



## Philip Cuddy, who first surfed in Korea and inherited the independence activists' soul

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### 1. Please introduce yourself.

It is ironic for me to be known in Korea as a legendary surfer. When I came here I was a surfer in 1973. I was pretty much hated. When I met Park Chunghee I was everything he did not want young Koreans to think like, act like or look like. Long hair, half Korean, dark skin and strange clothes. But, he shook my hand when I met him at Dosan Park. My grandparents are Dosan Ahn Chang Ho, who was a Korean independence activist and Yi Hye Ryun. My father Frank Cuddy is Irish. My mother is Susan Ahn Cuddy. My mother is Dosan's oldest daughter. She was very patriotic for America and Korea. My mother and father met when they were both in the US Navy. Of course Korea has always been a big part of our family.

I never think of myself as a legend. Someone at the Wave Park came up with that title. In my opinion James Jones who is half-Korean from Hawaii has the title Korean heritage surfing legend. He is a few years older than I am. He accomplished things in surfing nobody can surpass. I don't see any Korean surfer matching Jones's surfing or his contributions to surfing. He won the prestigious Duke big wave surf contest in Hawaii twice - a major accomplishment. He is a legend.

I have been a surfer almost all my life. My life centered on the ocean and riding waves. I have many entertaining stories about years of wonderful experiences surfing. I owe my parents

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many thanks for allowing me to chase freedom and happiness surfing. When I started surfing surfers were outcasts of society. When surfers started to grow their hair long people disliked surfers more. My dad hated my long hair. Surfing was truly a lifestyle. Today, surfing and surfers are accepted by society. Surfers are riding waves all around the world. Surfing business has become a large financial institution. Working and competing in the surf industry has been established as an acceptable pursuit. Now, surfing is more of an activity than a lifestyle.

## **2. What motivated you to start surfing? When, and Where did you start surfing?**

When I lived with my grandmother the older boy across the street surfed. I was always over at his house looking at his surfboards. My mother knew I was interested in surfing. I watched it on TV. Bunker Spreckels a friend at school was a surfer. And taught me about surfing. I started drawing waves and surfboards. In 1969, our family went to Hawaii. My mother took me to surf school in Waikiki. Surfing made me happy. I was hooked for life.

## **3. Do you have any memorable moments while surfing?**

I have too many memorable episodes. Over 52 years of surfing I have many great memories. Growing up in Southern California where there are many places to surf created many great experiences. Living in Hawaii riding perfect waves before it got so crowded is a great part of my past. Driving 850 miles to surf in Mexico many times created many stories. Surfing enriched my life in many ways.

One of the most important episodes was the organizing and producing a surf camp for kids with cancer. I worked Ronald MacDonald House and Children's Hospital and met some amazing kids who were battling cancer. We brought them to

the beach and got most of them surfing. This was very rewarding for me.

My unique experience in Korea is being one of the first surfers to ride waves at Jungmun Beach on Jeju Island. I may be the first person to surf in Korea. This was May 1991. When I landed at Kimpo Customs officers took my surfboards away from me. They never saw a board with no sail. These were surfboards not windsurfing equipment. My friend from Maui Grant Shoemaker surfed Jeju with me on that trip. In those days Seo Min Hee was a famous Korean windsurfer then. She did not surf at that time. Honeymoon couples on Jeju thought we were crazy. I donated that surfboard I rode in Jeju to the Wave Park(Figure 1).



Figure 1. Philip's surfboard donated to Wave Park(source: Wave Park)

#### **4. What activities are you engaged in South Korea and U.S. regarding surfing?**

I am an Honorary Advisor to Wave Park, I am sharing my experiences in surfing industry and competition. I am working

on developing a PTSD surf therapy idea with Dr. Euna Kim(2020) from Wave Park management. I am helping some Korean surfers who are on Korea's National Surf Team. I have some projects in Korea with Aloha Life my clothing line and some surf books and films. I am also writing for a Korean surf and photography publication named Stoned. It's a magazine.

In US I am mostly just surfing. Out of last two weeks I surfed 12 of those 14 days. I retired from US surf industry years ago. I still do some consulting here. I have many friends seriously involved in the surf industry. I learned every aspect of surf business from making surfboards, to making clothes and running organizations and competition. I also take care of Dosan's legacy, our family historical archives and Korean history projects when I am not working on surfing. I work in a woodshop in the Malibu area, too.

## **5. What do you think is the biggest attraction of surfing?**

I believe feeling good is the biggest attraction of surfing. Having fun in Mother Nature catching and riding waves makes you smile and feel happy. Riding waves is an accomplishment that gives you a sense of freedom and energy. Surfing is about being stoked – being excited and euphoric. Once people get this feeling they love to surf.

## **6. I heard there are many similarities between the aloha spirit of surfing and Ahn Chang-ho's Dosan spirit. could you explain?**

Dosan means Island Mountain. In 1902 he chose this penname when he saw Hawaii rise up out of the ocean while voyaging to America. He knew he was going to be alone, like an island, in his effort to change society and save Korea. He knew he had to be strong like a mountain to rise up and lead his country to freedom. Hawaii is forever connected to Ahn Chang Ho.

