

# The original article send to The Surfer's Journal

by Emmanuel and Maximilien Berque

We are born exactly at the same time in 1950, in Casablanca, Morocco, with just 10 minutes difference. Emmanuel et Maximilien, the twins. Two pretty little monsters immediately different from our 3 older sisters and our big brother. Our father worked as administrator in the mountains of the Atlas when Morocco was under French protectorate. We spend 3 happy years in this beautiful country, but we don't remember a lot, except the smells and the heat.

Then, we left for two years to Egypt in Alexandria, and we have enjoyed the real Arabic desert and a few pyramids, then two more years in Lebanon. Our father directed a research centre. We were living a few miles over Beirut, in a beautiful village close to the mountain. Sometimes, we enjoyed to go to Saint Simon, the main beach of Beirut to have a swim. In those time, this town was rich and beautiful like Monte Carlo now, even a lot more better !!! Mediterranean is not flat like everybody think. The local beach boys were playing on big hollow boards (something like 17'), made on frames and rib bands with plywood and painted canvas. They were surfing standing, with a double paddle. It was possible to surf with a friend or a girl. They took our nice sisters very often of course... and we also, to be gentle... It is funny to think that Laird Hamilton has reinvented that type of surfing 50 years after... So, in 55, we were 5 years old and we had our first surfing, without to talk about "surfing".

At seven, we came back to Paris because our father was nominated Professor in the " College de France", ( witch is the oldest college of the world, where the best 40 "best" professors of France are teaching). Our come back to the civilisation was very tuff, and we were the worst boys ever in school, except in design, music and gymnastic where we were the best ! Twins have often big problems in school... Very early, we loved to make things by hand. We have shaped our first sailing boat in a piece of oak at 8, and never bought a preshaped model in a box . We started photography on a old 6X9 bellows camera. In Paris, it was our dream... But for a chance, our grand mother was living on the coast, in Contis the small village of our family, 50 miles north of Biarritz. We spent all our happy vacations (4 months) in her old house. In 60, everybody was scared by the sea and the rips, and the beach was like a beautiful desert, quite empty. Our brother Augustin was a good friend of two very good lifeguards who swimmmed like fishes in the big waves... We always followed them. They were 10 years older than us. The game was to swim outside and back to the shore, even in the bad seas. We became very good swimmers... We always bodysurf, with nothing or with a bellyboard made of a curved plywood. But we never said that was surfing, an unknown word...

We hated school and to come back in Paris ! At 14 or something like that, in 64, Augustin had bought an American book: "Men who ride mountains" with Bob Cooper and Midget Farelly, and we also first discovered Greg Noll, Eddy Aikau in LIFE magazine. So, we learned the word "SURF" ! We had so much troubles in our

studies, that our parents separated us of one year in school and change our college. We became immediately very good, specially in mathematics and physics. In 66 we saw "Endless summer" on a big screen at "Les champs Elysées" in Paris. Home, we had a lot of books because of our father, and we read a lot, about voyaging. We just adore adventure, famous explorers logbooks, Jules Vernes and Edgar Allan Poe ! We were crazy about hand made powder, bombs and rockets, we just loved the fight between US and CCCP to go to the moon. One time, we nearly died in fire, because we had 2 lbs gun-powder in our pocket to go in the bus of the college et it ignited all alone ! Since this day, we stopped to play with powder ! But we were always making our own designed planes and boats, always dreaming of the sea and waves.

