

!! Ojos verde
Verde de mar
Pobrecito el que los mira
Si no sabe nadar !!

"Ol'aba"



!! Green eyes
Green like the sea
Pity the one who sees them
And knows not how to swim !!

Morning Stretch

I paddled out with a fair-sized lump in my throat, and a disposable water camera strapped in a waist bag. It was January of 1991, my second and best ever trip to Ol'aba. A powerful new swell was booming on the reef – muscular dark walls standing suddenly out of deep water, shifting deep into the shallow first reef bowl, devouring water. The sets were hard to make out, because they broke below sea level. After a certain point in size, the wave at Ol'aba seems to stop growing upwards and starts growing out instead, thicker and thicker. This day seemed to have already passed that point, and some of the set waves looked impossible to paddle into. The flutter in my stomach was still going when a surfer named Eric, whom I knew vaguely from the hotel, paddled up and saw my little camera.

"Hey, lemme get a shot of you", he said.

I tossed him the little disposable. He had just paddled to the shoulder and sat up on his board when I lucked into a solid set wave that let me down surprisingly easily before it hit the reef. It hollowed out ridiculously. I recall standing there thinking 'It's so round, I could probably throw my hands in the air and not touch the top of it.' The wave got gradually bigger around as it moved onto the shallower reef. I stood there just barely inside the tube thinking, 'Hey, I think I will put my hands up'.

Tor Johnson returns to the Central American town he knows only too well as place of overhead barrels, sweet, welcoming friends and a hard edge that you just can't ignore.

Words and Photos by Tor Johnson.



At 6'3" (190cm) tall, I still couldn't reach the top.

Back home, I remember picking up the envelope of prints from the developers, smiling at a few of my amateurish shots – friends surfing with their heads cut off, some nice empty waves – then I saw this one: a perfectly framed shot of a guy standing up with his hands in the air. It was me. Eric had been waiting in exactly the right spot, and had caught it perfectly. The only time I've ever managed to do that at Ol'aba, even after five more trips back down in search of another wave like that. Surfer Magazine ran the shot in the back of the magazine as a full page in the "People Who Surf" section, blurry and grainy as it is. Since I'm not exactly Kelly Slater, I was about as thrilled as a surfer could

be to have my photo in the magazine. Granted, it was far from a professional photo, but my surf buddies loved it. They said that made it seem more real, like something you saw paddling out, like it could be you. Someone I'd never met came up to me and said "You're Tor Johnson!". My fifteen minutes of fame.

When I arrived in Ol'aba this year, that photo, labelled "Morning Stretch", and now peppered with holes from eleven years of push pins, was still hanging in a place of honour next to the front desk of Kurt's hotel.

Left -
This shot of Tor, which sits behind the reception at Kurt's hotel, also appeared in Surfer Magazine. It was taken with a disposable camera one sunny dawn a few years ago and it's made him into a kind of local legend.

Opposite -
Kurt Van Dyke, one of the original outsiders to set up home in Ol'aba, steps into another day.

