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Bruce Gabrielson, now 75, was instrumental in growing the sport of surfing in 1970s California and later, in Maryland. Photo courtesy of Gabrielson.

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SOUTHERN MD. SURFING LEGEND SELECTED FOR NATIONAL SURFING WALK OF FAME

July 19, 2022

The Chesapeake Bay is a slightly unexpected place to find a surfing legend. But Chesapeake Beach, Md.'s Bruce Gabrielson, 75, is counted among the greats, and now he's headed to the sport's walk of fame in California.

Gabrielson will join the "immortals of surfing" by being inducted into the prestigious [Surfing Walk of Fame](#) in Huntington Beach, Calif., aka "Surf City", on August 4th. A personalized granite stone will be placed in the sidewalk. The 29th annual induction will be held as part of the annual VANS US Open of Surfing.

Gabrielson has been surfing for more than 55 years.

"I was surprised when I got the news because I'm getting older and have been passed over by younger guys when nominated in recent years," Gabrielson told *Bay Bulletin*.

Gabrielson happened to be in Huntington Beach for its Fourth of July parade when notified of his selection by Peter Townend, former world champ and current International Surfing Museum director. He was selected from 41 finalists in the local legend category and over 200 total applicants in 2022. This time around he was nominated by Mike Downey, a member of the Huntington Beach High School surf team Gabrielson created and coached.

A lifelong advocate for surfing, Gabrielson first fell in love with the sport as a Huntington Beach native in 1960 after he and a friend borrowed the friend's brother's surfboard. They took to it like fish to water. He quickly came to be known as "The Huntington Beach Snake" thanks to his skill in competition, and helped grow the sport's popularity, participation, and professionalism in an equally speedy manner.

Gabrielson co-founded the first collegiate surfing league in the U.S. and worked to get surfing recognized as a competitive high school sport in the state of California. He also taught surfing through the 1970s and wrote a book to train other coaches. After 20 years of growing the sport in California, Gabrielson moved to Maryland.

His day job was with Naval Research Labs working on DARPA NET, a predecessor to the modern-day Internet developed for the U.S. military. On his own, he created what he believes to be the world's first surfing website in 1991.

In addition to setting the standards for surfing instruction, he opened his own surfing museum and art gallery in Chesapeake Beach, Calvert County in 2000. Ranked among Maryland's top 20 cultural museums by the Maryland Department of Tourism, it contains a wide array of paintings by surf artists and what is perhaps the largest collection of surf sculptures, including many made of driftwood by Gabrielson himself, in the country.

Reflecting on why he's put such an awe-inspiring amount of time and effort into supporting surfing around the Bay, Gabrielson says, "Few people in this area realize how big the surfing industry is (over \$3 billion), and even fewer appreciate what it took to develop both the industry and the sport over the years. So, since I've lived the sport since its golden years and have been involved with every aspect of it, it's been natural for me, a history buff at heart, to want to leave this legacy for newer generations."

And as for why Gabrielson fell in love with surfing in the first place?

"I love many things about surfing," says The Snake. "Although I had a long career in a very advanced technical field, surfing kept me grounded and happy appreciating the simple things. For example, when I meet my old surfing friends, we visit during our drive, sometimes stop for breakfast, and just enjoy socializing. We strive to leave our daily lives behind and focus on the simple pleasures that surfing—and being in nature—provides."

-Steve Adams