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Ryan Doran, Fairfield County Business Journal

Christopher McCagg Conveys “The Structure of Waves”



Christopher McCagg, an architect from Wilton, has felt a connection with the natural world ever since he was growing up in central New Jersey. With an intrinsic need to be in outside, McCagg might reside in Fairfield County, but he feels most at home when he’s catching waves.

“I was always an outdoors person,” said McCagg. “Especially from a very young age I was a water person. I was always at the beach and outside. I was involved in sports a bit but I was never one to stay in shape by going to the gym.”

McCagg preferred that his athletics be more active and fluid.

“That’s the way I got enjoyment out of it,” said McCagg.

McCagg started his working life in his teenage years.

“My brother is a builder, starting a business young as a framing contractor, so I started working for him when I was 14,” said McCagg. “That was my introduction to the industry.”

McCagg said he would frame all summer and on weekends into his college years at Temple University in Philadelphia, where he studied architecture.

"I put myself through college and supported myself," said McCagg.

When McCagg was 23, he and a close childhood friend, Michael Yonkowski, headed to the Jersey Shore intent on learning to surf.

"We got into everything together," said McCagg. "We decided to try surfing. I started at a late age, but I picked it up pretty quickly. It was just one of those things. And I think most people who surf tell you this: The first time you do it you know you're hooked for life; you're going to be doing it forever."

When McCagg finished college in the early 1990s, the architecture industry was moving slowly.

"Immediately out of college, I continued to work for my brother in construction," said McCagg. His friend Yonkowski was also in construction.

"We had the flexibility in our schedules and we were able to throw the boards in the back of the van and head to Florida or South Carolina on a Friday night and do whatever we needed to do to get in the water," said McCagg. "We usually just lived on the beach. It became a lifestyle, and a pretty good one at that."

McCagg was moving up and helping to run his brother's business, as he was becoming a developer and branching out into larger things.

"I got to the point where I had to make a decision of what I really wanted to do," said McCagg. "I had gone to school and gotten this training in architecture; it was my passion and I kind of got sidetracked for those years. I decided to finally come up to New York City."

McCagg would eventually join Butler Rogers Baskett Architects under the direction of James Rogers. McCagg would quickly become a fundamental part of the clubs portion of the business, working out of the firm's South Norwalk office.

Rogers has recently broken the clubs sector into a separate firm, James G. Rogers Architects, appointing McCagg as a principal of the firm.

McCagg still manages to surf avidly. He has surfed the West Coast and Costa Rica multiple times.

"Puerto Rico has become my destination of choice because the quality of the surf and the ease of the travel," said McCagg. "It's not pretentious, it's very

low key, there's a certain spot on that coast which will remain unnamed that is really for the surfer scene, under the radar and not a resort area."

McCagg is a member of the Surfrider Foundation, a grassroots nonprofit dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans and beaches, and is a member of the Nature Conservancy.

"There's nothing better than being at a sunrise session, watching the sun come up, just you and a couple of friends," said McCagg. "There's something that's special in the relationship of being that close to nature. I don't know what can compare to that. It's about being part of something that's larger than all of us, and there are times when it's really spiritual."

He surfs with the same group of guys he met in the water at the Jersey Shore.

"They've become lifelong friends and we've traveled all over together," said McCagg.

"I've always felt that it's honed my capacity to apply that to my professional life," he said. "When you're committing to that kind of action, it's split second and you have to take in everything in that split second. You need to be able to focus on the immediate detail while at the same time seeing the impact on the larger picture."

McCagg has surfed 20-foot waves and hopes to see the sport in the Olympics in the near future.

Having moved to Wilton only recently, McCagg's largest struggle right now is being so close to water with no waves. He is departing for Puerto Rico in a matter of days.