

and stowed himself aboard. He reached the Islands, slipped quietly off the ship and thumbed his way to the North Shore. All went well. He was the ideal immigrant. Bob was even employed as a house painter between glorious days of surfing Sunset Beach and other North Shore spots.

One day while he was slapping white lead onto a sun-warped termite-ridden beach shack, the immigration people found Bob. Had an enemy passed word of his illegal status to the law? No. The tip came from a young Sydney surfing columnist. The writer just happened to think Bob's free trip to Hawaii would make interesting copy—which it did for the U.S. Immigration people. Now Bob has paid back the shipowners who gave him free passage and the U.S. has forgiven all. Bob has since visited America and surfed the waves of California.

McTavish surfed into Australian competition with real power. He doesn't like competition surfing, but of the four major Australian contests he has entered, the record stands: Queensland Championships, winner twice in a row; second and third in the Australian Championships. But in his favorite size waves—screamingly fast eight- to-ten-footers—he's number one wherever he surfs.

McTavish and most of the current crop of top Australian surfers owe a great deal to a quiet, young, and unpublicized Californian. Their involvement, their skill at playing it close to the curl, the evolution to the short boards, grew in part from the two visits of George Greenough. George, a sort of surfing wizard from Santa Barbara, California, has come up with more creative ideas in surfing and photography than most men could conceive in a lifetime. And George and McTavish together, one creating and the other bringing George's ideas into practice, really sparked the whole Australian surf scene.

Bob McTavish was a nobody when he first came down from North Queensland to Sydney and found a job in a board shop. Nobody knew him nor cared for the cocky little guy. In the Sydney area McTavish developed background, learned the trade of board building, and slowly gathered momentum as he surfed the New South Wales breaks. When Bob felt his apprenticeship was complete he returned to Queensland and the wonderful waves of Noosa

Head. There, among what he calls “. . . the most complex waves of the world's known surfing spots . . .” Bob worked and practiced to master the basic arts of surfing. At Noosa he rode the breaks of Nationals and Tee Tree, learning always more of the way of waves, gaining experience and skill that only weeks and weeks of surfing can bring. Then grinning and innocent George Greenough arrived at the Sydney airport wearing his huge baggy overcoat.

While McTavish fought the waves off Noosa and grew stronger, Greenough fought his way through Australian customs. George had come across the Pacific at the invitation of Bob Cooper and his glowing reports of wonderful uncrowded surf. As he stepped off the plane, with his hydroplane belly board under his arm, the Australians waiting to meet George whispered among themselves, “Out of sight! No! I don't believe it.” And the customs people went out of their skulls as George opened his bag and overcoat. From the bag came special Greenough surfboard building tools, miles of still and motion picture film, and several pairs of his faded and worn bathing suits. And when he opened his overcoat, they gasped. Built into the lining of the coat were special pockets designed to hold George's full line of camera gear. His cameras and cases were all handmade, crude but efficient. George pulled all his stuff out, plopped it down on the customs counter, and stood back. After the hassle over duty had been settled, George stepped out of the airport to dazzle the Aussies.

The Aussies couldn't fathom George at first. They were expecting some sort of cool American cat, polished and citified, which George is not. They were also troubled by the fact that George didn't ride a surfboard, but only his radical, self-designed fiberglass belly boards. George went north with his ideas and his belly board and met McTavish up at Alexander Headlands, Queensland.

Up on a hill, in a rustic pink house overlooking the surf, Greenough, McTavish, and a handful of other great Australian surfers settled down to surf and talk seriously. George would expound theory and then hit the water to kick out to the break on his belly board and rip the waves apart. McTavish would watch and figure and then attempt the same on his surfboard. George was the catalyst that

blew all the American styles and fads out of Australian minds. George said, "Cool it, forget the crap in the surfing magazines, do it your own way." And McTavish and Nat Young watched and were dazzled by George. McTavish was able to translate to his surfboard what George was trying to demonstrate on the belly board.

Then things started happening. George designed the flexible fin and McTavish went out and proved its worth. Next came the first short boards conceived especially for the Australian surf. This was an enlargement of Greenough's belly board that really ripped. Soon George was coaching the board builders, having them chop off a little here and a little there, and as the boards grew shorter, and fatter, McTavish would paddle out and test.

McTavish had the special ability to assimilate all that George was trying to do, and he succeeded remarkably. The others, like Nat Young, could then watch McTavish and see him doing the Greenough things—and make the transition to their own boards.

North Queensland and Noosa Head have special significance for Bob. It's where it began for him and where he best likes to surf. At Noosa Head there's his favorite break, Nationals. Bob says of this special place, "The waves of Nationals are the best thing I know in surfing. Riding them is second best. What is a National wave? A series of incidents that add, tie up to a tale, a being. One minute a pressure, then a cruise of ease, euphoria, next a calculus, finally, always finally a satisfaction. One pure slice of existence. Being."

Of the surf of Queensland, Australia's warm north coast, Bob says, "There's more surf there than anyplace in the world. I've surfed the north coast for ten years. There's hundreds of spots yet to be ridden. And warm water, it's beautiful. Ten years ago there was nobody there. People are friendly, camping is easy, no cops to bother you, traveling's a joy."

The United States bothered Bob. "You've got 200,000,000 people. It's amazing. You've so many rules to control them, so many licenses, registration papers, numbers, forms and cards. Australia's starting to get that way. It's a pity."

Surfing is a business for Bob. He acknowledges what it

of the radical shapes the new "gypsy-shaper" boards have taken:

"Before, just a couple of years ago, a new idea would be dreamed up and discussed endlessly. Then somebody would draw plans, but the paper would be around for months before somebody started board-building. Now the idea gets translated into action fast. Barriers are being broken down, commercial barriers for one thing, under the onslaught of this new communication."

So that people wouldn't misunderstand, Frye added, "When I say commercial barriers I mean individual jealousies between builders. I don't mean the manufacturers stand as barriers themselves. Generally they are quite progressive."

Skip, like others who've made the long flight to Australia, attributes much of the creative surge that has hit surfing to the Aussies. "They were riding, talking, watching and communicating—and when I was there the total interest they showed was remarkable.

"They'd go out, try an idea in the waves, and if it didn't work just right, back to the shops they'd go. The boards would be changed and the Aussies would surf some more, all the time chattering and getting ideas passed back and forth. It's this one factor of communicating that gives them momentum—and their incessant talk crossed the Pacific and is beginning to change our attitudes here."

In Skip's early surf schooling he was greatly influenced by Dewey Weber and Phil Edwards. Both surfers were traditionalists and were top men of the old school. "Then Greenough came back from Australia with his mind blown free of all preconceptions and he started a lot of us looking in new directions. Greenough stressed surfing on anything people could ride—mats, belly boards, boats, anything that could capture a wave and slide fast. George designs surfing vehicles. It's as simple as that. Before, we were all driving '49 Fords and then up drives George and he had a new Porsche. And George isn't limited to surfing. He talks on everything from fireplace design to unsinkable boats."

Frye went through the whole mind-expansion chemical scene of the past few years, testing one experience after another. Then came marriage and a more relaxed approach