Return to Ol'aba

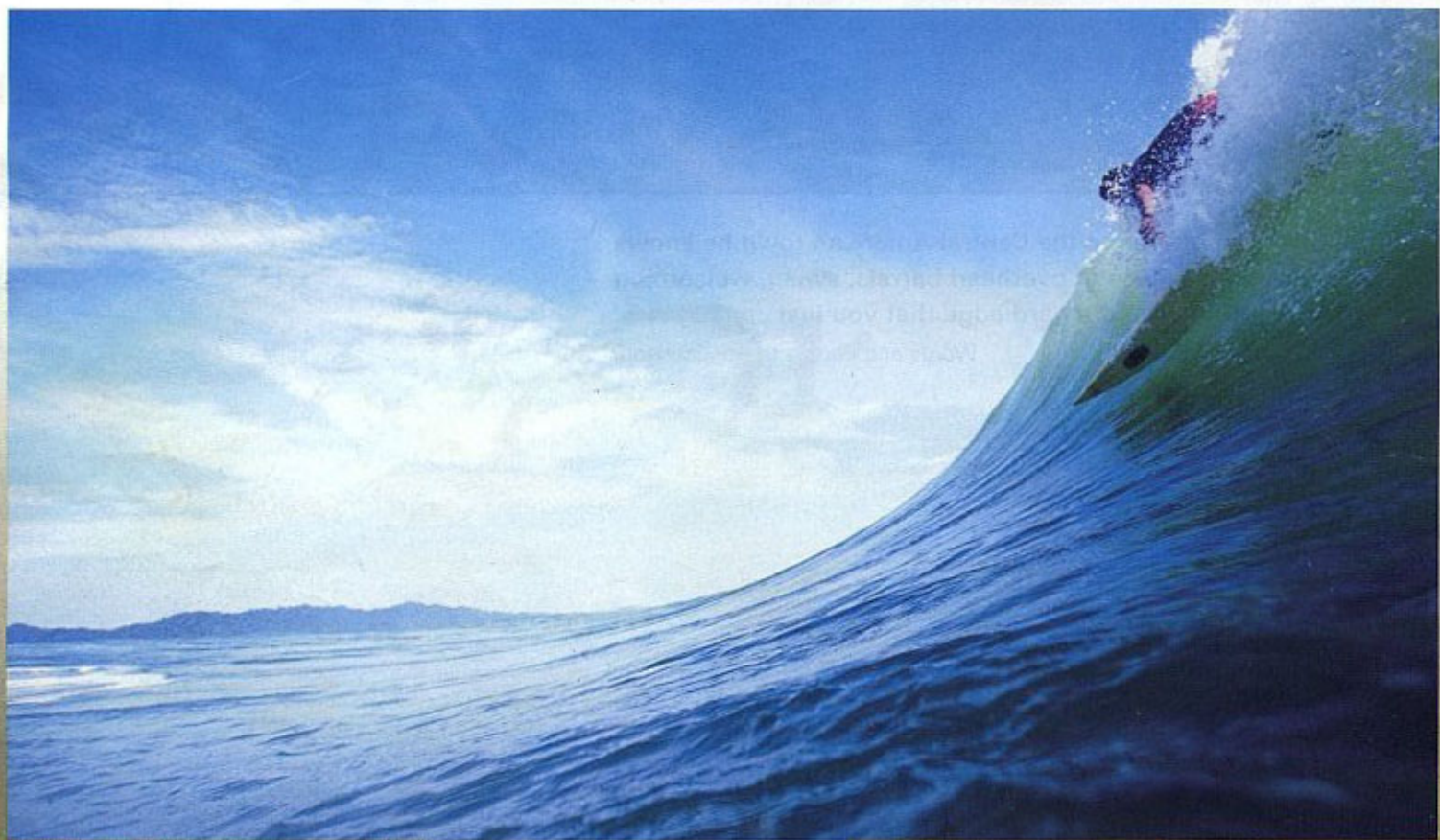
The trip down to Costa Rica was a transition from order to chaos. The tropics took hold quickly, exerting their irresistible force in defiance of human control even before I got there. Everything had gone like clockwork until that point: the rental car returned smoothly to computer-toting employees, the blandly smiling, perfectly coiffured and uniformed woman swiping my credit card and blithely robbing me of outrageous excess baggage fees for the boards, the plane backing from the gate at precisely 3:47:00. All exactly as expected. Norteño efficiency.

The change happened suddenly in Miami. Hot, sultry

tropical air collided with cold, energetic northern breezes. Thunder rocked the boarding gate. A nearby building was struck by lightning. Dense smoke and torrential rain obscured the runway. All flights were postponed. It felt like a sea change from one society of efficiency and order, to a latino world where emotion and nature hold sway, and things simply do not go according to the will of man.

While workers tried to restore order, I used the time to try a call to my friend Kurt Van Dyke, a friend and legend surfer from Santa Cruz, California who runs a hotel down in Ol'aba.

"Waddaya want?" A rude voice surprised me from the other end of the line.



"Kurt?" I asked timidly.

"No, this ain't Kurt!" the voice slurred. Drunk?

"Oh...OK... Well, this is Tor. Um, I'm a friend of Kurt's. Just wanted to let him know I'm headed down that way to stay at his hotel..."

The voice relaxed a bit.

"This is Lee. If you're Kurt's friend, I'll let him know you're coming," he said. "His phone got disconnected. My number now."

"Thanks a lot. Hey, is there anything I can bring you?" I asked, knowing that guests bearing gifts are usually at least tolerated, if not welcomed.

"Yeah. I need a fucking answering machine down

here."

Wishing I had never offered, I left the boarding gate in search of a phone answering machine. Miraculously I located one, and rushed back to the boarding gate with only a short twenty minute pause to be violated at the security gauntlet, arrived just in time to be the last one to jump on the plane and face the accusing stares of the properly seated passengers.

A heavy woman smiled, sat next to me, bit into an apple with impressive gusto, and sprayed me with a good quantity of the juice full in the face. I turned away and wiped my mouth in embarrassment, wondering if she had any seriously communicable diseases.

Outside the airport in San José, various hustlers tried their cons on me while I stood immobile on the curb, incapacitated by my boards and gear. The smoothest of the taxi drivers got my business and overcharged me by several multiples. In dollars it was still cheap, and I had yet to lose my values to the point where 75c becomes worth arguing about. My driver worked on me the entire way to my hotel, trying to get me into a place where he undoubtedly would receive a kickback:

"Jor hotel, very expensive! I take you better place!" When that failed, it was the conspiratorial "Entonces amigo, you like girls?"

The Hotel Alajuela was not expensive, but the fan in my claustrophobic concrete cell refused to turn. The helpful kid at the reception changed my room, apologizing in fluent American English. Then came a horrendous banging – the wind was picking up a large section of the tin roof just over the vent shaft and trying to tear it away. The sound resonated through the vent, making sleep impossible. The kid was still smiling when he changed my room again. This time there was a foul sewage stench coming from the vicinity of the bathroom, but the fan worked, and it was relatively quiet, so I resigned myself to it.

