

## Memorial Paddle for Duke Michael - Sunday January 18, 2009



Puerto Rico has lost a surfing legend. Duke Michael, one of the first truly hardcore surfers to call Puerto Rico home, died December 23rd after several months of failing health related to lung cancer. A native of Malibu, California, Duke immigrated to Puerto Rico in 1965.

Beyond shaping surfboards under the "Uku" label first in San Juan and then in Rincón, Duke is credited with being the first surfer to tackle the waves of Tres Palmas along with friend Dan Herlihy. He later made the first successful attempt at riding Gas Chambers, naming it as well as having named Tres Palmas, Hole In The Wall, Wilderness, and Middles.

A memorial paddle out will be held at Tres Palmas in Rincón, Puerto Rico on Sunday, January 18th at 3:00 pm, to celebrate Duke's life and bid him farewell in the waters where many of his most significant surfing exploits took place.

More about Duke at [www.surfcaribe.com](http://www.surfcaribe.com)

<http://surfcaribe.com/Default.aspx?tabid=36&ctl=Details&mid=401&ItemID=55>

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Article Courtesy of Surf Caribe.

RIP Edward "Duke" Michael (1938 - 2008)



### The Loss of a Legend

By Steve Fitzpatrick

Photos Courtesy of Michael Family

**Just before Christmas a pioneer of Puerto Rican surf culture was lost and the boricua surf community is still coming to grips with the passing of Edward "Duke" Michael.**

Puerto Rico has lost a surfing legend. Duke Michael, one of the first truly hardcore surfers to call Puerto Rico home, died December 23rd after several months of failing health related to lung cancer. A native of Malibu, California, Duke immigrated to Puerto Rico in 1965 after a tip from a friend about the surf there. An initial reconnaissance trip proved so alluring that Duke simply never left, earning him the distinction among Rincón natives as "el primer turista que vino y se quedó" (the first tourist that came and stayed).

Beyond shaping surfboards under the "Uku" label (named after a dog he had while living on the island of Oahu) first in San Juan and then in Rincón, Duke is credited with being the first surfer to tackle the waves of Tres Palmas along with friend Dan Herlihy. He later made the first successful attempt at riding Gas Chambers, naming it as well as having named Tres Palmas, Hole In The Wall, Wilderness, and Middles.

When asked to encapsulate Duke's character, long time friend and filmmaker, Dan Herlihy, commented, "Duke was always a positive influence on everyone he encountered during his life. Moreover, he was one of the most self-effacing people I ever knew. After his health began to fail I asked him point blank 'Do you have lung cancer?', and his only response was 'No'."

"We pioneered Tres Palmas together," continued Dan, "and Duke was the first person to ride a wave at Gas Chambers. He opened the door for so many things in Puerto Rican surf culture, and never sought credit for any of it, choosing anonymity and a simple life in the mountains of Rincón over any kind of celebrity whatsoever."

A memorial paddle out will be held at Tres Palmas in Rincón, Puerto Rico on Sunday, January 18th at 3:00 pm, to celebrate Duke's life and bid him farewell in the waters where many of his most significant surfing exploits took place.

A portion of Duke's ashes will also be sent to Oahu where a memorial paddle out will be organized for Makaha, a place where Duke spent a considerable amount of time before relocating to Puerto Rico.

Duke is survived by his wife, Jeannie, daughter, Jolene, and son, Nicolas.

Stay tuned to Surf Caribe for more news on the passing of this legendary surfer and the events surrounding his send off. Vaya con Dios, Duke.



Duke with daughter, Jolene, at Jobs in 1970.



Duke with Jolene again in 1970, this time at Little Malibu in Rincón.



The Uku Surfboards logo.

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