



P R O F I L E

C.C. ROBERTS

THE BEGINNING

I have been traveling ever since I was a toddler with my parents. I always remember getting out of school early and getting into a van or suburban and driving ridiculously far. My dad followed the boat racing tour across the States. I used to run along the shoreline with my older brother Scott while watching my dad race his boat across the bay. We went to my grandma's house in the Florida Keys every weekend while my dad would test his boats. Me, my brother Scott, and my cousins swam and fished all day while my mom watched over us. Born in Miami-Dade County on June 6th, 1973, I grew up around lots of water and fast boats. I learned to swim and ride a motorcycle by the age of three. It was in the blood.

My family packed up and moved to York, Pennsylvania when I was in kindergarden. I went from warm ocean water to freezing cold snow. Scott and I adapted fast to the climate change by playing in the snow and getting used to it. We even earned some money by shoveling snow off the driveways. We'd use the money we earned to buy candy from the local chocolate factory or bike parts from the bike shop. Over time, all that shoveling bought me my first pair of hockey skates (CCMs), a skateboard (Veraflex deck with Gullwing Trucks & Sims Wheels), some snow skis (K2s), and a BMX bike (Kuwaharihii, all chrome and red). Scott and I were big into BMX. We'd go ride and build jumps at the local track. He would always jump the highest and furthest. That's not surprising if you know him. It's all-out or nothing.



MEDDOCK



Playing in the pool at the beach. Florida Keys 1974.



Snorkeling with my cousins. 1982.



After school at New Smyrna Beach. 1989.



Is our sunscreen blended in? 1975.



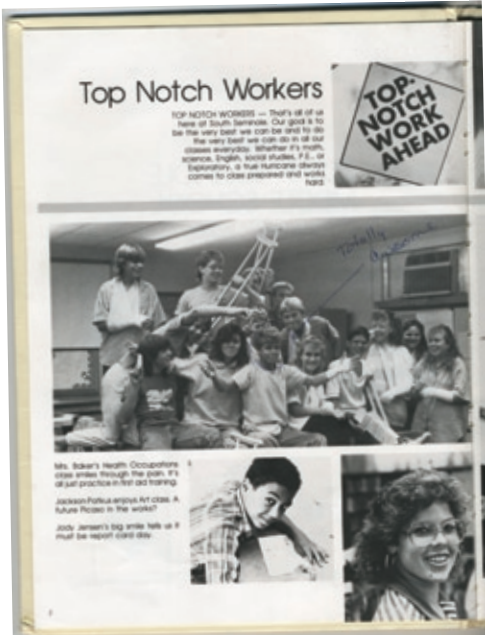
My first trip to Cape Hatteras, NC.



Uncle Gary, "catch of the day." Early 1970s.



Local dirt jumps in the neighborhood. We built these after watching the first X-games.



Being a middle school "senior" was totally awesome.



Freshman year in high school at Bethune Beach, Florida.



Caption.

FLORIDA

Finally, the cold weather got the best of my parents so we moved again and drove southbound to Florida where my uncle was living. By the start of the fifth grade, we had settled into a new house and were getting accustomed to the warm weather. Every weekend, our whole family would go to the beach. I was quickly introduced to the surfing world. We went to a spot behind a small surf shop called Ron Jon's. There, Scott and I would rent boogie-boards and eventually surfboards. We'd surf all day by the pier getting pounded by 2-3 foot choppy waves. (Thanks to my mom for all those times she would do a dawn patrol session with us at the beach to catch glassy surf.)

I made my first trip out of the country in the summer of 1986 I went to visit to my Grandma and Grandpa in Costa Rica. They had a house in the city of San Jose and a house in Jaco Beach. My brother and I would surf black sand beaches and develop our surfing skills there. I learned to surf some big waves and got some respect for being the smallest kid on the trip. I'd never hesitate to drop in on head-high to double-over-head size surf. By Christmas, I got my first surfboard; a Fluid Dynamics 5'6". It had some sick neon-orange colors with green paint airbrushed on the bottom.

Later that year, Ryan and Scott Byerly, Shawn Whitaker and my brother and I would become inseparable friends who would skateboard, BMX, or ski together on the lake at Scott's dad's house. We did it all day every day...and then some more if we could squeeze it in. There was not a day that went by without us doing some sort of board sport. I remember skim-boarding the golf course on rainy days with some homemade boards we cut out of ply-



Video caption.

wood. We'd paint them, sand down the edges and play in the rain. It's not a very safe place to be in a thunderstorm but definitely a fun one. We always had to run from the rangers of the Country Club. Apparently the skim boarding ripped up the golf grass...Or was it the Honda 50-cc motorcycle that was pulling us?