It was obvious I had arrived in the third world, and a new mindset was necessary. There is no sense trying to fight it.

When I arrived at Ol'aba, Lee was there to get his answering machine. Completely drunk and belligerent (again).

"Why are you harassing me?!", he accosted me when I gave it to him. So with rare common sense, I backed away and left him alone. Word on the street is that he is a serious player in illicit substances, is mentally unbalanced and carries a gun.

Ol'aba town had changed a lot in the twelve years since I first came. Low budget tourists who call themselves 'travellers' are everywhere, with the attendant stalls selling disposable, interchangeable souvenirs, sarongs, bead jewellery, and paraphernalia.

Twelve years ago there were a couple of sodas (cafes), and a restaurant or two. No paved roads. Now the main drag through town is paved, a development that comes with mixed blessings: although the choking dust is gone, crazed local drivers can now burn through town at speeds that make it hard to stop for kids, pedestrians or animals enjoying a tranquilo stroll. On the other hand there are great restaurants all over the town now, and you can eat world class French

food at Didier's place, or authentic Italian just down the street, great local food a few steps away, almost anything you could want. Still, the place feels rough and, if anything, less civilized than before.

It's a Jungle Out There!

As the ancestral natural land bridge between North and South America, Costa Rica is a tourist destination famous the world over for incredible natural abundance. "Biodiversity" is the catch phrase. There are, for instance, more species of birds in tiny Costa Rica than in any entire continent. Even the casual punter too busy surfing to bother with much else is likely to come across howler monkeys screaming from the trees, toucans, sloths,



crocodiles, and strangely beautiful moths and butterflies. Unfortunately, not all of the creatures in the jungle are of the tourist-friendly variety. The jungle is home to well over a hundred species of the most poisonous snakes in the world, like the instantaneously deadly fer-de-lance. There is even the "bullet ant" with a sting so strong it will paralyse your whole arm. Five bites from these oversized super-ants can kill a man. But the most fearsome creatures (I'll mention crackheads later) are the ones you can't see. The moist, humid climate is ideal host to all sorts of strange microbes. Perhaps the most gruesome is the Papalomoya.

Leishmaniasis or papalomoya as it's known locally, is a parasite spread by a tiny flea that injects a flesh eating bacteria with its bite. Anyone who lives in the jungle behind Ol'aba long enough seems to have scars (affectionately called "Tico tattoos") from the sores that refuse to heal, festering and increasing in size daily. Called 'the modern leprosy', the parasites will eat away the flesh down to the bone, resulting in death unless treated with powerful antimonial drugs, in a drastic treatment akin to chemotherapy. According to a friend who lives on the edge of that jungle, the best cure is a traditional local one: slice open the pod of the cacao pod (whence comes chocolate), and place it on the bite. The sore will start to burn painfully right away, but it kills the parasite so the sore will heal.

Above -
Costa Rica is the easiest place to travel in Central America. In general the local people are easy and friendly. But like the diverse wildlife in these jungles, the beautiful mixes with the deadly poisonous. It's fine if you know what's what. The cute frog, by the way, is deadly.

Opposite:
Local stand-out, Zurdo, ignoring the dangers.

All It's Cracked Up To Be

A black guy with ratty dreadlocks approached me from a side street, sliding up on a bike in slow motion, rolling his eyes to look me over on my way to the grocery store.

"Hey mahn! Ssstop and talk to me," he slurred.

"Sorry, I'm busy", I replied, walking on.

"Talk to me, mahn-to-mahn", he said, falling in next to me on his wobbly bike.

"Hey, I got nuthin' for you", I replied. Crack users around

"I got rid of him for you," said this one with an ingratiating smile.

"Hey mahn!" he called after me, "What's your name? Come talk to me."

I didn't stop.

Having to watch my back was something new for me at Ol'aba. I found out later that the first cracker, who goes by "Pana", once had property and a store in town. Until recently he was healthy and married. Now he has nothing. Spends his time begging, stealing, and wheedling for crack.

Ol'aba's crack habit is supplied by a steady, cheap flow



here drink guaro, the cheap grain alcohol, to deaden the crushing depression of coming down from a cocaine high.

"I goin' mash you up", he began threatening, eyes opaque.

Deciding the best way to get rid of him was with a show of power, I got right in his face.

"Do not fuck with me!" I said with my best Dirty Harry snarl, trying to penetrate the haze. He finally went away, but not before passing me on to his partner, a more sober and dangerous version who approached me on my way out of the store.

of cocaine from bordering Panama and nearby Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. The police seem to be impotent against the crackheads, who steal and cause trouble all over town. But the 'end of the road' crackheads on the street are not the worst ones. Violence among more serious criminals is increasing sporadically, to the point where it's a bit like the Wild Wild West.

