



Way-big-wave surfer Alec Cooke missing after night session

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HSA



I even said to my wife, 'There goes Ace Cool, paddling out at the bay at near dark.' ... You can get in trouble out there."

Tracy Bossola
Haleiwa resident who saw Alec Cooke, photographed above in 1985, at about 6:15 p.m. Tuesday near Waimea Bay

Veteran big-wave surfer Alec "Ace Cool" Cooke is notorious for fearlessly — some would say recklessly — surfing the North Shore at night in recent years.

"He's a wild man," said "Banzai" Betty Depolito, a former pro surfer and friend going back to the 1980s.

Cooke, 59, did it again at Waimea Bay on Tuesday night, paddling into estimated 25- to 30-foot waves. But this time he failed to return to his Waialua home, prompting an all-out sea and shoreline search by ocean safety, Coast Guard, police and fire rescue personnel Thursday.

He was not found.

Cooke's girlfriend reported him missing Wednesday, and his truck was found with his dog and keys still inside at Sts. Peter and Paul

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Alec Cooke is known for surfing colossal waves.

COOKE

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Mission Church, near Waimea Bay, at about 1 a.m. Thursday, officials said. One surfboard was missing, they said.

A missing-person bulletin was issued by police, and the Coast Guard was asking mariners to keep an eye out for the white-haired Cooke, who is 5-foot-9 and 160-pounds, wearing a white T-shirt and light-blue plaid surf shorts.

A Coast Guard cutter and helicopter were expected to continue the search throughout the night, a spokesman said Thursday night.

1985 was captured in a photo by legendary surf photographer Warren Bolster in an image that would be labeled "The Biggest Wave" and became a popular T-shirt and best-selling postcard.

Cooke would eventually run the North Shore Tow-In Surf Contest.

North Shore waterman and pioneering tow-in surfer Darrick Doerner said Clarke is an exceptional and smart waterman who is "totally approachable."

"He's a great, valued community member," Doerner said. "He's been out here since Day One. There's not one person on the North Shore who doesn't know Alec Cooke."

Shayne Enright, spokeswoman for the city's ocean safety crews, said a decision would be made in the morning whether to continue the search.

Tracy Bossola of Haleiwa was driving by Waimea on Tuesday at about 6:15 p.m. when he saw Cooke walking with his surfboard toward Waimea Bay.

"I even said to my wife, 'There goes Ace Cool, paddling out at the bay at near dark.' I thought to myself, 'He's nuts. It's pretty much dark already,'" Bossola said. "You can get in trouble out

But Cooke became a bit of a recluse in recent years, he said, and he had taken up a habit of surfing at night, a dangerous activity.

"He's been known to do some crazy stuff, especially over the last five years," Doerner said.

Depolito, the former surfing pro, who has known Cooke since he recruited her to do radio surf reports in the 1980s, said Cooke is a "wild child — a fun, outgoing and a supernice" person, adding, "He has a big heart, a giant heart and a generous personality."

there."

Another surfer wrote on Facebook that Clarke was seen paddling into the waves at Waimea Bay at about 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Cooke, who was born in Boston and raised on Kauai and Oahu, is said to be a member of the pioneering Cooke family of the Big Five. He attended Punahou School, graduating in 1974.

He took up big-wave surfing in the early 1980s. It is said that he was the first to surf at Kaena Point in 1984 and Outside Pipeline the following year. He surfed in the first Eddie Aikau contest in 1986 and finished eighth at the first Jaws contest on Maui in 2000.

Surfing Magazine described Cooke as "surfing's Evel Knievel" because "he'd do nearly anything to climb the ranks of the North Shore's big-wave-surfing elite."

A helicopter dropped Cooke into the waves of the North Shore's outer reef, and his ride at the Log Cabins surf break in January

Depollito said she still treasures a surfboard Cooke gave her for some work she did for the North Shore Tow-In Surf Contest eight years ago.

"The surfboard's value is way more than the work I did," she said.

Surfing expert Randy Rarick said Cooke was brash and confident in his abilities when he burst onto the scene in the 1980s. His bravado irritated some, he said.

But Cooke deserves recognition for charging into some intimidating surf breaks when few others would, Rarick said.

"For the time he definitely was setting the stage to take big-wave surfing to higher boundaries," he said.

Cooke, who attended Hawaii Pacific University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa, wrote a surf column for the North Shore News, did reports for the Surf News Network for two decades and owned a surf shop for a few years.

In addition to his surfing exploits, Cooke was an extra in television shows and

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movies. He had speaking roles on "Jake and the Fatman," in which he played a dockworker, and the television miniseries "And the Sea Will Tell," in which he played a hippie.

Cooke has said he got his start in the original "Hawaii Five-O" series when he and other classmates at Punahou School appeared as extras in several episodes.

In 2008 Cooke entered the spotlight again when he swam counterclockwise around Oahu in a stunt he called "Around Oahu Swim 2008." The mission was aimed at raising awareness of declining near-shore reef and water conditions around the island.

Cooke has three felony drug convictions, a Class C felony on Sept. 13, 1988, and two Class B felonies on May 26, 1989. He was sentenced to a year in prison in each case, the terms running concurrently.

911 REPORT

11/1/2015 HSA Search for surfer suspended after 3 days

The Coast Guard and the Honolulu Fire Department suspended the search for famed surfer Alec "Ace Cool" Cooke on Saturday.

Cooke was reported missing Wednesday after he failed to return from surfing near Waimea Bay. Cooke's truck was located at the Mission of Sts. Peter and Paul, with Cooke's dog and keys still inside. His surfboard was later located and recovered by a friend.

An extensive three-day search covered about 8,930 square miles and involved an HC-130 Hercules airplane crew and an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew from Barbers Point, the crew of cutter Kittiwake and a Coast Guard Auxiliary airplane crew. Fire rescue personnel also searched using personal watercraft and a helicopter.

"We've suspended several searches recently for folks who've gone missing in the water without locating them and it does not get easier," said Cmdr. Arex Avanni, deputy commanding officer at Coast Guard Sector Honolulu. "As with any missing persons search we saturated the area in an attempt to locate Mr. Cooke, but pending further developments, we have decided to suspend the active search. The Pacific Ocean is very dangerous, especially when we have heavy surf conditions. Our thoughts go out to his friends and family."