When middle school started, Ryan and Scott's older stepbrother Dusty would come pick us up in his badass Baja Bug. Right after school, we would head for New Smyrna Beach or Bethune Beach (The Wall). Every day, we'd barely scrounge up enough money for gas and sandwiches... all for the 1-2 foot surf. I began to surf in the ESA (Eastern Surfing Association) and a couple of NSSA contests. In high school, I wrestled and ran track my freshman year but when I found out that the tournaments and meets were on the weekends, there were no more days for surfing! Every summer, starting with my freshman year in high school, I would take a surf/road-trip to Hatteras, N.C. and surf all over the outer banks. Mike Raimondi, Shawn Whitaker, Jeff Thomas, Chris Rynell and myself would drive up to Hatteras for about two weeks with our boards and camping gear. We had no money to sleep in hotels, barely enough money to eat, and not a care in the world. All we wanted to do was surf. From the boys division when were little groms, to surfing in the 3A Mens division as teenagers, those were my best friends in school who I grew up with surfing. I traveled to Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Hatteras, N.C., California, and Baja Mexico wanting nothing more than sponsorship and getting paid to surf like the pros.



Me and Scotty by my dad's new Blue Max race boat.



I was four and Scotty was five. It was our age and our moto number.



At the Harley-Davidson factory with Evil Kenievel's race bike.



Prom 1992. No, Scotty was not my date.



My second trip to Japan in '97 with Shapiro, Patterson and friends.



My first team sport.



Introduced to snow skiing with mom and dad on Mt. Roundtop, York, Pennsylvania.



Before there were wakeboard boats. And wakeboards, for that matter. 19XX.



First grade, 1979.



Second grade, 1980.



First Communion, 1980.



Sixth grade, 1984.

PHOTOS COURTESY ROBERTS FAMILY ALBUM





WAKE TECH/NEPTUNE/COBE

When I graduated high school, I moved on Lake Katharine with my parents. I lived about 10 houses down from Byerly’s dad’s house. My parents had a ‘91 MasterCraft 190. The boat was nice but the wake sucked for wakeboarding. Byerly had ‘73 Ski-Tique with a killer wake but no ski pylon because Scott ripped it out of the boat from doing tricks. Between the two boats, my brother, the Byerly’s, and friends Tyler and Rich, we would ride all day. I felt bad at the time because we all rode Scott’s board. It was always the newest and best board out there...The Big Air (super lite) with the Wiley bindings. We all wanted one but had to wait for Scott to get a new board before we could trade him something for his old one. Since Wake Tech was only sending a few guys boards, we had limited access to ride them. Gator lived in Naples, Florida and Rich would never let us ride his board because he said we would stretch his bindings out. Byerly, however, would always share his equipment for us to use. I think my first wakeboard sponsor was Scott Byerly. Nice guy then, still the same today.



Bungee Jumping with the Vertigo Guys. This was my third or fourth jump, ever – and the first time I went backwards.

our team rode everyday together on Lake Katharine. Rich acted as our coach (if you could even call him that). He had everyone on the team riding consistently everyday and made us practice our trick passes for the contest. (Since back then we had to write down 10 tricks and one wildcard trick for the two 30-second passes we got at contest). Eventually, Gator moved up to Orlando and was roommates with Rich. What chaos that was!

Looking back at the *Wakeboard Magazine* story featured in June 2003 (The Wake Tech Story: The Team That Changed Wakeboarding Forever),



My first wakeboard ad ever. Wake Tech, 19XX.

I never thought that Team Wake Tech planned on changing the sport, it just came with the territory of the team. The image the company represented and promoted was a certain style that I seemed to fit into. I started traveling with Wake Tech, just out of high school in the summer of ‘92. This was the first time in my life where I was getting paid to do what I LOVED; wakeboarding. If there was surf, I was off to the beach where I would not have to worry about what time I had to be home to work. No matter how you sliced it, I was going to wakeboard, skate or surf all day whether I got paid to do it or not. If I had a “regular” job, I would have spent the

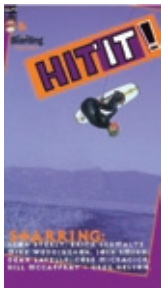


My first wakeboard ad with Neptune.



money earned on new boards for one of those three sports. Being sponsored and getting paid was a dream come true.

