

## Brains On (APM) | Skateboards: When Roller Skates Met Surfboards 1R431FTXDSTEYY78J57H2R138R

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**JOY:** And we're back. It's opening day at the 2095 Intergalactic X Games.

**MINNA:** And we're in the middle of a fierce lineup of skaters at this Hoverboard Park Competition.

**JOY:** Yes, Minna. We've seen some gnarly runs, and I think it's anybody's game today.

**MINNA:** I have to agree with you there, Joy. Before we went to break, we saw some incredible stuff from [? Florbian ?] [? Jiggleby. ?]

**JOY:** Yes, the limbless telekinetic orb with that winning personality. She tells the best jokes. She hails from Kepler 439b and skates using telekinetic powers, using just her mind to move the board.

**MINNA:** And move the board she does.

**JOY:** You know, Minna, this was quite the hot button issue at the Intergalactic Skateboard Federation last year. [? Jiggleby ?] was the first [? Kaplarian ?] to go pro, and the Federation had to decide, should telekinetic skaters compete with everyone else?

**MINNA:** After much debate, they to let telekinetic orb beings like [? Florbian ?] skate in regular competition.

**JOY:** Oh! Now entering the hoverboard park is this year's only earthling competitor, Lacey Baker, the Third.

**MINNA:** Man, it's getting harder and harder for these humans every year.

**JOY:** You can say that again, my human. They've got zero tentacles to do an octo cannonball alley-oop with.

**MINNA:** No telekinesis to pop 50 foot high alleys with.

**JOY:** Not even a fifth limb to work with. It's real tough luck.

**MINNA:** Oh, Lacey sticks a triple turbo boost kickflip with crazy precision.

[CHEERING]

**JOY:** Awesome. Those are mad skills, for a human.

**MINNA:** And to finish, she's coming in a hot hovering backward to attempt a 720 gazelle flip.

**JOY:** Yeah! She hovered in mid-air just a second longer than it seems like should be physically possible.

**MINNA:** Dudes, dudettes, and the various intergalactic beings, we may see an earthling on the podium today for the first time in two decades.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**JOY:** I'm Joy Dolo and this is *Forever Ago*, the show where we start at the beginning. And today is all about the gnarliest, most awesome, totally sick innovation to have ever rolled on four wheels, the skateboard. And I have to come clean, I'm not much of a skateboarder.

**MINNA:** But I am.

**JOY:** Yes. And that's why you, Minna, are the perfect person to co-host this episode. You can totally help me. So how long have you been skateboarding?

**MINNA:** I have been skateboarding for about 10 years and I'm 12, so.

**JOY:** So since you were two years old. How did you get started skateboarding?

**MINNA:** Well, my brother. He started skating and I just-- as the younger sibling, I just wanted to do what he was doing. I just followed in his footsteps.

**JOY:** Why do you like it?

**MINNA:** It's fun, and you can do it with so many different people. And you can meet a bunch of new people.

**JOY:** So do you and your friends, like, meet up at these skating places? Or, like, how do you guys get together to skate?

**MINNA:** Usually it's either for practicing for a contest, but I don't have like-- there's not a lot of skaters that live nearby that are my age and girls that I can skate with.

**JOY:** Oh, really?

**MINNA:** Yeah. Because I compete against a bunch of different people. Like, I'm probably one of the youngest in the Pro Division, and I think about the oldest is about 30 or something. I don't know.

**JOY:** Wow, Minna. That's incredible. You're skating with people that are literally twice your age.

**MINNA:** Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

**JOY:** And competing. So do you have a favorite trick that you do?

**MINNA:** One of my favorite tricks is doing a backside air over coping and like a deep bowl or a pool. And it's just super fun to fly in the air.

**JOY:** OK. So you're going to-- because I am not a skateboard person.

**MINNA:** Yeah.

**JOY:** Could you explain what that would look like?

**MINNA:** A backside air would be like you go-- you're going up about, say, at least a 9 foot quarter pipe.

**JOY:** Oh my goodness.

**MINNA:** Well, that's kind of small. A backside air would be like you going up the wall up to the coping and you lift up your wheels. And you go up, and you go in the air, and then you wait to grab your board. And you're just hanging out in the air and then you turn around and then go back in and land on the quarter pipe.