In 67 we saw a real surfboard for the first time. A German friend, quite old, had bought a 10 footer Barland Rott moulded Malibu. He lent us his board and we became the first surfers of our beach. The leg rope did not exist in this time and it was very difficult. Falling each wave, always good swim... Then in 69, we shaped our first surfboards. In those times, the boards were very big and we decided immediately to make short boards. 2m X 0,5m must be enough ! Square tail, twin fin, round nose... Very Thick, enormous boxy rails very sharp down... But good boards ! No tail rocker to be as fast as possible... At 20, we were the kings of the beach (witch means kings of peanuts...!), the courageous "Surfers", different from anybody, and reading sometimes Surfer mag, witch was very difficult to find. Emmanuel was studying mathematics and physics, and Maximilien learned cinema and then deep-sea diving. Emmanuel quit Paris and very good easy scientists studies to live in our paradise, when Max was diving for oil in the North sea. We were not to bad looking and the early seventies were nice like a wet dream ! After the pill and before aids ! Living in a small garage under the dune, at a few meters from the beach, we founded our own surf club in 73 called the " Banzai Pipeline" (we loved so much the style of Gerry Lopez) because we had now some friends surfing with us. We participated in our first French championships in 75, but we disappeared in the first tour ! Our way of surfing was always to drop the biggest, not to make embroidery ... The guys from Biarritz had already the first leg ropes...

It was the time of freedom, sex, music, surf and above all : never work in summer. Sometimes, we drove down to Hossegor to surf when it was to big and closing home. Max was selected to dive for the world record 1672' (510 m) deep in open sea for COMEX (this record is still the one now), breathing Heliox, a mixture of Helium and oxygen, and the pressure is 25 time more than in a tire !!! That means a lot of money ! And so, he was crazy in big surf, always alone to try to go out when it was serious and very white in Hossegor and Guetary... In the sea, we have saved at least 50 life each one of us in those time, but never paid of course !

December 76, Max quit the Comex with enough money to go surfing for a while... He bought an old big van for that. We were already super beach-freaks and became real bad boys : The sea and the wind was incredible strong and huge during 2 weeks. 2 big boats made shipwreck in the same night on our beach. Unbelievable ! They arrived only 0,5 mile from each other. One was a 70 000 ton tanker and the

other cargo 400 feet long arrive surfing to the bottom of the dune, nearly dry ! It was too much ! We said "Such a thing can't happen only one time in our live ! We have to go !". So, the next low tide, by night, we decided to go onboard to have fun. But onboard we became crazy. We though we were aloud to take something on a shipwreck, like in our adventures books ! So, we took a ton of everything : 42000 Dunhill cigarettes, tones of food, butter, gorgonzola, rockets guns, 150 bottles of Cognac Remy Martin, and a lot more... But it was very difficult to carry all that behind the dune in a force 10 wind, and we have made a track in the sand. The police came, and caught us easy. Nice little "vacation" in jail... A lot of money to pay to the customs... And they find some rest of grass of a friend in our house, so we were also accused to be dealers ( impossible to say the truth, because our sense of honour...) So, we had problems with all our village and we were not anymore the nice twins, heroes of the beach, sons of a famous professor...

July 77, we were already something like 25 surfers all together, only very good friends, and the next surfer in the horizon was immediately our new friend. A family. We met 4 good surfers in an old WW yellow van full of surf magazines. 2 aussies, Greg Taylor and Barry Mc Grath, and 2 pommies, Julian and Danny, all coming from Perth, and we invited them immediately to eat with us under the dune. They surfed a lot better than us, and had real nice boards shaped by Cole Adams. We became friends, although they did not speak a word in French and we started to learn English. They were a bit boring, completely crazy about Mark Richard and Ian Cairn (we were more into Hawaiians like Gerry Lopez, Reno Abellira, Rubbermann...), talking always from the power of Hawaiian waves, and saying all the time that French surfers were so bad and our waves also... So we had a big challenge between us, although we were good mates, and we learned a lot... Jean-Claude, a rich friend working in USA came with a Hobby 16 and we had good fun approach of real sailing in the waves... In September, we had a marvellous big day in Hossegor. For us, because we enjoy the biggest, there is only one wave there, the perfect North outside Peak. It was really big, something like 20' waves on the sets. On the top of the dune, it was impossible to see the horizon during the big sets... Nobody in the water... We were still very bad, but my brother and I paddle out first, with everybody staying an the beach, watching... We had a few vertical drops and we still remember now how hard was the water in the bottom turn, something like 30 yards after the drop, the thickness of the wave and the tones of water moving... We are French Cartesians, we admire the big waves riders, but we thought always if Hawaiians can surf so big, we can also ! And we loved the Larry Bertelmann's word "Anything is possible !". We knew already that we have some huge waves in France, like 30' or more, because we had always watched the sea with binoculars and big lenses, evaluating properly the distance of the break and the altitude of the eye witch is very important...