Gordo Malo ("Fatty Bad") is a notorious local thief. Well known for his uncanny ability to evade the local police as well as any retribution, Gordo Malo is said to have some sort of black magic that makes him invincible, a sort of 'Robin Hood on crack'. One story about him starts when he was involved in a botched theft attempt that left an expatriate Austrian hotelier bleeding to death in his wife's arms. Without hard evidence, the police were powerless to apprehend him, despite the fact that everyone knew he was involved. The expatriate community was terrified. Most of them were sleeping with some sort of weapon under their pillow. At this point a slightly imbalanced, Vietnam veteran expat decided to take matters into his own hands, and arranged a posse to teach Gordo Malo a final lesson. They caught up with him near the town soccer field where he was smoking crack. The vet pulled out a gun and shot Gordo Malo in the head. Strangely, the bullet bounced off, and Gordo Malo escaped. Worried about their own safety, the posse took up a collection and





Apparently he'd been drying his bullets in the toaster, and they had all exploded...

Surfers are far from immune to crack's incredibly addictive clutches. One of the best local surfer kids got into crack, lost all his sponsors, and now begs on the street. I met a gringo surfer named Johnny who was working as a gigolo, while at the same time trying to pimp out his girlfriend to buy crack while I was there. I saw Johnny surfing one day and was surprised to see that he is a talented surfer – fast and loose. Sad, because he rarely gets in the water these days.

In an autobiographical book called *In Search of Captain Zero*, Allen Weisbecker, an ex-drug smuggler/surfer/author who wrote for the TV series *Miami Vice*, goes looking for his old

becomes:

"...a zoomorphically motile disarrangement of darting mini-saurians (and) fist-sized arachnids."

The crew at Ol'aba, many of whom are characters in Weisbecker's story, tend to dismiss his work as a load of posturing, throwing the book down with:

"You need a dictionary just to read that shit! And it's not even worth looking up the words!" It's a shame because

Weisbecker at times writes insightfully about surfing, which is something few seem capable of.

Soda Irma

With the drugs around, it would be easy to forget there are still good people in Ol'aba. The other side of Ol'aba's personality, the one that captured my heart, is still there at 'Soda Irma'. Irma knew the times when Ol'aba was a small fishing village, a tranquilo place where everyone knew each other, and no one locked their doors. Irma runs the place with a sweet, knowing, languid smile, surrounded by her extended family: her daughters who could be her sisters, and her lovable rascal of a son, Alex, an uncle at eleven. It's not the custom to wait past early teen age to have kids here, so Soda Irma is always full of irresistibly adorable mulatto babies who waddle up to you and demand to be held. Local black fishermen, the tough and friendly, resilient core of

Ol'aba, stop by to share their peculiar salty Caribbean wisdom in the local patois. I remember the weather-beaten old boatbuilder who builds the local dugout canoes examining the fins of my surfboard.

"Ah yes", he said simply, "man imitatin' nycha once again."

Anyone is welcome to sit down to a bowl of Irma's tried and tested power food. Rondon (patois for "run down") is Irma's speciality, a slow cooking fish stew with coconut milk and root veggies that is unconditionally guaranteed to get you that last burst of paddling power you need to push over the ledge into an Ol'aba barrel.

Irma has taken a gang of the resident gringo community

under her wing: Joel, Billy, Albert, Garrick, and Gary just hand Irma a wad of cash, eat three meals a day of her home cooking until the money's gone, then hand over some more. Somehow this makes it all the more like home because there's no need to ask prices, get the cheque, or carry money. Irma knows her clientele so well that she has a strange ability to guess what people will order when she sees them walk in. Although she says she's not psychic, she's rarely wrong. Sitting at Soda Irma's, surrounded by a family of good people who are quick to laugh, you could almost forget Ol'aba has a dark side.

OPPOSITE: (Clockwise) Rastaman, doin' a ting.

Local lads, like Zurdo, are into surfing big-time. The sad thing is, some of the best of them have succumbed to the devil-rocks and quit surfing completely.

Soda Irma, a homely, old-style place.



friend from the smuggling days, and finds him in the "town at the end of the road", Ol'aba.

"I've been smoking crack these days", says 'Christopher', as Allen calls his friend. The character from the book is now a fixture in Ol'aba. He has a reputation as a notorious scammer, always at the bus stop chatting up the new arrivals.

While *In Search of Captain Zero* makes interesting reading about Ol'aba, it's a painfully verbose book. For example, a day when the surf gets too big and hollow for Allen to longboard he describes as:

"...of top-to-bottom breaking configuration...at best borderline for optimal longboarding."

And Christopher's surreal picture of monkeys and spiders



Gringo Locals

Localism rears its ugly head once in a while at Ol'aba, but as it often happens, it's not the locals who have the attitudes, it's the gringo foreigners. Most of the older guys, like the original surfers who found the place, seem to have mellowed over the years to the point where they will tolerate new faces, if not give them waves. Two of them watched a travelling surfer walk out over an urchin-encrusted reef, and didn't bother to tell him where the safe paddle-out spot was. This sort of passive disdain seems about the worst they're capable of these days. They seem to have

Above and left - As well as true locals there are also 'gringo locals'. Most of them are smart enough to enjoy their blessings, although a few have taken on that embarrassing role that expats sometimes do - aggressive defence of 'their' wave. Kurt (above) and Tequilla (left)



Above -
Not really a longboard
wave. Unless you can
handle it. Joel

Right -
Kurt again.
Tara basking at the hotel.

