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CONFLICTED YOUTH

SHEA HODGES rebelled in an effort to reconstruct herself only to find a glass ceiling

BY NICOLE GRODESKY

SURFER: SHEA HODGES
PHOTO: GRANT

Shea Hodges greets me at the door of her apartment. I'm immediately drawn to her interesting style. Old school high top Nike's, tight tapered jeans and a hoodie. "Hey," she says with a welcoming smile, "Come on in." Looking around the room, I notice art on the walls, hardwood floors and a rug from India. Hodges' apartment is reminiscent of a typical surf trip pad. I smile and think to myself, "There's no place like home."

Hodges is now 20, and has been surfing since the age of three.

"I had water wings around the age of two and used to cruise with my dad on his longboard. [I started] actually surfing and standing up, around three or four," Hodges said.

A Hawaiian native, Hodges was raised on the island of Oahu. She competed in amateur surfing competitions and earned the title of the Hawaiian Junior Champion. She traveled to South Africa representing Hawaii in the International World Championships. Life was all too normal until a period of turmoil hit home. Hodges' parents decided to get a divorce, after which Hodges's dad put pressure on her more than ever to be a competitive surfer.

"He took out his competitive attitude on me. He made me be the pro in the family because he couldn't do it. That was a struggle. There was a lot of pressure from my dad. I needed the pressure though, but after a while I just stopped surfing. I stopped surfing around the time of my parents' divorce. My dad would take out his anger with my surfing on my mom. I

felt that my surfing was causing problems, so I just stopped surfing," Hodges said.

There was a deep desire to leave surfing and find a new direction. Hodges felt that moving to Southern California wasn't for her because of the fake lifestyle that L.A. was known for. So, she decided on San Francisco.

"I figured, 'I'll go be with the hippies.' I had friends up there and they told me, 'It's fine, there's people that surf up here.' I mainly needed a change of scenery," Hodges said.

She lived and worked in San Francisco for two and a half years. "It was crazy. There was a lot of finding myself and a lot of growing. I keep picking myself back up," Hodges said.

Then that dreadful phone call came. It was 6 a.m. in San Francisco (4 a.m. in Hawaii) when she received the call. Hodges knew the news wasn't going to be good, but she wasn't prepared for what she was about to hear.

"My father is dead," her voice trembling as she solemnly recounts the story. "My dad was sleeping in a van at Bowls and my dad woke up to tell some guys that they were playing their music too loud and to shut up. They quieted down for a little bit and he went back to sleep. Then they started back up again and he went back and a fight broke out. A kid had a knife and started stabbing him like twelve times. It was a mess. My dad was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

This phone call was life changing for Hodges. She

ended up moving back to Kauai to be with her mom and regroup.

"Surfing had found me again. It's healing," Hodges said.

The passing of her father was a turning point in her life that marked an end of one chapter and the beginning of a new one.

"My dad pushed me and motivated me. We started getting close three months before he died. He was trying to be more positive. I felt that I wanted to do something for him and for myself. **I wanted to at least surf and train and be healthy,**" Hodges said.

Hodges is a talented surfer. Her turns are deep and committed. Her style is clean and aggressive. Hodges continues to fuel the progression of women's surfing with airs and seemingly impossible-to-make layback snaps. Right now her competitive goals have been put on the wayside as she tries to figure out exactly where to take her surfing.

"**I want to break into surfing in a different way, not just by contests.** I want to be different, I want to be me," Hodges said.

Hodges has the talent, now all she needs is the support.

"**I want to do the tour eventually, but I don't know how to do it.** Take photos? Hope that somebody notices you? People keep telling me, 'You're still young,'" Hodges said. "But you know what, at the same time, **I'm not young. I'm hitting that point where I have to make it or break it.**"