on surfboards. ?In Hawaii surfboard riding became an intricate part of the local Kapu religion? (Quot?d in Young, ed. 19). Surfing in Hawaii was also a part of a social class system: ?Some beaches were reserved for the ruling class: the commoners surfed different beaches and on a shorter board? (The History of Surfing, Quot?d in Young, ed. 19).

Societies that no longer, as a whole, concern themselves with survival but have more time for recreation turned to surfing, encouraging it as a pleasure sport. Surfing as a recreational activity first flourished in Hawaii, but would inevitably spread across the world. ?This change revolutionized surfing: it turned into something which, in our own century, has spread form Hawaii across the face of the planet.? The change Young wrote of here was the transformation from ?work to play? (Quot?d in Young, ed. 19). In 1907, Hawaiian surfer George Freeth first introduced surfing to the mainland of the United States, in California (The Endless Summer, Quot?d in Brown, ed.). Shortly after Freeth introduced surfing to the United States, another Hawaiian surfer, Duke Kahanamoko introduced surfing to Australia, where surfing would immediately catch on as well (Quot?d Brown, ed.). Surfing was growing fast, and eventually people would surf virtually every where waves broke. In under half a century surfing exploded into the second most popular water sport in the world, second to swimming (Quot?d in Young, ed. 19).

As the society became more affluent, surrounded by more conveniences and technologies people needed more challenges; as a result, surfing evolved once again and this time from recreation to profession. Around 1970 was the time when surfing became more then just something a bunch of guys did on the weekend to impress the female crowd, or to have some fun. Surfing was becoming more and more competitive, and from this a new professional sport was arose. Advertisers, manufacturers, and sponsors took notice to surfing and began to realize that surfing was more then just a sport but it was a potential market as well. Soon the prize money in contests was enough for a professional surfer to live off of. By 1975 professional surfers were in the spotlight. This changed the appearance of surfers dramatically; they went form a shaggy-haired crazy teens to clean-cut professional athletes (Quoted in Young, ed. 125). Surfing is now not only a sport, but also business (Quot?d in Brown, ed.).

Surfing evolved swiftly to what it is today: from physical and spiritaul necessity, to recreation, then to profession. What will come next? Past and present, surfing adapts to human needs and wants. The thing that will remain the same in surfing despite what the sport becomes is the waves, but as long as society changes, so will surfing.