During the summer of 2021, I took part in a trip to Huntington Beach, California with some friends of mine. The interesting thing about this trip was that it was with friends that I was close with through middle school but was partially separated during high school since I went to a different school across town. I knew most of the group but some guys I didn't know very well. I quickly learned on the first night how everyone viewed each other and primarily that we were all in California to have a great vacation. One thing that separated myself and the guys was my appreciation for the ocean. I was the one constantly trying to go to the beach since Idaho is very inland.

I was constantly watching Surfline, a wave app, during the trip and one day the Wedge was pretty large. The app stated the waves were ten plus feet, so I convinced my friends we should go and at least see it, since we had no plans. Thankfully, the boys were convinced, so we rented bikes from a local store and rode the nine miles south to the famous beach. On the way, we all got separated at a point and I was solo with Dylan, whom I didn’t know super well. I rode about a mile or two with him and after this time I felt a sense of knowing him much better just from talking for half an hour. It was nice talking to someone about certain aspects of life even though we were in an unknown place going to an unknown location. I feel our conversations were so easy because of how comfortable we were both because of being on a trip and in the weather. It is funny how the weather alone can impact a person’s character.

We stopped and got ice cream in Newport and then arrived at the Wedge. The waves were estimated to be ten feet at this beach. I remember the ocean was much calmer than I expected when we arrived. We all relaxed and swam around for about thirty minutes, enjoying the sun and warm water. Suddenly, I turned around and watched a wave much bigger than the rest approach and continue to grow. As the wave grew closer, I realized how big this wave was going to be. My friends and I were forced to go under the waves since we couldn’t get to the beach. I went under the wave but the impact alone of the wave picked me up and threw me hard onto the sand. The shear force of the wave and pitch-black water, due to the sand kicked up by the wave, made it hard to find the surface. I was not worried about my friends at this point, since after getting up and getting air, I saw another wave just as large coming.

We all tried to get to the beach but the steep, wet, sand with the strong backwash off the beach prevented us from moving backwards at all. I eventually stopped resisting and let the current pull me in towards the oncoming wave. We all took a beating from the second wave, which had a barrel that could engulf a small car. Again, the dark, violent, and loud impact of being thrown onto the sand made it hard to find air. Eventually, I pushed off the bottom with little time left since I couldn’t keep a steady heart rate under all the violent water.

Escaping the current of the ocean was nearly impossible again while the biggest wave of the day approached. I truly was struggling to maintain composure after the third wave. I wasn’t seeing clearly and the three impacts in a row onto straight sand took all my breath away. Thankfully, the third massive wave was the last of the rogue set. My friends and I dragged ourselves up the steep beach, sinking into the sand with each step. We got to the top of the beach where we were finally able to relax and catch our breath after a minute of straight chaos. We all started to realize what we had just gone through and how unbelievably strong the ocean just was. Some of our friends were on the beach during the wave set and recorded videos. We all watched these videos, and we were able to see what unfolded from a different point of view. From the beach, you wouldn’t understand the dramatic change in the ocean as well as being in the water.

Not only did the ocean suddenly change within a few seconds, but my feelings and emotions too. I went from a state of calmness to a state of anxiety and shock. I would think that all the guys in the water with me would agree with this statement. This story about fluids is obviously about the power of nature and the dramatic influence the water current has on all things in it, but also represents a personal relationship. Like spending time with someone, you get to know them more with time and learn about them. Just like with a person, you can get to start to understand how the ocean works by watching and feeling its movement. I don’t know if my friends see the ocean in this way, but even with my little experiences, I visualize the ocean almost as a friend who helps you learn about oneself.