Opposite:
There isn't only one good
wave here. There are
plenty more if you can get
to them.

passed on the role of enforcer to guys like "Tequila", a southern California surfer who barks at people in the water on a regular basis, in an effort to intimidate people who aren't sure of themselves.

This year Tequila was in rare form. One morning after downing several beers he paddled out and began scowling, calling people "kooks" to their faces, and telling them to "beat it".

Tequila is a competent surfer who rides the tubes of Ol'aba well, with a slightly spastic style, but on this particular morning he was still "short" a few waves, which was making him irritable. He keeps track of his wave count zealously, grabbing what he considers his due "quota" of tubes for the day. He'd recently gotten in a collision with a young kid and forced the kid to give him money and wax. The kid then left town in fear. Tequila just never seemed to realise that even if

you surf well, if you act like an asshole, you are still just...

an asshole. Sooner or later, Tequila was bound to run into someone who would stand up to him. It turned out to be sooner.

The King

Kurt Van Dyke, known as "King" to his friends, was nearly killed in an accident when he

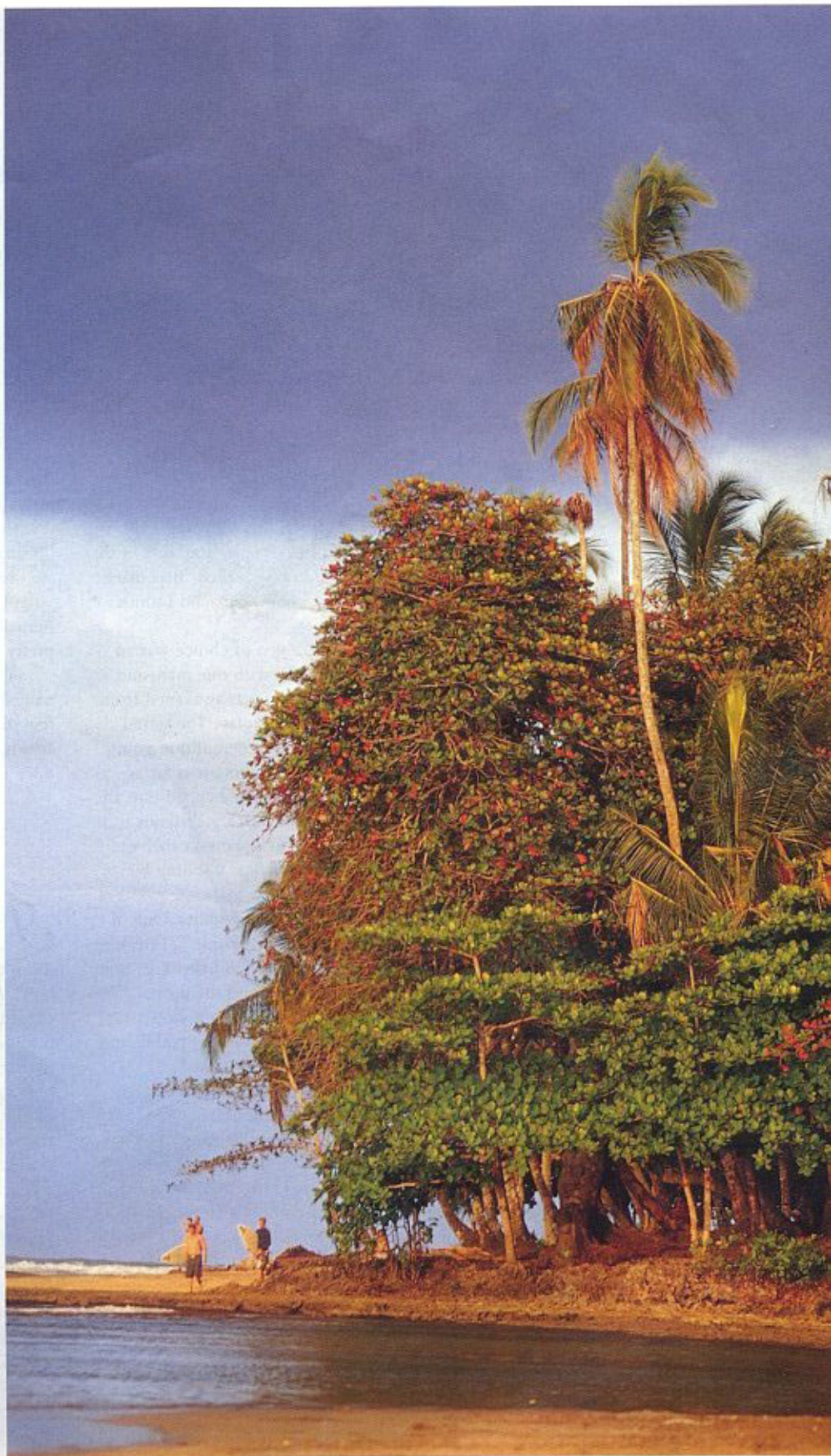


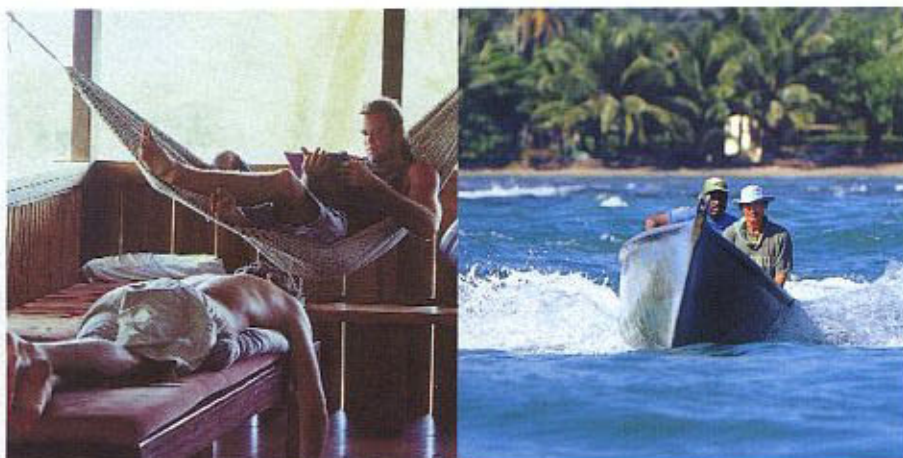
and a friend wrapped their VW bus around a power pole up in Santa Cruz. Kurt woke up from an out-of-body experience with a power pole where his gear shift was supposed to be, nearly blind from serious head injuries.

A weaker man might have died, but Kurt, a powerful 6'5" (195 cm), 250lb (113 kg) surfer, survived with some damage to his vision and a completely changed attitude toward life. He resolved to live every day to its fullest, and die with no money. When a friend invited him down to Ol'aba, he found more hollow waves than he could ride, and an old hotel going at a bargain price. He decided to turn the hotel into a surf hang-out where he and his buddies could party between surfs to their heart's content. In 1987, a friend convinced him to make a business out of it, and he started charging visiting surfers a dollar a day to stay there. Demand was high, so in '89 he built a second storey out of native hardwoods. This was a vast improvement on the original concrete cellblocks of the old hotel. But Kurt wasn't finished.

Kurt decided he'd have a better view of the surf if he went just a bit higher, so with some serious blows of his oversized hammer and nails on some of the heaviest wood on this planet, he put up a third storey. This padlocked third floor he reserved for himself his closest friends. The entire area is open air, and the light equatorial breezes that never seem to reach more than about ten miles an hour blow straight in and out the other side of the house, cooling it to perfect hammock temperature. When it cools down in the evening, there's a hot shower in the peculiar Costa Rican style of water heaters – basically a hot plate wired directly to the shower head – which heats water as it flows through. It's a very practical solution to the expensive and bothersome water heater, but it has a few drawbacks, chief among them the risk of a nasty electric shock while standing under the water, with full house current wired directly to the shower head.