Aloha means more than “hello” or “good bye”. The Hawaiian word “alo” means “presence” or “share” and the word “ha” means “breath of life” or “essence of life.”

So the word aloha is something that you experience, your interaction with life, passion, joy, something that’s present within you. But at the same time, it’s something that you share, something that is spread to those around you, sharing that energy and joy that is within you.

One of Dosan’s most important writings is Love Yourself, Love Others. If you could describe Dosan in one word I think it is sincerity. Dosan was centered on truth. To me Dosan is about “presence”, “sharing” and the “essence of life”. Aloha is essential to Hawaiian culture. Dosan is essential to Korea. Without Aloha there would be no Hawaii today. Without Dosan there would be no Korea today.

## **7. I know that you recently visited Wave Park. What did you think about the park, which is the biggest man-made surfing destination in Asia.**

Siheung Wave Park has accelerated Korea’s development as a surfing nation. Wave Park has improved the opportunity for Korean people to learn how to surf and improve surfers’ ability. I am grateful Daewon Plus built such an excellent place to surf.

I was discussing becoming an advisor to Korea Surf League. I had seen Wave Park on YouTube. I had a friend contact Wave Park about its surfing program. After a couple months of communications the Wave Park invited me for a visit. I came to Wave Park in May. I spoke at some seminars at Wave Park with surfers and local business people. I met with Governor Lee Jae Myung and Siheung Mayor Im Byoung Teak and discussed future Korea’s surfing. I enjoy Wave Park and will return soon to offer my help.

I decided not to join KSL’s competition program. I worked in surfing competition for 20 years. I competed and produced many pro and amateur surfing events. After learning more about Korea’s surfing world I wanted to focus on developing

some programs at Wave Park. I decided to stay out of competition politics. I have done that already.

Siheung Wave Park is the biggest and best man-made wave facility in the world right now. The design in Siheung is more advanced than other wave machines. I am impressed Daewon Plus would make such a serious investment in surfing. I think it is great for Korean people to be able to surf Wave Park anytime. The capability to make many different waves and how they designed where waves break keeping beginners in the Bay is excellent planning. It is a great place for beginners, advanced and pro surfers. It is different than Ocean made waves. But, surfing in Wave Park makes people happy and stoked. That counts I believe this is a great development for Korean people.

## **8. Surfing made its Olympics debut in the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. What is the point to enjoy surfing as a sport?**

Surfing is exciting. It has all the attraction of extreme sports. Surfing is becoming one of the most popular sporting activities in the world. People from many countries are surfing and competing. It appeals to younger generations more than some of the traditional Olympic sports. It is natural Olympics has adopted surfing. In some ways watching surfing requires some understanding like watching golf does. Once people understand elements of surfing they will appreciate how to ride waves more and become spectators. I think watching surf will become more popular with Korean people as the surf culture and industry grows with more Koreans learning how to surf.

Twenty years ago I wrote a proposal with wave parks as part of the Olympic competition. Wave parks are important to the Olympics because they even out the playing field. Wave parks are being planned and built all over the world. The surf is always available at wave parks. Someday there may be surfing arenas built around a wave park. The Siheung Wave Park could be a leader in developing Olympic surfing.

## **9. Surfing is more popular than ever and what is the next move?**

Korean companies were historical key players in building the surf clothing industry. Years ago most major surf brands were involved with Korean manufacturers. It took a long time for Koreans to realize there was decent surf in Korea.

I think the expansion of surf culture in Korea is a great development. I have degrees in Anthology and Geography. I can see beneficial text book changes happening to Korean society through surfing. People's attitudes towards the environment and how they think socially are changing for the surfers and their beach communities. I remember when the majority of Koreans did not like to be in sun at the beach. Most Koreans I met could not swim. Most Koreans were afraid of the ocean. Much of this was caused by government propaganda. Now, Koreans love the ocean more, are out at the beach more and are surfing more every day. Koreans are experiencing a sense of freedom through surfing.

Everything that happens involves work. People going into the surf industry are entering a difficult business to be successful. However, there are many people who have prospered from surf business. The one thing about surfing is the more people who surf the stronger surf culture becomes. And surf clothing and surf accessories will become more popular as people appreciate surfing more as participants or spectators. With a little nurturing Korea's surf population and culture will grow on its ability to make people happier and more satisfied with life.

## **10. Is there anything you would like to say to Korean surfers and your fans?**

Keep building surfing as an influential beneficial part of Korean life. Surfing makes people feel the rhythm of nature. Surfing makes people appreciate life more. Dosan said: "Discouragement of the youth is the death of the nation!" I



think surfing encourages youth. Korean needs that. Through surfing people's attitudes about themselves and the environment will change for the better. Use surfing to fight things like Hell Joseon and depression. Keep building the stoke of surfing and make your lives happier and the country of Korea a better place to live.

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