**JOY:** Minna, that sounds terrifying.

[LAUGHTER]

**MINNA:** I've been doing it since I was like around seven or eight.

**JOY:** Goodness.

**MINNA:** Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

**JOY:** So where do you think skateboards came from?

**MINNA:** Oh, I think they came from surfing and then just doing it on concrete?

**JOY:** Yeah, from, like, water to concrete kind of like evolving kind of thing. But I mean, just even the idea of skateboards, it just seems so simple. It's just a board and four wheels. I feel like even a caveman could have figured it out.

**CHRIS:** And then I kick flipped off that mastodon's tusk.

**JOY:** Gnarly.

**MINNA:** Hold on. Wheels didn't exist until 3,500 BC.

**JOY:** OK. OK. OK. So maybe the ancient Greeks figured it out?

**CHRIS:** The Parthenon is the sickest skate spot.

**JOY:** These stairs are no!

**MINNA:** I guess it's possible. But I haven't heard of any ancient Greek skaters.

**CHRIS:** Yeah, me neither.

**JOY:** Oh! Hey, Chris.

**CHRIS:** Hey, what's up?

**MINNA:** Hi.

**JOY:** Every episode, we invite one of our reporter friends to take us way back into history. And I thought Chris Greenspon would be the perfect person to help us explore skateboard history.

**CHRIS:** Because I skate, too.

**MINNA:** Awesome.

**JOY:** Cool. Cool. So Chris, I think most people know what a skateboard looks like. But can you kind of break it down by its parts?

**CHRIS:** In essence, it's a flat object called a deck, that's the board part. Underneath the deck are trucks where the wheels are attached. Once you have all that, you ride it using your feet.

**MINNA:** Where did the first one come from?

**CHRIS:** Well, it probably happened one day when a surfboard crawled out of the ocean, looked around and said, this is nice. Then it grew wheels. Just like the dinosaurs.

**MINNA:** Um, this is a history show?

**CHRIS:** Yeah, but no one can prove that never happened because no one's really sure what the first skateboard was. People have been putting wheels on things for a long time, but most people agree that skateboards evolved from surfing, which is hundreds of years old and four-wheeled roller skates which were invented in 1863.

So in theory, there could have been a skateboard as far back as the 1860s.

**JOY:** Well, what's the oldest one you've ever heard of?

**CHRIS:** Some people claim kids started making their own skateboards as early as 1918.

**JOY:** Holy moly, that's a long time ago.

**CHRIS:** Yeah. But it's kind of hard to know that for sure. What we do know is that homemade skateboards started popping up in the 40s and 50s because you can actually go and see skateboards that old at a place called Skate Lab in Simi Valley, California.

I talked to their founder, Todd Huber, who loves these old do-it-yourself boards.

**TODD:** So this is an example of a roller skate nailed to a piece of wood. A lot of kids took it upon themselves to do art. This one's got this artwork. I love on its feet he put PU, like stinky feet.

**CHRIS:** These early skateboards were as simple as it gets. Basically just a piece of wood with broken apart roller skate wheels nailed onto both ends. Would you guys want to try one of these early skateboards?

**JOY:** You know, me personally, it doesn't sound very safe and I'm a safe gal. But Minna, I think Minna lives on the edge a little bit. What do you think?

**MINNA:** I've tried them before actually. They're not as smooth as normal ones, but it's kind of fun to ride around and try to actually use it.

**JOY:** Yeah, it gives you kind of a bumpy ride.

**MINNA:** Yeah.

**CHRIS:** Yeah. They're definitely low tech. And that's because they were all DIY, which stands for do it yourself. You couldn't buy them at stores. But also we're talking about life during World War II. Supplies like metal, cloth, rubber, and leather were being used in the war and there was very little left for everyday stuff like toys, so kids made do with what they had.

But after the war in the 1950s, homemade skateboards were getting so popular that companies took notice. And by the early 60s, you could buy a skateboard in a store. One of the first ones available was the Roller Derby number 10.