The third floor is the embodiment of Kurt's original vision. It's a place where King and his bros can party to their hearts content between go-outs. The only real difference is that now the view is better. That and the fact that the hundred beds on the bottom floors of the hotel are now bringing in a considerable income for Kurt while he enjoys himself. And





Above - Two worlds. Some folk come here to surf their brains out and tire their bodies in the search for enjoyment. Others do the same just to make a living. Due to a general respect for each other, these different species usually interact quite well.

Opposite: Joel making it again.

he does enjoy himself.

Kurt absolutely loves women, and by what I gathered, women seem to love him too. Often. His reputation has nearly reached the point where some think he is led around life by his penis. Big and strapping, with a gravelly voice and a full head of curly brown hair at forty three, he plays the role of el dueño with classic panache. He's even been called "mas macho que los machos", more macho than even the macho Latinos. This does have its pros and its cons.

When I arrived at the hotel, the video of choice was an explicit porn tape of two women in bed with one man, and starring, yes... el dueño. A few days later I was awakened from an after-surf nap by the sound of breaking glass. The sound went on and on. Assuming there must be a demolition going on next door, I walked downstairs and had gotten as far as "Hey Kurt, did you hear th...", when I nearly stepped into an entire room full of broken glass. One of Kurt's girlfriends was systematically taking every glass from his restaurant shelves and smashing each one on the floor. Kurt was standing by helplessly while she finished off the dessert glasses.

Kurt loves to be surrounded by his surf buddies. One of these is a local named Carlos, who goes by "Zurdo" (Lefty). Zurdo does carpentry, runs the front desk, and helps Kurt hold the whole operation together. He's also one of the most talented surfers in Ol'aba, who specialises in the hollow, shallow and deep first peak wave. I watched Zurdo paddle into a ridiculously thick first peak wave, so late it looked impossible. He paddled from halfway down the face and simply stood up as the lip threw over his head. The wave tried sucking him up the face, doubling up and throwing out clean and far over him, but he forced his board down it. Zurdo knew it was the only way to ride a wave like that. He came out untouched, and claimed his ride as only a latino can - arms raised, turning left and right to the crowd with a huge smile on his face, like a soccer player who just scored a goal.