In late November, we decided to go surfing to the Canaries Islands. We took the Greg, Barry, Julian and Danny with us and also two more French friends. So we were 8 in the van, and the voyage will be cheaper because we were all very poor

now... Starting the first day, we were so drunk that we nearly forget our boards ! We arrived in Cadiz and had nice little surf near Trafalgar, in a hot water, waiting for the ferry. But somebody stool Julian's board on the top of our van wile we were eating. Bad vibes... We had first a discover of Confital in Las Palmas, witch is a beauty, top to bottom crystal tubes, but too much city surf and too crowded... We went on Tenerife, the beautiful biggest island with his 12198 feet Vulcan and had good surf in Punta del Hidalgo in the north shore. It was quiet empty except very good locals. Our way to surf, my brother and I, was to have first a good scuba fishing and to invite the good locals to eat with us. So we never had problems with them... And they learned us to eat their traditional food, the "Gofio" witch they are very proud about, a precooked corn then grind, witch you mix with anything, milk, soup, wine, crush bananas ... It is very cheap and useful, perfect to stay long time surfing... We drove then to the south shore, in Los Cristianos, a perfect left close from Las Americas, and had all a great time in this touristy city, full of pretty German and Dutch birds... We had our camp in a desert, very close from the wave, between the old canarian village and Las Americas. In this time, 100 surf-freaks were living there, all together, smoking hash and living in the dust for all winter... With Max, we were the first to surf Alcala, a little bay with his fantastic really powerful left heating a 6 yards underwater vertical step (Anglos call this wave K16 now). Our pockets completely empty, we had a beautiful cutback 9 days on a ship back to France, incredibly cheap, aboard a banana cargo with the van on the deck. Then, everybody disappeared to get money somewhere... In 78, we were so poor, Jean-Claude proposes us to make fortune in the Persian Gulf, working for Arabs. The job would be to make a society of tiling, with very nice tiles made in France. J-C is a super merchant, working now in Saoudi Arabia, and we trust him. But the must interesting part was : he bought a 33 feet sailing boat, and we had to go there sailing to have a place to live.. In this time, there is not GPS and he needed us to learn astronavigation, because we were good in mathematics. We bought a book and learned immediately to use a sextant, and all the resolutions of the terrible trigonometric formulas... Since those days, we became real astro-fanatics...

After all summer surfing, we started the trip in September, from Marseille to the Red Sea, trough Suez canal... A few months after, we started perfectly the society in Jeddah, but we had a lot of troubles with Jean-Claude since the start of the journey. He was simply boring, too much into money... So we came back to Paris in a frizzing cold March, without a penny in the pocket. Max found a job as cameraman in a TV news, and I, a work in a super wine shop on the Champs-Élysées (because I had learned oenology in Bordeaux to be closer from the surf after Paris...). But very fast, we saw that it was impossible to stay in Paris, too far from the surf, and we decided to try to be surfer journalist and photographers. In 79, there is not yet one surf magazine in France , and we tried to write in a windsurfing mag. We had already a good portfolio, and they accepted our first article. And so, we became the first surf journalist and photographers in France. Our way to speak about surfing was to talk about freedom, that surfing is cheap and for everybody,