**TODD:** It was a little red skateboard. It was flat. It had no grip tape. The trucks were not adjustable. The wheels were made out of metal. And it really wasn't very practical at all. And a lot of people got hurt using them.

**CHRIS:** But some kids got really good and did acrobatics on them. Some of them got so good that they could do a handstand on one of these skinny two foot long boards while it was rolling.

**JOY:** Whoa.

**MINNA:** That's crazy.

**MAN:** So let's watch Wendy [? Bearer. ?]

**MAN 2:** Watch this.

**MAN:** With that hand stand.

**MAN 2:** Head stand. With a handstand.

**CHRIS:** That was from a competition in Anaheim, California in 1965. By then, World War II was long over and people had money to spend. So the toy industry started turning out Barbies, GI Joes, train sets, and--

**JOY:** Skateboards. Ha-ha.

**CHRIS:** Yes. Good guess.

**JOY:** Thank you.

**CHRIS:** Tens of millions were sold. But they didn't get much safer. The biggest problem was the metal wheels. If you went over even just a tiny pebble, your wheels might stop but you would go flying off your board. By 1963, manufacturers tried to fix the problem by switching to clay wheels. Not clay like pottery clay, more like ground up and compressed plastic, paper, and walnut shells.

They were really hard, like a rock. And they kind of looked like reddish cement.

**JOY:** To me, it doesn't sound as sturdy. What do you think, Minna?

**MINNA:** I feel like you'd still get stuck on rocks.

**JOY:** Yeah. Yeah.

**CHRIS:** Yeah. They kind of rode better but they broke apart really quick. And to make matters worse, skateboarding was starting to have an image problem. In May 1965, a popular magazine called *Life* published a cover story about the craze and the menace of skateboards.

[LAUGHTER]

There were pictures of kids riding on their stomachs and on their butts narrowly missing cars and pedestrians. Doing this was and is super dangerous.

**JOY:** Very.

**CHRIS:** Does your parents ever worry about you and your skating?

**MINNA:** I don't think so. I think they only get worried if I'm trying something like crazy big which I haven't tried anything like gigantic. So I don't think they ever get worried. I think they're always supportive and just hope I don't get hurt.

**CHRIS:** Well, your parents are cooler than mine because I'm wearing a helmet right now.

[LAUGHTER]

Back in the mid '60s, people were freaking out. At this point, the toy companies kind of just gave up on skateboards. So once again, skaters had to get creative. They kept improving their own boards with things like grip tape to help their feet stay on the board, and the kick tail, that's the raised part at the end of the board, that helped riders lift two wheels off the ground and invent new tricks.

But some might argue that the biggest, most revolutionary skateboard innovation came from a rebellious teenager.

**JOY:** All right, we'll get to the next big skateboard innovation soon, Chris.

**MINNA:** But now it's time for First Things First.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**JOY:** First Things First is the game where we try to put things in order from oldest to newest. Minna, do you want to read today's three things?

**MINNA:** Sure. Here they are. Ice skates, surfboards, and tandem bicycles, that's a bicycle that two people can ride on at the same time.

**JOY:** OK. Now we just have to guess which one came first, which one came second, and which came most recently in history. So what do you think out of those three? We have ice skates, surfboards, tandem bicycles.

**MINNA:** Um, I'd say surfboards maybe?

**JOY:** Well, surfboards. So that must have been--

**MINNA:** No, maybe ice skates. I'd say ice skates.

**JOY:** Ice skates.

**MINNA:** Ice skate. I don't know. Oh, I don't know.

**JOY:** When do you think ice skates were invented?

**MINNA:** No idea.

**JOY:** Me neither. But do you think ice skates are the oldest, definitely?

**MINNA:** I don't know. No, I don't know. I can't-- definitely not surfboards. Maybe tandem bicycles or ice skates, either one of those. Not sure though.

**JOY:** Ice skates or tandem bicycles?

**MINNA:** Yeah, because I feel like bicycles are pretty common.

**JOY:** Yeah.

**MINNA:** What do you think?

**JOY:** That's a pretty good guess. I think that ice skates? I think I agree with you. I think ice skates would be the oldest and then maybe surfboards?

