

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Ben Laurro, Pure Publicity
818.753.4056 or Ben@purepublicity.com

An Epic Tale of One Family's Courage

Raising a Soul Surfer Details the Fearless Faith and Passion of
Bethany Hamilton and her Family.



Hanalei Bay, Kauai, HI – Bethany Hamilton’s book, *Soul Surfer*, sold more than 1.5 million copies and with it a hit movie. Now, her mother, **Cheri Hamilton** has written a memoir, *Raising a Soul Surfer*, and reveals the many ways that God prepared her and her family for Bethany’s traumatic accident. Their preparation helped them cope with the shark attack on Halloween 2003 that claimed her daughter’s left arm, and with the unexpected, international attention that followed.

“I wrote *Raising a Soul Surfer* to help families who are going through struggles. I want others to know how God set up our family as a team to deal with life’s uncertainties,” says Cheri. “God doesn’t allow us to go through pain to hurt us, but to heal and transform and draw us to Him. My hope is that our story will encourage you to pursue God regardless of the cost.” Among the topics Cheri covers in *Raising a Soul Surfer* are:

- Cheri’s life as a surf girl in the 60’s, an era known for recreational drug use and promiscuity and the night she spent in jail for eating police evidence
- The spiritual struggles Cheri faced and the lessons learned from Bethany’s accident
- Cheri’s eerie experience of her first-ever surfing outing to the same reef where Bethany was attacked years later
- The Hamilton’s today including Bethany’s courageous re-entry into the world of surfing competition and the non-profit organization to help shark-attack survivors
- Other family adventures including surfing as a young mom, surviving Hurricanes Iniki and Iwa, Bethany’s return to surfing after the attack and having her family story turned into a major motion film

Crafted with the help of author Rick Bundschuh—who helped write Bethany’s autobiography—*Raising a Soul Surfer* invites readers on a journey that started in San Diego, where Cheri grew up, and the resort town in New Jersey where Tom, her future husband, learned to master a surf board. They later met and fell in love while surfing in Hawaii and after their wedding saved money by living in a van.

Six months after marrying, the newlyweds made a decision to follow Christ through the influence of friends. Cheri believes this was part of a wave of God’s activity that featured evangelism spread by surfers. After their conversion to Christianity, Cheri and Tom would go on to raise their three children in church while teaching them the Bible at home.

“At the beginning, I was a young surfer girl, living my dreams, who encountered God in an unlikely place through unlikely disciples. I was a surf gypsy, with a surf gypsy husband, enjoying life in tropical paradise,” says Cheri. “But I became a mother who had to wrestle with fear and uncertainty when the news came that her daughter had been attacked by a shark. I never expected our children to be life-changers in such a profound way. We had raised our daughter to surf, not to seek to be in the media spotlight, but to shine for Jesus. Yet she embraced this challenge to honor God and be His witness to the world.”

~more~

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Ben Laurro, Pure Publicity
818.753.4056 or Ben@purepublicity.com

Today, Bethany Hamilton is a professional surfer. Her brother, Tim, is a bodyboarder and videographer, while her brother, Noah, operates his own photography business. Cheri stays busy helping manage the family with help from her husband, Tom, who also works at the five-star St. Regis Pineville Resort in Hanalei Bay on Kauai.

About *Raising a Soul Surfer*:

Raising a Soul Surfer: One Family's Epic Tale by Cheri Hamilton and Rick Bundschuh. Published by Regal Books. July 2011. Hardcover, 224 pages. \$22.99. ISBN 10-digit: 08307.59697. ISBN 13-digit: 978.08307.59699.