about surf trips and that the surfing way of life is the best... But we have made a mistake, we tried to make the photos only in France, to show to everybody how good and big is the surf home. For the mag, we had the opportunity to try the first new Hobie 18 coming in Europe into the waves. Since this days, we wanted to cross an ocean with this fantastic toy and we tried to be sponsored by Hobie Alter, but he refused... Our articles were simply talking about our own surfing adventures and trips, like those of Kevin Haughton and Craig Peterson... We had a good success with the readers, but not enough place in the windmag to earn good money... In the same time, we were designers at Barland to shape new prototypes in windsurfing. The fashion was 12' boards, horribly thick and heavy, and we decided immediately that the good size must be 8 to 9' max, a surfing shape, just a nice board, just to surf the waves, not only jump it... The best French TV was interest and with some windsurf champs, we have done the news on the incredible fastest boards for the time. But one day, some Hawaiians (Mike Walze and others) came to Barland and said we were wrong and they have made horrible jumpboards with an enormous bump on a very wide square tail ! Barland believed immediately them because they were from Hawaii, and we, only Frogs.... It was so silly, we were incredibly disappointed and quit windsurfing and never saw Barland again...

A good friend gave us a big US army tent (like in the movie M.A.S.H), and we lived on the top of the dune in Contis, 6 month long. The paradise ! 100% surf and love... In September, Hossegor received all the best surfers of the World for the world amateur championship. We saw Terry Richardson, Mark Scott and Glen Rawlins but the best was the 14 years flying Tom Curren ! We tried to make a good reportage on it, but the mag took many pictures of Casenave, a big day in Waimea. We went in Tenerife again, driving our old 2 CV Citroen for 4 months to make an other article, but the mag gave us not enough place and disappointed us again, so we quit them. Now we were living of nothing, just with very short bad jobs, and we decided to make a surfing school for the grommets, so we can still surf and make a bit of money. It was good, we were in a perfect nick, but our teaching was very cheap and we realised that it will produce too much surfers. We don't want to destroy our beach with too much crowd... We stopped the school because we knew it was not our future to stay just surf-teachers. During the cold winter 83, we were living in an old destroyed Mobil home like very poor freaks and real ascetics. We realised that we were very free, but our poorness destroyed in the same time this freedom, everybody was talking bad from us and it was even difficult to fix our bikes... It was maybe respectable for Diogene, but now in 1983... A very paradox life, because everybody in summer thought that we were very rich !!!

We are now 33 years old and our brain start to run a lot, getting depressed... It cannot be enough for us to live like that ! We can and must do something better ! But we refuse to take dirty jobs like always, paid just a few peanuts, just to survive. So, we decided to make a movie. Because the sea is our speciality, it would be a super adventure in the sea. A sea crossing on a canoe... And to be interesting, we had to do a crossing like nobody had done before ! The smallest boat possible, but

also without life raft, no distress beacon, no radio, like in the olden days ! To earn a bit of money, we started to shape some surfboards, and in the same time, we started to built our boat in the living room of our old family-house... We designed the Micromegas 1 without any calculations, just drawing the lines on a 5mm plywood, like shaping. The 16' boat will be very small, a sort of raft, with 3 square hulls, a flat bottom and a net between. 3 big guns. More simple you can't ! Just a surfboat to take strong winds and surf safe the big waves on open sea. You just need to steer in control... After only one month of work, the surfboat was nearly finished ! In march, we put the thing on the beach because we don't have a port in Contis. Surfing all the time, living under the sky, we were black like Africans but also poor like them ! We went fishing sometimes to have something to eat when the sea was not too rough. We had our first try sailing along the north coast of Spain, with a dog and 4 surfboards onboard, in case... We decided to sail to the Canaries the following summer. After only 2 days, we had a big depression right in the middle of the Gulf of Biscay, with very strong winds like force 8 to 9 and have lost our tiller... Living into the water in our poor oil skins, it was hell ! But we surfed a lot of big waves, trying to escape in front of the wind, each one of us with a paddle. 4 days later, we were back home in Contis, happy to be alive. We never slept and we were horribly burned by the salt water. Of course, we had miss our target, but it was so fantastic to seat almost "on the water", completely lost at sea ! We never had such a big feeling in the heavy surf !!! And no crowd up there ! We felt stronger and invulnerable, like after a primitive initiation !

