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CAPE COD

Lawyer finds balance
on ocean waves

Emotional intelligence
outranks IQ

Hibernation
over!

Lawyer finds balance on ocean waves

BY SARA HOAGLAND HUNTER

Cape Cod lawyer, Peter Daigle, makes a convincing case that, contrary to popular belief, sports improve with age. The prize-winning athlete excelled at cross country and track in his teens and in triathlons throughout his 20s and 30s. But

for Peter, surfing with friends in his 50s is a lot more fun and just as fulfilling.

It used to be that athletics were all about the clock for me...about biking fast and running fast to beat the next guy. It was all about winning...it's more about the whole person now. I'm still driven but it's not about the clock...You mellow with age, family, children."

"Mellow" isn't the first word that springs to mind when meeting the chiseled outdoorsman who surfs from 5 to 7 most mornings before putting in a full day at his law practice in Centerville. He is a disciplined, year-round athlete, with a need to be outdoors.

Whether covered head to toe in a wetsuit on a frigid winter day or surfing autumnal swells after a hurricane, Peter says he is completely rejuvenated by the "changing light and tides and wind" of the ocean. "I start the day balanced, ready and at peace...ready to take on the challenges."

For an in-demand bankruptcy lawyer, these challenges are many. "You deal all day with people whose lives are broken...counseling



Attorney Peter Daigle begins most days surfing. That time on the ocean, often with family or friends, prepares him for helping clients at his Centerville office.



STEVE HEASLIP PHOTOS/CAPE COD TIMES

Attorney Peter Daigle highly recommends the stand-up paddleboard for fellow athletes over 50. This expedition was to Coast Guard Beach on a chilly February morning.

those whose lives are in turmoil...It takes it out of you."

His pre-dawn sojourns at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham are his salvation. "With the first paddle stroke, I disconnect from the shore and I get to spend the early morning hours in nature, pushing myself physically and mentally."

Two years ago, the longtime surfer transitioned from a surfboard to a stand-up

paddleboard. The board is more stable and requires less up and down movement in order to catch a wave.

Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is a sport he highly recommends for the 55-plus crowd. He says the two types of SUP, flat-water and surf, are both "great for the thighs and for the core...a full body workout, head to toe."

Even more important to Daigle is the

congeniality the sport affords. Most days, he's joined by 20 to 25 regulars from all walks of life. They are brokers, store owners, contractors and realtors. Some, like Daigle, are former surfers, now in their 50s and 60s, bonded by their love of the sea.

"We have coffee and remark on how much fun we're having in our middle age, having...raised our children, and now being able to find ourselves through our love of being on

the ocean, no matter the condition."

When I ask what makes a ride on a wave worth waking up at 4 to brave wind and weather, Peter practically waxes poetic. "You paddle to pick the position for a ride. As you drop into the wave, the back of the board lifts...you can feel the energy transmitted through your legs, through your whole body. In the seconds you speed down the face of the wave, you feel a part of it, one with the

ocean...Immersed in that moment...you're unaware of anything else."

Coast Guard Beach provides some of the Cape's best waves due to its position on the Outer Cape where the open ocean swells hit the sandbars from Truro to Nauset and prevailing southwest winds angle the breakers perfectly to shore.

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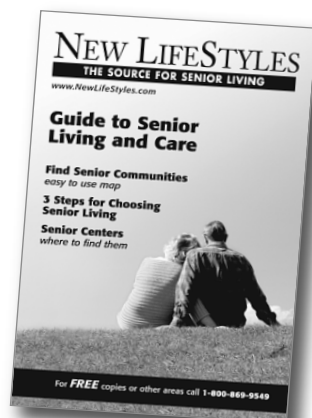


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STEVE HEASLIP/CAPE COD TIMES

The time of year doesn't matter. What's important to attorney Peter Daigle is getting outside, spending time with others and preparing mentally and physically to meet the challenges of his practice, and of life.

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ers perfectly to shore.