**MINNA:** I'd say tandem bicycles next, maybe?

**JOY:** You would say tandem?

**MINNA:** Maybe. I don't know.

**JOY:** Yeah, I don't know either.

**MINNA:** I feel like tandem bicycles could be first too.

[LAUGHTER]

**JOY:** It's either or. So I'll say ice skates, surfboard, tandem.

**MINNA:** I'll say ice skates, tandem, surfboards.

**JOY:** OK. Well, I think we need to take a quick break just to catch our breath. When we're back, we'll hear the answers to First Things First and we'll also hear how a teenager took skateboarding from rad to totally radical.

**MINNA:** Don't go anywhere.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**MAN 3:** Did you know that some early skateboarders didn't wear shoes?

**MAN 4:** What do I need shoes for, dude?

**MAN 3:** See, a lot of early skateboarders in California were surfers, too.

**MAN 4:** What the heck is skateboarding? We call this radical new sport sidewalk surfing.

**MAN 3:** In skate competitions in the 1960s, some skaters would wear shoes and some would go without.

**MAN 4:** My feet really got a feel the board for the flow, you know?

**MAN 3:** But as the tricks got gnarlier, in the parlance of skater youths, the risk of foot injuries increased dramatically.

**MAN 4:** Oh, no! My little baby toe.

**MAN 3:** In 2014, the city of Charleston, South Carolina banned barefoot skateboarding and made it punishable by a fine. So it's unlikely you'll see anyone competing barefoot these days, but never say never.

**MAN 4:** Who needs 10 toes anyway? Let's do this.

**MAN 3:** Seriously though, put on some shoes, my dudes.

**JOY:** And we're back with more Forever Ago.

**MINNA:** The show where we ask who did it first.

**JOY:** And today, reporter Chris Greenspon is helping us find the answer to that question about skateboards.

**MINNA:** But before we get back to the story of the skateboard, let's find out if we're right about surfboards, ice skates, and tandem bicycles.

**JOY:** Yes. We tried to guess which came first, which came second, and which came most recently in history. And I guessed ice skates were first, then surfboards, and then tandem bicycles. And, Minna, you said ice skates, tandem bicycles, surfboards?

**MINNA:** Yes, I said ice skates, tandem bicycle, surfboards.

**JOY:** Awesome. Do you have the top secret answers envelope?

**MINNA:** Yep. Here it is.

**JOY:** Drum roll, please. All right. And here we are. OK. So it looks like-- oh, wow. Ice skates we're first.

**MINNA:** Really?

**JOY:** So we're both right.

**MINNA:** We're right.

**JOY:** We did it. The earliest ice skates appeared in the Bronze Age, over 3,000 years ago.

**MINNA:** Wow, that's crazy.

**JOY:** That is something. In the Bronze Age, ice skates were made from animal shin bones. Yuck. So the first ice skates, next up was surfboards. So this appeared like in sixth century Polynesia. And the island royalty would surf on super long boards, like 25 feet long so that people would know how important they are.

**MINNA:** So I got it wrong and you got it right.

**JOY:** Yeah. But we were so close. It was so close. So ice skate, surfboards, and then tandem bikes. All right. I think it's time to get back to the story of the skateboard with reporter Chris Greenspon.

**MINNA:** Yeah, you said there was a teenager who changed everything?

**CHRIS:** Yes. A teenager and something called polyurethane. It's a plastic compound that's kind of soft but kind of tough, kind of like me.

[LAUGHTER]

**JOY:** OK. But what's a teenager doing messing around with plastic compounds?

**CHRIS:** Allow me to explain. The teen is Frank Nasworthy. And his story is sort of a legend, meaning no one can quite agree on how it happened. But here's one version of the story. It's 1970 and Frank had just dropped out of college in Virginia.

Hippies were taking over popular culture. They wore tie dyed shirts and big bottom jeans and they protested America's involvement in the Vietnam War. And Frank Nasworthy found himself in his friend's dad's plastic factory.