Finally, we succeeded to reach the Canaries 2 years later, with a beautiful German girl onboard. We explored all the coast, rock after rock, beach after beach, living one full year outside on the 10 yd<sup>2</sup> net. The boat was quite okay, but we were too poor again and really famished. We decided to stop adventure also because our 8 mm camera was out of order and our brain was destroyed. We needed to have a real job and had forget our dreams of sailing for a few years... We found a 6 months work in Berlin in winter witch was not very pleasant ! But then, 6 month of nice cool surfing in Contis in summer... During the bad working winters, we always worked geometry, searching good lines to draw good rockers and templates, designing boats with a lot of geometry-programming on little pocket computers and dreaming about surfing and the sea...

In 87, Danny bought a Bar and we had a fantastic summer. We were a lot of surf mates and the bier flew by barrels... "It's always six foot offshore in the bar" !!! We were completely crazy. No sleep and too much surf. Really tired. Max had an heart attack outside surfing and nearly died on a perfect day. It was terrible. The docs said : "Now, you have to live like an old man, super slow..." Impossible to listen to that ! No way ! Without any medicine, 8 days after the hospital, Max was again in the waves, moving like a slow jelly fish, almost under water... We had together (twins have the same feeling) a terrible winter, he could not sleep, feeling his heart hitting in his chest, with horrible nightmares of death...

In this time, everybody had only 6' boards. The next spring, we have made 2 big boards, a 8'6" for Max and a 9' Malibu called "Moby dick" for me to go surfing again in a different way, like Zen: Take the power with you, never against... We started very progressive every day, and a few months we were still surfing 10 foot waves in the good conditions, with there was a good channel, taking all the outside waves... It looks simple, but in fact, we needed at least 5 years to recover our confidence and to loose our fear...

We tried again to write again for the brand new French "Surf Session" magazine and had a very nice surf trip in Marocco with all of our friends to make an article. And one more time in Portugal in spring, but the mag destroyed our writing. Since the beginning, we always thought that a surf mag must be interesting for any reader, not only surfers, to be open for everybody. That must talk about geography, about the beauty of the world, something like National Geographic, but with the surfing way of life and point of view...

After this article, we stopped writing. It was interesting perhaps to be the first journalists, but now with the surf fashion, that became boring ! They paid us not enough and very late, we quit them soon. For luck, the government in France was now left and we were aloud to receive a little state-money because we were sic. With this money, we tried again to be normal, studying computing to get a normal job.

But the call of the sea was too strong. We still had the "Go for it" mentality, and the normal working life doesn't satisfy us at all ! At 42, we decided again to cross. We loved the Mickey Dora's sentence: "I have never worked in my life man !" and we were always thinking "We have only one life to live, we have to follow our dreams ! Or it is too boring to live !" We did miss the crossing on a 16 footer, we don't care ! So now we will succeed on something smaller ! Since 10 years, we were working on a own program to design boats or boards. With our program, we need just 2 minutes to draw a boat, with all the displacements, the areas, the volumes calculations ! We draw a 13' 8" little dory with a yawl lug rig to be really classic. It would be a wooden masterpiece, specially made to be different to all the other adventurers who cross the ocean on horrible floating buoys to break records... And also to show to everybody that we can be good marine carpenters ... The Aesthetic must be fundamental for a surfer ! Two years after, Micromégas II was born in Barry Mc Grath's garage , nice and perfect, shinning like a marvellous wooden toy ! Then we had a terrible first journey to the Canaries, caught by a big storm close to Madeira. In a force 8 consistent storm, with some sets 15' to 20' big, with 5' white water on the top breaking ... With such a small boat, you are of course very slow, and we had terrifying super late takeoffs. It was so vertical that sometimes, we started the drop without water under the nose of our ridiculous toy and rock into the vacuum ! Without radio, life-raft, GPS, distress beacon, such type of surf gives you serious vibes !!! We missed reaching Madeira but went to Casablanca, and then Lanzarote a month later. Our good friend Greg Taylor was now working for Quiksilver and presented us in this company. Since this day, they helped us for our