Wake Tech had wakeboarding headed in the right direction with a company that backed their riders 100%. Water-skiing, tricking skiing, jumping, and all the other traditional disciplines of the sport were obsolete to Wake Tech. Wakeboarding was all about your set-up, rope length, and style on the water. Style like surfing, skating or snowboarding, only this was behind the boat. We learned new tricks



and fed off each other’s moves. We all wanted to ride like Byerly. If you surfed you wanted the style of Tom Curren or Occy. If you wakeboarded you wanted the style and “hook” of Scott Byerly. Riding with him, Brannon, Drew, Rich, and Ryan was so much fun. We’d teach each other the basic new tricks while Scott was over there inventing new ones. It was an inspiring time to ride and witness. It was Scott who ruled everything on a lake, hands down.

In the summer of ‘93 Byerly got a call from Tony Finn. He told Scott that some guy named Cobe Mikacich wanted to come down to Florida and stay with him and ride with the team. The next thing we knew, this guy named Cobe was in Florida looking for a place to stay and ride with us. Well, Cobe ended up living at my house on the lake and becoming best friends with my brother. Cobe was a good rider and self-motivator. He started working and riding with some new people from Ski World of Orlando. Cobe,

and these new faces he met and hung out with, would eventually become the Three Amigos known as Mike Weddington, Charlie Patterson and Thomas Horrell. They all became good friends and roommates who made up the Full Tilt team of the ‘90s.



I bet Scott Byerly took this photo. This is when we were all sharing his board and bindings. I think I even have his rash-guard on here. Tailpoke, circa 19xx. Lake Kathryn, Florida.





Launch wakeboard magazine was my first cover shot. When I first saw it, I was already in the hospital.

Other media exposure in Wakeboarding Magazine and a Nautique brochure.



Slob 3 on one of the first Flight-69s from Wake Tech. Lake Kathryn, Florida 19XX.

Tony Finn was the boss at Wake Tech and trusted Rich with the team on the road from contest to contest. Somehow, Team Wake Tech had made it. We were traveling with the Bud Pro Water Ski tour, wakeboarding was just a sideshow. The tour was not very big back then. It was a tight little family of five or six teams, with about four guys per team. Fridays were the qualifying day to try and make it to the top 10 to ride on Saturday. That group was cut in half to ride on Sunday. It seemed if you weren't Byerly, Shapiro, Gator, Kovak, Murray, or Lavelle, or could not do a mobius then you probably were not riding on Sunday. We all did not like one another at first but as time passed, the love

grew. We traveled to the same cities together raising hell in hotels, destroying rental cars, and visiting local skate parks. Traveling the tour for me was just fun and I got to do what I loved, for free. I wakeboarded for one minute, then skated the Wake Tech ramp the rest of the day, and partied at night. I was not on the tour to make money, that's for damn sure! I was just there to have fun.

Riding with this much talent around me (Wake Tech) brought me new opportunities, sponsorships, and respect. I rode for Wake Tech for about two years before riding for a new board company called Nep-



Bahamas, '96. Photo: Sonja Weinacker

tune Wakeboards. I knew Byerly and Gator were where Wake Tech's money was going, so I looked into other opportunities. At Neptune, I was a bit more involved with the design, graphics, and logos for the boards. With new doors opening up for me there, Blake Lewis and Billy McCaffray brought me under their wings and put me on a salary contract. I continued to travel all over the United States competing in wakeboard contests. I was teaching clinics, participating in photo shoots and was featured in several wakeboard videos. I visited Japan twice throughout my time with Neptune and traveled with riders Josh Smith, Darin Shapiro, Parks, and Shane Bonifay, Jeremy Kovak, and Dean Lavelle.

After my second trip to Japan in June of '97, I immedi-



ately left for Colorado where the second annual snowboard/wakeboard crossover event was held. We wakeboarded one day snowboarded the next, for a combined overall score. I got third place, two consecutive years for wakeboarding and did alright on the snowboarding side. I was just stoked on the opportunity to snowboard (through the wake connection) and skate the mini ramp they had built in the parking lot. I was riding all kinds of boards and living a dream back then.

I had no idea that trip was going to be my last time skating, wakeboarding or snowboarding and walking away safely. One month later, my life would never be the same.