**FRANK:** Cool. Smells like a new car in here.

**CHRIS:** They were experimenting with a new type of roller skate wheel. But they were a flop because they made the skates go slower. So there was a big barrel filled with all these wheels they couldn't sell.

**FRANK:** Hm. These would fit pretty nicely on my skateboard.

**CHRIS:** According to some, Frank asked for a few dozen of them, put them on his skateboard and tried it out. Now he could skate on smooth surfaces-- marble, granite, stuff you could never ride with clay wheels. Then Frank moved to California to be a surfer and he saw skaters wiping out on clay wheels.

**FRANK:** Gnarly.

**CHRIS:** So he cashed in his savings and ordered some custom polyurethane wheels to sell to surf shops.

**MAN 6:** Cowabunga. Welcome to the surf shop.

**FRANK:** Have I got a surprise for you. Meet the future of skateboard wheels.

**MAN 6:** Yeah, I don't know, man. What are these things made of?

**FRANK:** Only the purest American polyurethane, my dude.

**JOY:** Only.

**MINNA:** My dude.

**CHRIS:** Slowly but surely, people started to see the benefits of the polyurethane wheel. And Frank Nasworthy made a small fortune selling them as Cadillac brand wheels.

**MINNA:** Like the car?

**CHRIS:** Exactly.

**LAURA:** Urethane wheels gave you the ability to seamlessly surf on the concrete. It was so smooth and you had traction. And it just opened up a whole new level of physical expression on the skateboard. And the flow and the satisfaction of being on the board and riding on urethane just-- there was no comparison to what it was like.

**CHRIS:** That's '70s skate legend Laura Thornhill Caswell. She was born in Texas and moved to California in the seventh grade. It was 1974, and she found herself in the midst of a skating renaissance. She came at the perfect time, really, because there was a drought going on. Can you two guess why a drought might be good for skateboarding?

**MINNA:** Yeah, because you could skate empty ditches or empty pools.

**CHRIS:** Exactly. Because pools and water basins all over California were empty and full of giant slopes and zigzagging channels. These empty pools and other places that usually held water were basically big concrete waves to skate on. They were kind of the original skate parks.

**LAURA:** The reservoir down in San Diego was amazing. It was a huge water reservoir and it was smooth, and it just had these great lines and you could get crazy speed. And it was my favorite place.

**CHRIS:** Polyurethane wheels allowed kids like Laura to push their limits and get noticed by board companies. She was the first female skater to get her own signature skateboard in 1976. Even the famous Smithsonian Museum has one in its collection. According to Laura, it's a short lightweight board, good for doing fancy footwork downhill or pool skating. And she was just 15 when she designed it.

**JOY:** Yeah, just a few years older than you, Minna. So kids were on the leading edge of skateboard design again.

**CHRIS:** For sure. And they were also the ones inventing the tricks. Do you know what an ollie is, Joy?

**JOY:** Do I know what an ollie is? It's the-- when you get on the board and then if you're in the air you--

**CHRIS:** Minna, help her out.

**MINNA:** OK. An ollie is when you're on flat ground and you pop with your back foot on the tail and make your board go in the air and go with it. And that's an ollie.

**CHRIS:** Exactly.

**JOY:** Oh. Yeah, I was getting there.

**CHRIS:** Yeah. You had it. And it's named after a 14-year-old Ollie, Ollie Gelfand. It was invented by Ollie's 17-year-old friend Jeff Doer, but Ollie is the one that shared the trick with the world. Once people started getting the hang of ollie-ing, the whole industry geared more design towards air tricks. Minna, have you ever invented any tricks?

**MINNA:** I don't know. I feel like every single trick I try I'm just like oh, what is that called? And like, oh, that's called blah, blah, blah. And I'm like, oh, I didn't know that.

[LAUGHTER]

**JOY:** So you might have already invented one?

**MINNA:** Yeah, maybe.

**JOY:** You just got to give it the Minna name.

**CHRIS:** Well, you still could. Skate Labs founder Todd Huber says the tricks are nowhere close to being done invented.

