

Daily Pilot

Huntington Beach's Brett Simpson among the 2022 inductees into Surfing Walk of Fame

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Inductee Brett Simpson, a two-time U.S. Open of Surfing champion, poses with Peter Townend, left, and John Etheridge. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)

Huntington Beach's Brett Simpson started out surfing at a young age, 11 or 12 years old, though not as young as some of his peers.

"I started a little bit late," he said. "Right away I was intrigued by how difficult surfing is. I was playing a lot of ball sports and it was going good, but I ended up falling in love with surfing. Thank God my mom loved the beach because we didn't live close. We were about 20 minutes away, so it was important to

have someone in the family. My dad was a little bit skeptical at the start, but from then on it took over my life.”

That life has taken him to visit locales all over the world, but Surf City has remained home for Simpson.

The 2003 Huntington Beach High graduate was among several inducted into the [Surfing Walk of Fame](#) on Thursday morning on Main Street. They all got granite stones placed in the sidewalk in front of Walk of Fame sponsor Jack’s Surfboards.



Local surf hero Bruce Gabrielson shows his book “Gatherings of Greatness” as he makes comments during Thursday’s ceremony. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)

The other inductees at the 28th annual event included Huntington Beach native Bruce Gabrielson, the founder of the Edison High and Huntington Beach High surf teams, in the Local Hero category. Lance Carson was inducted as Surf Pioneer, while Jodie Cooper earned Woman of the Year accolades.

Al Hunt was inducted in the Honor Roll category, while the band Honk earned induction in the Surf Culture category.

Simpson, now 37, is well-known for winning back-to-back titles at the U.S. Open of Surfing in 2009 and 2010. He stays very involved in surfing. Last summer, he was the inaugural [head coach of the U.S. Olympic surfing team](#).

He was joined Thursday by numerous supporters, including his parents, wife Danielle and two children. He also gave shout-outs to numerous people including Huntington Beach surf coach Andy Verdone and members of his longtime sponsor, Hurley, that were in attendance.

“I never really visualized even winning U.S. Opens,” Simpson said. “My goal was to make the World Tour. I wanted to get on that World Tour, travel the world and surf those amazing waves. I ended up, in 2009, having pretty much the event of my life which catapulted me to a lot of success. In 2010, I had a lot of déjà vu moments that went my way again. Those obviously go down in history; they’re special.”



Members of the band Honk including Steve Wood, Richard Stekol, and Beth Fitchet, from left, at Thursday's ceremony. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)

Gabrielson also has had plenty of special moments in a life in surfing. He took an interest in surfboard shaping by the late 1960s. In 1967, he was elected president of the Huntington Beach Surfing Assn., and he held the position for a decade.

He launched Wave Trek surfboards in the 1970s and also made impressive waves in education, holding a Ph.D. in electrical engineering and advanced degrees in computer science and business.

“I’ve worked with some of the best scientists and engineers in the world on a daily basis,” said Gabrielson, who still shapes surfboards and is a board member of the International Surfboard Builders Hall of Fame. “When you work with those guys, your brain goes up in the clouds someplace. It’s hard to come back to earth. If it wasn’t for surfing, I don’t think I would have had an anchor. I could leave work, put on a different hat and get my buddies and go surfing.”

Thursday morning’s Surfing Walk of Fame induction ceremony, emceed by John Etheridge and Peter “PT” Townend, was also attended by local civic leaders. Huntington Beach Mayor Barbara Delgleize quoted surfing legend Kelly Slater during her remarks: “Surfing is like the mafia, once you’re in you cannot get out.”

Simpson, for one, has never wanted to leave.

“Surfing has given me so much,” he said. “I don’t know, surfing is the s—. I look at other sports and guys go, ‘I want to take a month off.’ I never feel that with surfing. I want to surf every day.”