Winter of '97 in Squaw Valley, California. Photo: Bill Chase





THE CRASH

On Thursday July 25, 1997 my lifestyle changed dramatically. It was about a month after the '97 Worlds were I finished 11th place. I missed the top 10 by one trick (I still have that trick pass written down). I rode at Chase Heavener's that morning and then went home. I heard Andy Lazarus was coming in town from West Palm and staying at Chase's house. Andy, who finished 10th that year, made it to Sunday's final. I called Andy to see if he wanted to hang out that night. I went to pick him up and then went to Todd Brendal's house around 8pm. After arriving at Todd's place, Andy and I were waiting for Todd and his friend Tommy (who Andy and I hadn't met before), to get ready so we could go get some dinner. After being at the restaurant for nearly two hours, we all left with Tommy at the wheel. Todd was in the passenger seat, I was in the back seat behind him and Andy was to my left. We were all headed back to Todd's house.

He lived down a gravel road off Alfaya Trail near U.C.F in Orlando. The street changed into dirt just before the turn at his street. Well, Tommy missed the street and continued down the dirt road instead. Jokingly, he continued to speed up and kept wanting to pull up the E-brake. Everybody encouraged him not to pull the brake and to slow down but, that didn't happen. He pulled the E-brake anyway and lost control of the car. All I remember was the sound of the mailboxes or something beneath the car as we flipped through the air uncontrollably.

BAM! The car hit a tree. Spiritually, I was sent to a place that not many people go to and come back from alive. It's hard to hear I was even considered to be "lucky."

July 25th through September 25th are some dates that I will never forget. I was in the hospital for two months straight. I woke up in a hospital with my family and two doctors looking over the top of me. I had my family and friends with me there, and that was all that mattered. They explained to me that I was in a severe car accident and had sustained a broken neck with a spinal-cord injury that left me paralyzed from my chest down to my toes. It was some news I wasn't ready to accept.

As I laid there breathing into a machine, trying to keep a plastic ball at a certain height with my breath, I learned that Todd Brendal died in the accident, Tommy suffered brain injuries and Andy broke an ankle and tore up his shoulder.



Testing-out a new bucket seat on a Byerly board.



Top of the mountain, Park City, Utah. About to carve some fresh tracks.



The road less traveled.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

In 2001, I had stem cell research done in Ecuador. I had a lot of doubts and fear but researched the doctor for about three or four years before going through with it. Yeah, there was a time when I thought, “Why aren’t they doing this kind of surgery in the States?” But then again, sitting around wondering “what if” wasn’t helping either. That trip to Ecuador has made me forever hopeful. I am so glad that I went and that there are other recovery options in this world for people with spinal injuries. After the accident, the doctors said I would only have about a 5% chance of ever feeling or walking again. Well, I’ve beaten those odds already because I have feeling from head to toe with some involuntary movement. Only time will tell how much more movement or feeling I will get back.

BACK ON A BOARD

At times when no one was around, I would think of my old life style and now my new life style that I would have to learn to adapt to. I often thought I didn’t want to deal with it and was better off dead. Those thoughts ran through my head daily, but then all I could think about was my family. All I would think was, “When is this going to end?” It felt like I had a disease that wouldn’t go away. I could move certain parts of my body but I could only feel a tingle in others. The thought process was there but the physical action wasn’t. I went through a long rehab having my good days, and of course, the bad days. My family and friends kept me in high spirits. They’d tell me that they would help me get better and back on the water as soon as I was ready.

About seven or eight months after getting out of the hospital, Scott Byerly and Brannon Meek had me back on the water with a makeshift knee-board. I knew it was not the same as wakeboarding, but it felt good just to be back in the water and being pulled again. There was a sensation of feeling alive again. Big thanks to Brannon and his McGuyver-like talent. He eventually helped me mount an old wheelchair onto a wakeboard. That finally got me as close as I could get, for the time being, to the real feeling of riding! I have learned who my real friends are in these 10 years that I have been injured and it is them who make me who

I am. Whether it’s Byerly telling me, “You got it, one more” as I am trying to slide a 60-foot rail, or Wooster and Travis yelling, “Go left,” as I’m pushed into the surf.

