



Jeff Callaghan sharing a wave with Nat Young, 1969. Surf International (Vol. 2#4). Photo by John Witzig. Later versions of the photo airbrush Jeff out.

1 Final comments

Bellyboarding has appealed to both novice surfers, for whom the bellyboard was a transition to riding a surfboard as well as to competent bodysurfers and others who saw opportunities for going faster or for obtaining greater manoeuvrability than bodysurfing or longboarding offered. In the 1960s bellyboarders were often found where there were hollow waves or at rocky locations, which were hazardous to surf before leg-ropes became popular. Fast, hollow waves were suited to the planing speed that a bellyboard could obtain while the reduced buoyancy was a bonus in getting out in big surf.

Rather than a passing fad, riding prone has been an essential aspect of the surfing experience historically, while the fun of riding prone continues to be rediscovered. This is well illustrated in a 2009 interview involving a group of pro-surfers (Binns 2009):

MO: Oh yeah, when no-one's around I don't even try, you cruise. Early mornings at D-Bah, with no no-one around, it's so good to not even try, and just go across.

OW: I lie down sometime and just enjoy the waves.

MO: Me too

OW: Yeah, you just go across and you're like 'this is the funnest wave of the session. I'm gliding'. (p.70)

Appreciating something of the history of bellyboards won't revolutionise the surfing world, though it does give recognition to surfers who were having fun with a shortboard revolution of their own.

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