

BANZAI BURGER

Media Coverage | **Wall Street Journal** September 3, 2011

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. | HEARD & SCENE

NY HEARD & SCENE | SEPTEMBER 3, 2011

Leading the Wave Into Montauk

Montauk, N.Y.

In surfing circles out here, a community that has only gotten larger as the sport and the town grows more popular, Danny DiMauro is something of a legend. This is partly because he is a fixture of the ever-multiplying and crowded scene—places like the newly opened Banzai Burger on the Napeague Stretch, Ruschmeyer's, the Surf Lodge, the Crow's Nest and the Naturally Good Foods and Café (for fresh-pressed juices and breakfast, of course)—but also because he is a damn good surfer.

For the record, Mr. DiMauro, 41, has a beverage named after him at Naturally Good Foods. It's called the "Tan Dan" and is a vanilla soy shake with a splash of chocolate because it matches his skin tone.

Mr. DiMauro's story has another interesting layer, so to speak: He is a trained hairstylist, having worked for a time at Warren-Tricomi in Manhattan. When Mr. DiMauro—who started surfing in 1977 in Margate, N.J., where he grew up—moved to Montauk full-time a few years ago, he moved his business with him; he has many private clients up and down the East End.



[Enlarge Image](#)

Gordon M. Grant for The Wall Street Journal

Mr. DiMauro heads into the water.

A few days before the season came to a sad and nostalgic close—before what Mr. DiMauro happily refers to as "Tumbleweed Tuesday, the most celebrated holiday in Montauk," the day after Labor Day when the area can go back to its peaceful self—he went out for an early morning surf in the ocean. Then he enjoyed a breakfast sandwich and a juice from Naturally Good Foods and spoke about the influx of bankers to Montauk and joked that he'd been asked to be "captain of the Goldman Sachs Surf Team."

"Well, they've actually purchased Montauk and bought the East Deck Motel and plan to turn it into a Canyon Ranch," Mr. DiMauro continued. This may not be true, but he does regularly attend a "Bro-ga" class taught by his friend Kathleen Stenson at Love Yoga just around the corner. "All the dudes started showing up," Mr. DiMauro said, "so we started calling it Bro-ga."

"This is the year that Montauk tipped," he said, referring to Malcolm Gladwell's "Tipping Point" theory. "People that were staunch East Hampton, Amagansett and Sag Harbor guys have gotten places in Montauk. They've taken their '68 convertibles and fedora hats past the Napeague Stretch."

Why is that, Mr. DiMauro was asked. "Because Montauk is like adult summer camp," he said.

"Well, that will make more people come," said Ms. Stenson.

We had some more questions for Mr. DiMauro.

How has surfing culture changed in Montauk since you started coming out to the beach?

I've been here a decade. A friend of mine told me there were good waves out here and I was so enamored by the place and the surf was perfect that day.



[Enlarge Image](#)

Gordon M. Grant for The Wall Street Journal

Mr. DiMauro and Kathleen Stenson at Naturally Good Foods and Café.

Ten years ago, when you paddled out there you knew everyone in the line-up, which would be anywhere between 20 and 30 guys. Now every car commercial, you see a surfboard on the roof.

Now on a weekend in August at Ditch Plains, you see maybe a 100 guys on a weekend. But if you go back to the "Gidget" era Malibu, those guys were complaining about the crowds at the beach then. It's not just a Montauk phenomenon. Every beach town is experiencing this.

Have you noticed more finance guys out in the water?

The bankers are great. I know four or five of these guys running their hedge funds from their basements this summer. But I think they've always been here.

What do you think has made surfing in Montauk more popular?

There are two things we've noticed. The rebirth of the modern long board and surfline forecasting webcasts. Your average guy needs to schedule in surfs, pencil them in. You can figure out a week in advance from these computer models what the water's going to be like.

And anyone can ride a long board. It's like standing on this table. And stand-up paddles are now a huge market share. A lot of people are trying to cram a lot of fun into three months.

Do you think the influx of happening spots is related to the surfing swell?

I don't think so. I think most New Yorkers are usually single coming out here and looking for a little summertime drama. Everyone loves some beachtown breakups.



Gordon M. Grant for The Wall Street Journal

Surfer Danny DiMauro surveys the water at Ditch Plains Beach in Montauk.



Enlarge Image

Gordon M. Grant for The Wall Street Journal

Mr. DiMauro surfs at Ditch Plains Beach.

Ten years ago at night there wasn't anything to do. It was super mellow. Now there are places to go eat and go out. There's pluses and minuses to that. There were nice things too about not having places to go.

Is cutting hair anything like surfing?

I can't even comprehend that question. There's no comparison. But people have started to ask me to teach them how to surf, so I've taken Christina Floyd [the daughter of golfer Raymond Floyd] and [actor] Liev Schreiber out a couple times.

What's your favorite thing about Montauk?

It's such a wacky mix of bankers and surfers and hipsters. There are bond traders above the yoga studio. It's classic.

But it's my goal to know everyone at Ditch Plains in the summer. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Write to Marshall Heyman at marshall.heyman@wsj.com

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904716604576546833281253962.html>

THEVELVETROADGROUP

119 West 40th Street 14th Floor New York 10018 212.999.5584 Facsimile 917.777.0004