Since that time, I’ve gone to a water ski clinic for the disabled and found out that there is still a way to enjoy the wake sports if paralyzed. The idea is called a cage or bucket, with the basic concept being chair on a ski or board. The rider is in the sitting position, just like their normal chair. When I was at the clinic one day, a friend named Ann at UCanSki2.com had one of these buckets for sale. My dad bought it for me. As soon as I got home, it went straight on a new Byerly board. I’ve been riding my chair-board (that’s what I call it) for about five years now. After seeing pictures of me riding it, I have people ask me if I’ve invented it. I always reply, “No, but I am reinventing the way it needs to be ridden!” I just ordered a new custom bucket from Ann and plan on sliding some new rails in the near future. (See one of the best photos of the year in December 2003 *Wakeboard Magazine*, sliding a 60’ rail at The Projects—thanks for the pull, B.T.)



Without my friends, I would never make it to the water. I would never get a chance to slide the rails. Thank you to all my friends who push me through the obstacles in life. Thank you for keeping a smile on my face.



Getting my slide on at The Projects. Chris Lastname put a 13-foot extension on this 80-footer so I could slide the rail.





The Vertigo bungee team, with Ryan and Scott Byerly and Brian Grubb. Mt. Rainier, Washington. 240-footer.

I have had many people tell me that I inspire them and I am an inspiring person. Well, I am just trying to continue being C.C. and do what I do. I have my Bachelors degree in Graphic Design from UCF with experience riding surfboards, skateboards, and wakeboards for over 25 years. Ten of those years, I've been riding paralyzed.

One day, I'd like to take my boards and experience across the country to rehab facilities, hospitals and other life rehabilitation centers. I want to take other individuals out on the water through clinics. I want to show them how to adjust, yet still enjoy some of their favorite past activities. I want them to be inspired and shown the everyday signs of hope and fun.

There are programs out there like "They Will Surf Again" as well as events and foundations like Jesse Billauer's "Life Rolls On." It's people like Jesse and Ricky James who are making a difference among spinal cord injuries. They stay active and are having fun in life at the same time.



Wakeboard boat rollers are like moto "whoops" for me. Double 'em, triple 'em, or case it.



Getting pulled back up after being thrown from the Mt. Rainier bridge. I jumped six or seven times before I got hurt. Since then, I've been thrown off five times.



My toys, my quiver, my inspirations.



Chris Pottz

C.C. Roberts

Name Name

DISABLED IN ACTION SPORTS

With the movement of action sports increasing, there is a severe risk of injury that can come along with those sports. People like Stephen Murray (BMX rider) and Chris Ackerman (Moto-X) are now paralyzed due to sustaining spinal cord injuries in their sports.

I believe we can all help these athletes get back on the horse with the right people, sponsors and donations involved. The “X-tra Help Ride Tour,” is in the works for the future.

I would like to show and teach individuals about spinal cord injuries and the life after, even though life is not the same after you’re injured...not even close.

I know for a fact that we can continue to do the sports we love, it’s just in a different way. It was written in *Wakeboarding Magazine*, “Roberts has hit rails at the Projects, surfed breaks in California and become a BIG part of the movement to keep people with disabilities out on the water.” And, that’s what I will continue to do and that’s what I want to continue to share with others. That was one of the best compliments I’ve ever received.

In this crazy world we call life, you just have to dig deep and find what makes you happy. Through my experiences, I have learned several things, but one I that I would like to share with you is to make yourself happy.



The Sebastian Inlet Pro expression session for Jesse Ballard’s “Life Rolls On.”



SURFING

I’ve learned that living life happy will make you a stronger person. I found what makes me happy is continuing to do the things I did growing up. Surfing is something that I fell in love with ever since I smelt Sex-Wax for the first time. I’ve been doing it ever since I was able. Well, just ‘cause I am paralyzed now from the chest down, it doesn’t mean I’ll stop surfing or stay out of the water.

I have been working with Mark Wooster @ Woostersurfboards.com for about four years now. We’re designing a tow-board to do some tow-ats in the surf as well as a new chair for the right surfboard. Woo and I have come up with new surfboards that help me paddle and arch my back as I am lying on the board. Hopefully, his designs combined with my input will allow other injured/paraplegics to get back in the water doing what they love.



My custom shape from Mark Wooster.



Mark Wooster, Jeremy Johnson and Chris Pottz helping me get ready to paddle out.





Travis Ryan at the track.



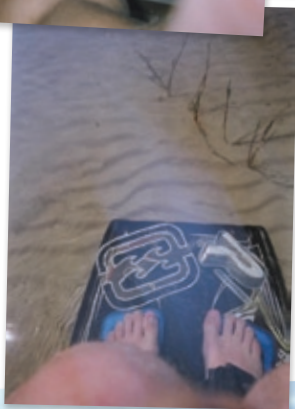
Caption.