The King's Castle

Living at the Hotel Puerto Viejo is like having a hundred roommates. What used to be a restaurant downstairs has turned into a sort of free-for-all of

a communal kitchen. There are up to a hundred tenants, a good number of whom use the kitchen at the same time.

Dishes sometimes get cleaned, sometimes not. Once someone leaves a dish in the sink, it's open season for the next to just leave a dish or two. Once the pile gets big enough, you can't use the sink anyway.

If you leave something in the refrigerator, chances are it won't be there when you come back. It's a form of 'taxation', and it's done without malice. If

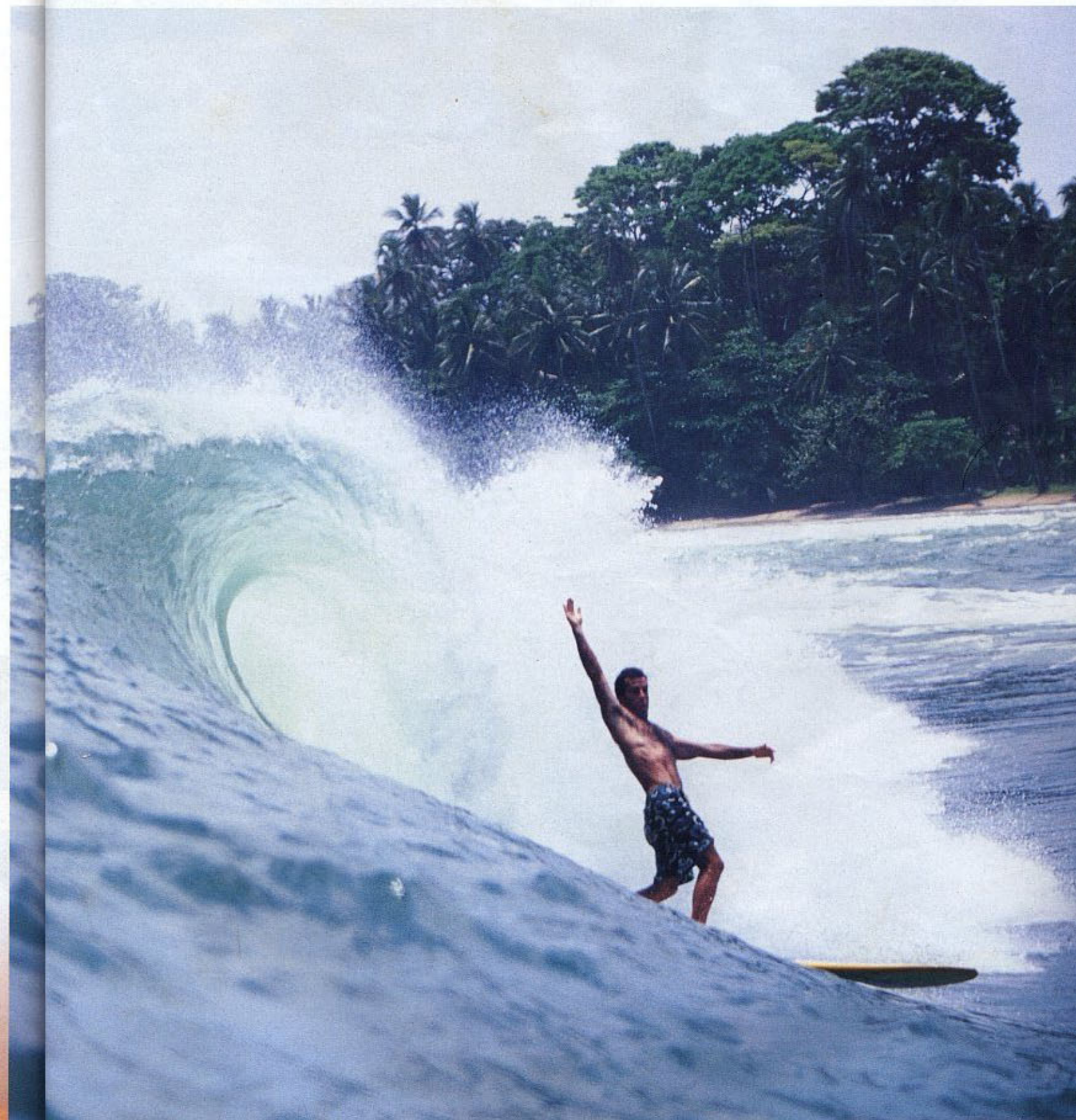
you need something and you see it, you just grab it. If someone starts complaining, you just admit it and buy them another, although it's more likely no one will actually realise, and you'll get away with it. Kurt, as the dueño could police the area, but instead he rolls with it, poaching whatever he needs out of the refrigerator. "Sorry, we taxed your melon," Kurt said to a girl when she asked what happened to the sweet melon she'd been saving. Actually, he ate the whole thing. Taxation rates can run pretty high around here.