Suggested Interview Questions for Cheri Hamilton

1. Many know your daughter, Bethany, and her journey as a surfer and shark-attack survivor. What do you want people to know about you and your family?
2. What was life like for you growing up in Southern California in the surf community?
3. You are open about the recreational drugs and promiscuity that is known in the surf community. How did you deal with raising children and your own personal convictions?
4. How did you meet your husband? You write about your simple life with him including living out of a van after you were married. What are some of life –lessons you learned while living in simplicity?
5. How did you and your husband discover your Christian faith? Did you find yourself quickly dedicated to your faith? If so, in what ways?
6. How did God use your love of surfing and your surfer friends to draw you close to Him?
7. What was that Halloween day like when Bethany was attacked by the shark? What was your initial reaction? How long did it take you to see God's plan in this event?
8. What has been the irony of Venus de Milo at various points in your life?
9. What has life been like since your families story has received nationwide attention?
10. You write that you viewed raising your children as a ministry. How would you describe your parenting convictions? Do you see the reward of your ministry in your children's lives? How so?
11. How did Bethany find the courage to become a professional surfer after all she has been through? What are her goals for the future?
12. How has the outpouring of generosity and support you experienced after Bethany's injury changed your outlook on people?
13. Why do you affiliate Jeremiah 29:11 as a life verse? What have you seen God do in your life over the years?
14. What is your hope for your family and those who have been blessed by Bethany's story?
15. How can people keep in touch with you and Bethany? Do you have a Twitter or Facebook page?

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Ben Laurro, Pure Publicity
818.753.4056 or Ben@purepublicity.com

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR CHERI HAMILTON



Cheri Hamilton is the mother of three adult children—Noah, 29; Tim, 25; and Bethany, 21—whose life changed dramatically on Halloween of 2003 when Bethany was attacked by a Tiger shark that traumatically amputated her left arm as she surfed off the coast of Kauai in the Hawaiian islands. Her story has been told in the best-selling book, *Soul Surfer*, which has sold more than 1.5 million copies. A highly-acclaimed movie of the same name grossed more than \$43 million in less than three months after its April 8, 2011 premiere. The DVD releases Aug. 2.

Thrust into an international spotlight by her daughter's accident, in *Raising a Soul Surfer*, Hamilton professes amazement at how God changed the trajectory of their lives: "I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that if I had been in charge of writing the script...I would have written it much differently than God did. But God's script is certainly more incredible! I would describe it as like standing behind a tapestry of God's creation. From my vantage point, I can't see the pattern or the purpose. Life is often stormy, conflicting and seemingly senseless, like the aftermath of a hurricane. Then, every once in a while, God lets me see the front side of the tapestry."

A native of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, Cheri grew up in San Diego, California, where she developed her affinity for surfing as a teen. In the early 1970s she moved to Kauai to fully embrace her passion for surfing and live a simpler lifestyle. After meeting her husband, Tom, while surfing, they later worked together at the Kauai Surf Hotel (now owned by the Marriott chain) and spent their days surfing.

Within six months of being married in August of 1979, Cheri and Tom became Christians through the influence of surfing friends—a decision they reached standing in a driveway beside their home, a white Volkswagen van. Cheri calls it the beginning of a relationship with the God who had been courting her throughout her life, starting with a childhood visit to a vacation Bible school. They followed up on this decision by attending Bible studies at the home of a surf shop owner, which Cheri says were aimed at new Christians like them and a "far cry" from the typical church at that time.

The Hamilton's' also taught their children about Christ and provided them the opportunity to grow spiritually at home and through Sunday school, vacation Bible school, and religious education classes. Cheri had always wanted to be involved in some kind of Christian ministry, but every door closed. "So I focused on raising my children for Him—teaching them His Word, His ways and His unconditional love," she says. "Unbelievably, it turned out to be the very ministry God was calling me to all along. My story tells about a journey to find hope, truth and purpose."

In addition to providing them spiritual training, the couple instilled their love of surfing, a sport that Tom had mastered as a teen while living in the island resort town of Ocean City, New Jersey. Cheri says they went out of their way to make sure their children got their daily dose of surf and beach time, signing them up for local surf contests so they could have fun and hang out with friends. Although Noah, Tom and Bethany all enjoyed playing soccer, when their games conflicted with surf contests, they made the choice to surf—something they have been doing ever since.