**TODD:** They're still going on. Like it's never going to end. There's not a guy-- I'll just use Tony Hawk as an example-- who can do every single trick. And I also think kids like the challenge. So if skateboarding was really easy, kids would, like, do it and move on. But the fact that you can't just grab a skateboard and be really good is something that drives the kids to try, to keep trying it and get better.

**CHRIS:** At the end of my visit to Skate Lab, Todd took me up to his office to look at the old photos he gets in the mail. He showed me pictures of kneepads made out of footballs, a paper boy on a board being pulled by a dog, and a deck with a chainsaw engine, which I think would be a great Christmas gift. Mom, if you're listening.

[LAUGHTER]

But to me, the one that set it all was this sharp black and white photo of a little kid skating in a neighborhood with really old, beat up apartment buildings. He's on a board like the ones Todd showed me from right after World War II-- just some skates nailed to a piece of wood. So you'd think 1950s.

But then look at the car in the background.

**TODD:** It's the '70s. I can tell just by that Mustang.

**CHRIS:** Even in the '70s when polyurethane wheels and pro models were out there, these kids used whatever they could find to get around.

**MINNA:** So they built them the old school way?

**CHRIS:** Yeah. And we still can, just like the kids who built them during World War II. And eventually we can improve them, like Frank Nasworthy, and reshape them like Laura Thornhill Caswell as we adapt to our surroundings. Sure, we might be used to street skating on polyurethane wheels and boards with two kicktails, but who knows? Maybe someday they'll end up back in the ocean for some underwater skateboarding, if that's what we need them for.

**JOY:** Well, we'll see. Thanks so much, Chris.

**CHRIS:** Hm-hm.

**JOY:** Later, skater.

**CHRIS:** See ya.

**JOY:** From DIY to smooth riding polyurethane wheels, skateboarding is constantly evolving.

**MINNA:** But what's next? We asked our listeners to imagine the skateboard of the future.

**JOY:** And here's what they had to say.

**GIRL 1:** My skateboard of the future, when I jump over things, broken things, it fixes things.

**WOMAN 1:** A hovering skateboard. Like just one that completely lifts off the ground. That'd be the greatest thing ever.

**MAN 7:** If you hit like a crack, you won't fall and just stop. Because that happens a lot to me.

**WOMAN 2:** I think it'll just transform. It'll turn into surfboard and then use it as a hoverboard. It turns into a backpack.

**WOMAN 3:** Maybe air conditioning. When it's hot, that'd be dope.

**GIRL 2:** I would want it to have spiky wheels so that it can go through the dirt. And it can turn into a submarine or a boat or even a car.

**JOY:** Whoa! Those sound awesome. Well, what type of futuristic skateboard would you want, Minna?

**MINNA:** I would want a hoverboard that could hover, obviously. And a hoverboard that could fold into a jetpack so I could just go flying everywhere.

**JOY:** So you're just always flying, just always in the air?

**MINNA:** Always flying. Flying fun to school, flying to the gas station to get junk food.

[LAUGHTER]

**JOY:** And gas for your hoverboard skateboard.

**MINNA:** Flying to a cafe to get hot chocolate.

**JOY:** Yeah. That's so neat. Yeah, I was-- I think in the future, these skateboards and these hoverboards and things like- - what technology would be like with those as well? Because I'm thinking about if you could like type into it and it can kind of just dart you to wherever you want to go, still hovering and still jet packing, like something like that.

**MINNA:** And just teleport everywhere.

**JOY:** Yeah. Yeah, teleport on a skateboard. Hoverboards are super fun to think about. But for a lot of people, skateboarding is about way more than skateboards themselves.

**MINNA:** Yeah, it's a way to make new friends or hang out with old ones. It's a way for people to connect.

**JOY:** Which is the subject of Neftalie Williams' research.

**MINNA:** Get this, he's a skateboarding professor.

**NEFTALIE:** Well, I'm a PhD candidate at the University of Waikato and a research fellow at the University of Southern California's Annenberg Institute of Sports Media and Society. But in the end, skateboard professor sounds pretty cool.