Most common are the knee-to-waist-high "wind swells," which Daigle says provide about 50 rides per session. By contrast, the dramatic "ground swells" that are a surfer's dream build up over long distances, "when the underwater is churned up by storms and disturbances at sea."

Peter is awed by the "amazing energy" of a 10-foot groundswell as well as by his regular encounters with seals and whales. As for the much-publicized great white sharks, he says they aren't a worry inside the break of the waves because they are interested in the seals offshore.

A bigger danger than sharks or undertow is being hit by his own or another's surfboard, but Peter's enthusiasm has never waned. He says he is forever grateful to his brother,

John, who introduced him to the thrill of surfing years ago. "To this day, we are always talking surfing and how we need that time on the water to be a better husband, father and more proficient in our life's work."

Peter and his wife, Grace, raised a family of athletes, skiing every winter and taking family bike and canoe trips. All four children competed in Barnstable town sports; several competed in sports at the regional and national levels. Oldest daughter Sarah now 30, competed in gymnastics. Michael, 29, played hockey, lacrosse and tennis. Both Erin, who is 22, and Kerry, 20, skied competitively through high school. Kerry continues to race as a member of the prestigious Middlebury College ski team.

During the intensive child-raising

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years, Grace's maintenance of the schedules of her family of athletic achievers resembled the duties of an air traffic controller. The schedule became especially demanding when her husband transitioned from a career in commercial real estate to law in his late 30s to "better support the family." At that point, all five of her family members were in different schools, ranging from pre-school to law school. She says her car became a "fully stocked shuttle service." All sports uniforms, homework books, snacks and equipment were stored in the car, with no stops at home during the afternoon. The younger children learned to nap in the car as the sportsmobile kept on rolling.

Peter says that due to Grace's support while he balanced work and school, he was able to pass the bar exam at age 40. "I locked myself in a room for two months and said, 'I have to pass. We don't have any money left!'"

Success in private practice followed, along with the increasing demands of children's sports commitments. Peter laughingly admits he doesn't miss "all those days at hockey rinks" or the tournaments in remote towns that required hanging at fast food restaurants between games. "If I never see another McDonald's again, I'll be happy."

When Erin and Kerry reached high-school age, Grace spent several solo parenting stints in the mountains while her daughters trained and studied at Waterville Valley's ski academy.

The family still skis at Waterville, with Peter being a huge champion of outdoor recreation. He avoids the gym as "smelly" and "boring." "It's absolutely my last resort. Anything indoors, forget it...you're looking at the clock, and you see people you don't want to

talk to."

For him, the joy of fitness comes from being "immersed" in nature while "enjoying the fellowship of others." He encourages even the unathletic to "at least take a walk... anything to break the inertia." His carefully planned year-round regimen revolves around biking, skiing and SUP. His affection for each sport and the camaraderie it provides is evident in his descriptions of shared meals and cups of coffee.

Between March and November, he bikes the 1200 acres of Barnstable's Trail of Tears. On a mountain bike in the spring or fall, on a road bike in summer, he enjoys biking

the "miles and miles of single track, usually with a buddy and getting a beer afterwards."

Winter weekends (November to April) are spent skiing with friends. "We ski early morning until lunch and take a coffee break halfway," as opposed to the old days when he says he skied "bell to bell, counting the number of runs – as fast as I could."

Several of the children still surf with him, Kerry being the most committed. "She surfs while I SUP...Like me, she'll check

the webcams and surf reports at random times of the day or week to feel connected even for a brief moment."

Peter admits that "like any good outdoor adventure, [SUP] comes with adversity." He says, "Some days it is grueling work keeping the board balanced with a strong wind or in choppy seas." But the grin on his face and the gleam in his eye belie any hardship. For Peter, there is nothing sweeter than the bonding experience of facing the elements with family and friends. In the company of like-minded souls, as well as atop the ocean's waves, Peter has found his balance. He is no longer competing, just content. ♦

"To this day, we are always talking surfing and how we need that time on the water to be a better husband, father and more proficient in our life's work."

PETER DAIGLE, LAWYER

ABOUT HIS BROTHER



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