Today, Cheri stays busy helping manage the careers of Bethany, a professional surfer; and Tim, a top bodyboarder and an acclaimed photographer. Cheri and Tom are members of North Shore Community Church on the north side of the island of Kauai. For more information on their family, you can visit www.soulsurferwave.com/meetthehamiltons.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Ben Laurro, Pure Publicity
818.753.4056 or Ben@purepublicity.com

QUOTES FROM *RAISING A SOUL SURFER*

- “At the beginning, I was a young surfer girl, living my dreams, who encountered God in an unlikely place through unlikely disciples. I was a surf gypsy, with a surf gypsy husband, enjoying life in tropical paradise. But I became a mother who had to wrestle with fear and uncertainty when the news came that her daughter had been attacked by a shark. I never expected our children to be life-changers. We had raised our daughter to surf, not to be in the media spotlight. Yet she embraced this challenge to honor God and be His witness to the world.” (Introduction)
- “A tsunami came to the Hawaiian Islands on February 27, 2010, during the movie production (of *Soul Surfer*)...The event that could have been a tsunami of destruction and fear has turned out to be a wave of blessing. God has always had a plan for us, and He only used the perceived tragedy to advance His plan and embrace the world with a tsunami of love. It was the fulfillment of Jeremiah 29:11 in our lives.” (Chapter 1)
- “Tunnels reef was the first place I ever surfed after arriving on Kauai. It was about the only place on the north side of the island that had waves during the summer. I never liked the wave all that much, because it dumped on a shallow reef, and I always came back in with cuts all over my feet. The wave runs along a deep drop-off channel, which was very spooky and a haven for sharks. I couldn’t know then that this surf break would feature so largely in my life story; for it was at Tunnels that a shark attacked my daughter, Bethany, many years later.” (Chapter 5)
- “I keep telling people who hear about our past that Tom and I were *not* hippies. The distinction to most people isn’t that great; but in my mind, even back then, it was important. What consumed me was the addiction of surfing, not dropping out, not political activism or communing with anything other than a nice glassy wave at an uncrowded beach or reef break.” (Chapter 6)
- “In my mind, I had imagined a mangled wound that would require loads of stitches and months of rehab; but at that point I lost it. I dropped the phone and pulled over to the side of the road, unable to drive because of my tears. In my fraught state of mind, I remembered that in times of trouble it was a good thing, according to the psalms, to worship God.” (Chapter 6)
- “The prospect of 13-year-old Bethany becoming a professional surfer before she was out of high school was getting brighter. A surfing career, as a believer in Jesus Christ, should not simply be a means for gaining money, trophies or accolades, but a way to give glory to God. Our prayer went like this: *Lord, bring Bethany into the center of Your will and use her surfing to glorify and honor Your name.* It never occurred to us the manner in which God would answer our prayer.” (Chapter 8)
- “Jeremiah 29:11: ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’ (*NIV*). This verse has become the cornerstone of hope for all that we have been through and may go through still. I don’t know how deeply those words penetrated Noah on that alarming day in the car ride to the hospital, but in the weeks ahead, they would provide encouragement to all of us and even more so in years to come.” (Chapter 9)
- “Within two weeks, a group of friends had managed to organize a grassroots nonprofit organization—the Friends of Bethany Hamilton—that exists to this day. Its primary focus is to support shark attack survivors and amputees worldwide and present inspiring life stories through movies, projects and activities...We didn’t quite expect the overflowing generosity, love and support from everyone all over the island.” (Chapter 11)
- “Before the attack, I had so many plans for my future and dreams of how my daughter’s amazing talents could affect the surfing community. But my hopes and dreams were too small for God. He always has much grander plans...When our plans unravel. When the fear and the tears of tragedy collapse our safe petty world, we can only turn to God, who works all things for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28). The frayed fabric of our pain becomes a work of beauty in His hands.” (Chapter 13)