**JOY:** That is pretty cool. Maybe we'll just call you a Dr. Skateboard, too.

**NEFTALIE:** Yes.

**JOY:** In short.

**NEFTALIE:** That'll be coming soon.

**JOY:** So we've read about how you do something called skateboard diplomacy. And we have a lot of questions for you. Minna, I'll let you take the lead.

**MINNA:** So what exactly is diplomacy?

**NEFTALIE:** Well, to make it simple, Minna, the best way to think about it is when you go out skating at the skate park, you meet new people and you want to make friends all the time, right?

**MINNA:** Yeah.

**NEFTALIE:** Well, the same thing happens with governments. Governments and different nations want to make friends with other governments. And the United States wants to be friends with France, France wants to be friends with Brazil. And so that's diplomacy, in a nutshell, is making friends with people all over so that it's good for both parties.

**JOY:** So how do you combine skateboarding with diplomacy?

**NEFTALIE:** Well, one of the best examples is what we worked on with Cuba Skate. We brought boards back and forth to the kids who were in Cuba and we bring professional skaters back and forth between the US and Cuba. Now, that might not seem like a big deal. But the US and Cuba do not have the best relationship right now.

**JOY:** Right.

**NEFTALIE:** So what we're doing is using skateboarding as a way to still make friends with all of the kids that are there even though our governments aren't talking. There's no skate shops on the island, nothing from America has really allowed to be in Cuba. Even though you can go to the store and pick up new trucks and wheels, they can't.

**MINNA:** So how do they get all of their gear for skating?

**NEFTALIE:** Well, they rely on people coming down to Cuba and bringing boards and bringing trucks and wheels. So when they have a board or a board breaks, it might be months before someone comes and brings them another board so that they can skate again.

**MINNA:** I'd be so desperate to just go out and skate. I'd be so-- I'd be losing my mind.

**JOY:** Yeah.

**NEFTALIE:** Yeah, well, that's what happens a lot of times there. They really are waiting for people to bring boards. So it's something where we really have to be friends, which as we were talking about earlier, that's what diplomacy is. It's making friends with people in other countries and trying to help out when you can.

**MINNA:** That's super cool.

**NEFTALIE:** We should have you come on one of our next trips.

**MINNA:** That'll be super fun.

**JOY:** I want to come, too, but I can't skate. So I can carry stuff. Well, thanks so much for coming on the show, Neftalie.

**MINNA:** It was super fun. It was really nice to meet you.

**NEFTALIE:** No problem. I really am excited to have talked to both of you.

**JOY:** We've heard about the kid pioneers who were making DIY skateboards since 1918 and possibly earlier.

**MINNA:** And the kids who invented tricks like the ollie.

**JOY:** Now listeners, we want to hear from you. Do you have an idea for the next great skateboarding innovation or maybe a revolutionary skateboard trick?

**MINNA:** Head to [foreverago.com](http://foreverago.com) to send us your ideas. Forever Ago is it brought to you by Brains On and American Public Media. It's produced by Sanden Totten, Molly Bloom, Mark Sanchez, and Elyssa Dudley.

**MINNA:** We had engineering help from John Miller, Donald Pause, and Nate Nauseda.

**JOY:** Production help comes courtesy of Lauren Dee. Our fact checker is Ryan Katz. We want to give a special thanks to Eric Ringham, Cameron Kal, James Kim, and Sid Raskin. What about you, Minna, any special thanks you want to give today?

**MINNA:** I would like to thank my parents. For my mom driving me here and my dad saying that I can do this. And my parents saying I could do this.

**JOY:** Awesome. All right. I think it's time for us to kick flip on out of here.

**MINNA:** Let's do it. Are you going to be all right, Joy?

**JOY:** Yeah. Just skate next to me so I can lean on you for support.

**MINNA:** OK. I'm here. You got this. Just keep kicking.

**JOY:** Oh, but it's working just fine now.

**MINNA:** It's working fine because I'm pulling you.

**JOY:** I'm OK with that.

**MINNA:** Whatever, just focus on steering.

**JOY:** With what steering wheel?

**MINNA:** With your feet, duh?

**JOY:** Minna, none of this was in my contract.