The saving grace is a long-haired, craggy older guy named Walter who looks like he's seen the dark side of a few streets. He has some arrangement with Kurt, and he sees it as his small contribution to clean the entire kitchen once in awhile.

The Day of Reckoning

It was just another mellow day in the line-up at Ol'aba, clean and small, with the odd perfect long tube. Tequila paddled out and grabbed the first thing that came along - a nice wall from deep on the first bowl. A guy who we'll call "Bam-bam" dropped in on the shoulder and cut back just as Tequila was headed full throttle up the face. Tequila speared Bam-bam's immaculate new surfboard nicely right through the bottom, and kept riding. From my perfect vantage point on the shoulder, it looked exactly like he meant to do it. Unfortunately for Tequila, he speared the wrong guys' board. Bam-bam was raised in rough neighbourhoods where you solved problems by scrapping. Later on the beach, I foolishly told Bam-bam what I'd seen, that it looked as though Tequila had speared his board on purpose.

It was several days since their collision by the time Bam-bam met Tequila again out in the water. Bam-bam had been stewing over the incident and the ding in his new board. Tequila and I had already been surfing for awhile. I'd just asked him why he'd speared Bam-bam's board and he had just finished telling me that he had no intention doing that.





Then Bam-bam paddled over.

"Are you gonna give me five thousand colones and a bar of wax, like you made that kid give you?" he wanted to know.

Tequila missed his cue and started protesting, but before he could get a good argument out, he was bleeding from a solid punch that repositioned his nose on the side of his face. Still game, Tequila began to argue more through the blood, and was about to get his nose broken a second time. I couldn't stand any more, and feeling as though I was partly responsible for the incident, I told Bam-bam that it was enough already.

"Tequila didn't mean to spear your board! It was an accident!" I yelled, stepping in a bit late. The situation finally calmed down and Tequila went in to nurse his nose. The sentiment around Ol'aba was that it was a shame, but it couldn't have happened to a nicer guy.

But the story was still not over. Tequila and particularly his local wife intended to avenge the slight to their honour and, saying that Bam-bam was a dangerous man who ought to be expelled from the country, they filed a denuncia, something like pressing charges in court, against Bam-bam. The police arrived as Bam-bam was getting in a second violent altercation with a neighbour, and took Bam-bam to jail. I spoke with Tequila, and told him that he should just settle the

fallen far behind on his 'wave quota'. It seemed ironic that the self-styled 'enforcer', who had intimidated so many people, had become the one who was afraid to go surfing.

Love it. Leave it

The day came when I told Irma that I'd be leaving tomorrow. She looked at me with that knowing grin and said,

"I don't think so. I think you will stay."

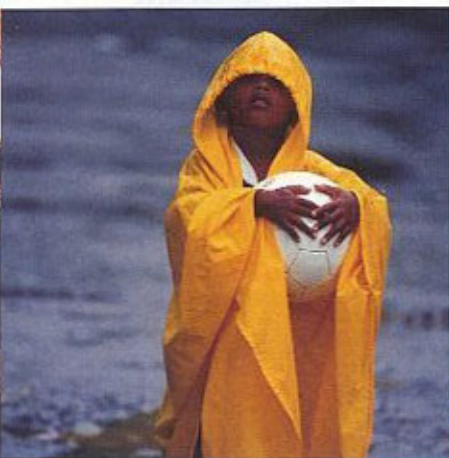
So I checked the other oracle and sure enough the internet told me the military was predicting a new swell. Irma wasn't even surprised to see me running around for a few more days with a gigantic smile stuck to my face, after some of the deepest tubes of the trip.

On the bus out of town, I looked down at the black water running through the roadside gutters of this ramshackle town, right out into the line-up. I thought about the crackheads, the violence and the thieving. With all of this, how could it be that Ol'aba was still a tough place to leave? Maybe Irma and her extended family know. Maybe her adopted gringos know. Maybe King knows, with his castle and its keepers.

One thing is sure: the waves never change.

Below L to R -
Tree house living.
Future talent.
Unchanging attraction.

Opposite:
That wave. Its pitching,
heaving barrel has
changed this village
radically by attracting
people like...us.



matter with Bam-bam and put it behind them. His wife insisted on making a court case of it. A few days later the police came looking for me at Soda Irma while I was having a post-surf lunch. The officer pulled out a court summons, looked me in the eye, and said,

"Tor Johnson?"

"Who?" I replied with a blank stare.

"Tor Johnson," he repeated.

"Never heard of him," I said.

By the time I left Ol'aba, Tequila and his wife had managed to alienate nearly every surfer there by having the police visit them. Tequila seemed afraid to surf Ol'aba, paddling in if there was any danger of seeing Bam-bam. Between that and his busy schedule visiting lawyers and police, he missed some epic days at Ol'aba. Tequila must have