New Smyrna Beach City Commissioner Randy Richenberg.



Jeff Hunnicutt, learning to balance. Lake Georgia, FL.



A family weekend at the Byerly's means fun on the lake.



Photo: Austin Hunnicutt



Down South Dave, representing.

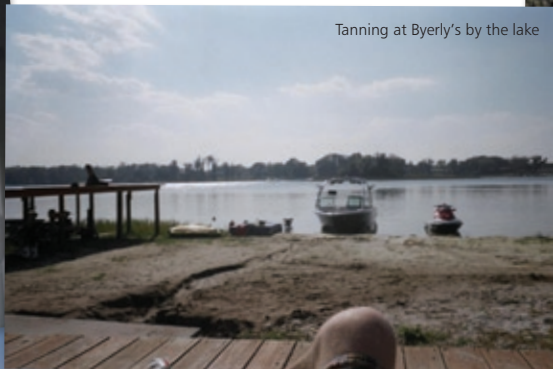


Waiting for cash.

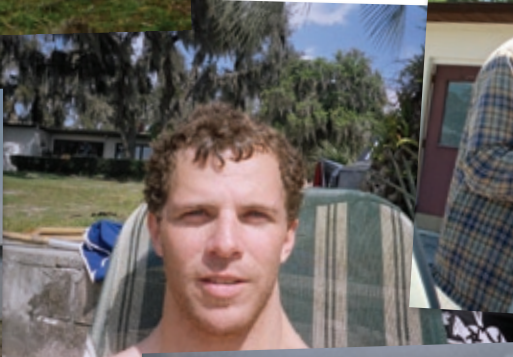
John John keeps my boards in check.



Caption.



Tanning at Byerly's by the lake



Leaving BoardUp Miami.



Car and board parking.



Riding on Lake Georgia. Photo by Austin Hunnicutt.



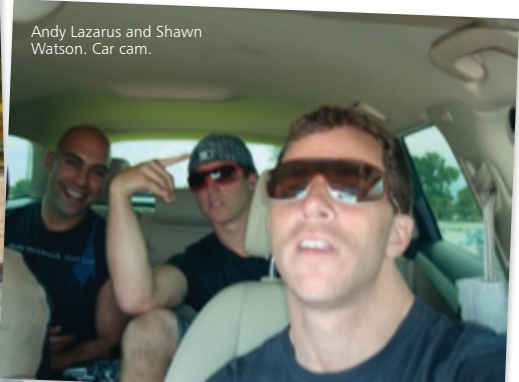
Dishman working, imagine that?



Orlando Magic's "Stuff" and my niece Katlyn.



Byerly's backyard view.



Andy Lazarus and Shawn Watson. Car cam.



Miami, Florida.



One of the tougher parts of my days.

Fin assistance.



Danny Hampson, flexin'.



IN CLOSING

Now that I look back at those boat races my dad drug me to when I was a kid, I've realized he was just chasing his "perfect wave" equivalent. I guess that's what we are all doing in life, chasing our dreams while making the life we live as happy as we can.

I have to thank my mom, dad, and brother first and foremost for the immeasurable support. I would not be here today if it was not for them. And, my niece, Kaitlyn, I love you guys. You keep a smile on my face. For everyone who has helped me get to where I am today, thank you. Bill Porter from Performance and Ski and Surf, I can't thank enough. Scott, "Butch" Bouchard who is the Billabong Sales rep and signed me to my first clothing and sunglass sponsorship, thank you. Scott Mohr got me my first deal with Nautique and is a long time friend. Todd Brendal (R.I.P.) Special thanks to EB, Bruce Clem, Bledsoe, PB, Shane, Boris, Brite, BT, Byerly, Chris (at the Projects), Cobe, DB, Sean Dishman, Down South Dave, Earl, Brannon, Grubb, Jeremy Johnson, Danny Hampson, Kristina Kalinka and Motef Design Studios Inc., Hunnicutt (both of ya!), Jainie, Heath, Chad Sharpe, Jerome, Andy Laz, Letchworth, Matty, Gina, Travis Ryan, Devon, Wess, Scarlet, Chris (Rasta Man), Wooster, Heff @ Billabong, Drew and The Standerd family. If I missed you I will catch you next time...



Byerly's daughter Raina.



Scotty Roberts, airing it out.



A man may fall
many times in life
but is only a failure
when he refuses to get up.

- Evil Knievel

E.E. Ritz