clothing. The company ROLEX gave us also 2 Submariner as a gift, with "Micromegas expedition" engraved on it... The biggest French TV came one week to make a movie on the 2 crazy twins, and after 37 days, we reached the West Indies. We came back to Paris to make a 13 pages in a big mag, and the cutting of our movie "Twins of the sea" with our rushes for an important TV channel. The money was not bad now... The year after, we continue the expedition, visiting the coast of 100 different islands, until Miami. We had never been flying or sailing on a real boat to the US, except on our 14' wooden lugger without electronics !!! So we have reached America like nobody has done before us, even the best pirates of the 17<sup>th</sup> century !

We became quite famous in France, after many interviews for different TV and radios and we wrote also a lot of articles. We had the honour to be invited by Quiksilver for the Surfmaster festival in Biarritz. To show something of our work, we took a 17 ft wooden paddleboard we have done. A pure masterpiece with 2500 copper nails on 25 frames, made with only 0.2" red cedar planks. A beauty ! After staying 15 minutes watching the thing, Greg Noll said to us : "You must never go to the water with it, just put it in a museum !" . Billy Hamilton also asked us to try our board and said: "I promise, I don't put wax on it !" We became good mates of Scott Dillon and Mark Cunningham who tried also the machine. A few days after, Midget Farelly and Mikey Dora came surfing with us in Contis and "The Cat" slept in our house...

A few days later, our dad died and let us some little heritage. But money is not enough to be happy ! We wanted to do better! We decided then to cross the ocean like Phoenicians sailed in Mediterranean 3000 years ago or the Maoris in the Pacific, to understand more about antics seafarers. We knew already the experiments of Hokulea in Hawaii, but we wanted to do better on a smaller boat, without any trick and no escort boat... This time, we designed a very light 21' wooden proa, with a beautiful old fashion rig, a lugger schooner, in reference of old sailors of Brittany. We built the beauty in two years work and we wrote a book of our crossing called "The mutineers of the sea" for a strong editor in Paris, Robert Laffont. We became a lot more comfortable in our life. In summer 2002, we sailed to the Canaries to try our prototype with instruments. We had very bad seas along Portugal. One day, the wind was blowing something like force 9, and we have had a rogue wave, so vertical that we nearly fall aside of the boat !

In 31th march 2003, we took the big take off on our 600 pound outrigger. The target was a very small island (La Desirade, only 2 miles wide from the west and 304 yds high...) and we had to sail through a big 3000 nautic-miles wide water-desert. We had no compass, no watch, no sextant, no GPS, no radio, no log, no map, no book, no cooker, no radio receiver or transmitter, no star guide, nothing onboard ! And no sponsor to stay pure without stickers ! On board, 90 liters of water in bottles, 90 teens of sardines, 35 lbs of gofio, 13 lbs of milkpowder, 17 lbs of sugar and... 30 bottles of Tabasco ! We took a Argos beacon, to study our track after the expedition. Although we had 20 cloudy days bearing only with the wind and the swell direction, we succeeded to land on La Desirade, just watching the sky by eye, after



27 days ! We had some success in France, but really not enough to pay all our expedition's expenses who has cost us all our fortune... During 2 years more we have made the cutting of our new movie "Huis clos sous les étoiles" ("Inside Outside" with the English subtitles). This movie won already 4 big festivals and had great success in the Cowell Theater of San Francisco during the Ocean Festival, in Moskau also and plenty of others...

Now we are 57 years old and we have built a new boat, a real wooden dory inspired by Grand Bank working boats for Cod-fishing. The flat bottom is just a 18' rhinochaser... There is no deck to live outside under the sky and film better the sky, the sea, the winds and the life onboard, all together on 100% of our shoots ! We will try again to cross north Atlantic in the two ways, to meet a lot of new friends and shoot the new sea-movie...

We are poor again but still going surfing, because it is our life.

If people are interest, there is a lot to read on our website [www.sansboussole.com](http://www.sansboussole.com)  
Emmanuel and Maximilien BERQUE