

## My Personal Surfing Odyssey Bruce "Snake" Gbrielson

With my upcoming induction into the Maryland Surfing Hall of Fame, I've decided to write down my personal surfing odyssey on how I got here. I believe these dates are close, but maybe Bob Highsmith or Steve Walden have better dates.

In 1965 I started entering local contests, plus college surf team contests, and my friend John Geyer had me riding for Surfboards Hawaii on a Model A Surfboards Hawaii noserider. I did well enough in contests that I achieved a WSA rating around mid 1966. That got me on the Soul Surf Team. It was there that Dale Velzy taught me how to shape. When Dale left Soul, Steve Walden had just opened his shop in Huntington and I moved to the Walden Surf Team.

In 1968 I was drafted. Fortunately I had a friend where I could keep a board in Monterey, so was able to surf after basic. Since I had graduated as an electrical engineer, my training was fixing helicopter electronics. Fortunately, I after almost a year, I was located to my permanent base at an Army fort and missile site in Palos Verdes. I surfed around there plus it was an easy drive back to Huntington. It was also during this time that I became HBSA president and also started running some local contests.

The next big change was the short board revolution. In early, 1969, Chuck Ray and I had a chance to ride a reshaped longboard around 6' long in the Frog House in Newport. That was a big deal. Frank Petrillo was selling boards there, so Chuck and I immediately got on the Petrillo Team as their two Orange County riders. Dru Harrison and Mike Purpose were his South Bay team riders.

That fall another big thing happened to me. Dale Velzy decided to retire from shaping and asked me to stop by. He opened the back of my van and loaded in all is shaping equipment. That was the stimulus that caused Chuck and I to open Wave Trek Surfboards. We named it Wave Trek after the Star Trek TV show. Our motto was searching for new waves and. "Always going where no surfer had gone before." Not really true but it sounded good.

We started in a building in Costa Mesa then made boards under an awning in back of my parents house in Huntington. Our retail shop was in the paipo board shop next to Greek on Pacific Coast Highway. Within a few months my parents move to a new home on the corner of Garfield and Delaware. There was an old farmhouse on the back of their acre sized lot. It was perfect to move Wave Trek to it's permanent location. We made surfboards there until around 1975 or 76 when we also started making fiberglass fins and skateboards. I also got married in 1976 and took on a regular job, so Chuck DelRio took over all production in the shop.

I happened to pass through Southern Maryland on my honeymoon and it really reminded me of Huntington in the early days. So in 1980 when the aerospace industry slump hit Southern California, Maryland had plenty of jobs and that was the next stop for me. I made myself one last board at the shop before moving, and ended up riding that board for the next two years here. Chuck DelRio continued to make skateboards in HB under the name Trip Stix for a few years until he was seriously injured and had to close the shop down.

I competed on my Wave Trek, doing well in contests, until 1983 when I got on the Sundancer Surf Team. Although I had all my board building equipment in Maryland by then, I didn't have a good place to build boards so rode those shaped by others. Every now and then I would shape and glass a board for one of the locals I surfed with until around 1996 or 97 when I started making Wave Treks again. I was riding shortboards when in 2000 a Delaware local got me to try a longboard. I hadn't shaped a longboard since the 60s, so I only rode my Wave Treks in contests and preferred to ride other shapers longboards.

One of the first teams I got on was the Greg Noll Team when Jim Lucus was the team captain. My Noll was a good all around board but I felt a little sluggish on bigger waves. Of course I was still used to riding shortboards. After a couple of years, I used a Robert Strickland, and then I tried a Walden Magic Model. Wow, it handled larger waves like a shortboard. It was then that I started entering contests again, particularly the East Coast Surf Championships, both shortboard and longboard.

Next I was in Huntington a few years later and borrowed a Greek Stylemaster for a surf at Trestles. That day I got one of the longest backside noserides on my life. It was perfect. I decided to ride Stylemasters when the surf was smaller and I could do tricks.

My next challenge was to develop a longboard that would allow noseriding and tricks while still being fast and maneuverable on larger waves. After three designs I developed my Snake Model. The perfect board for me, plus many of my customers liked it as well. I sold a lot of them. My last shortboard competition was at the East Coast Surf Championships in 2014 at the ECSC, with my last longboard competition there in 2020. I'm now almost 79, have had 3 rotator cuff operations, a hip replacement and 3 back surgeries, so standing up on waves has become difficult for me. With arthritis in my right hand and difficulty standing for long periods, in December, 2023 I closed my Wave Trek shop here in Maryland.

It's been a good run, but like Bing told me, I've now graduated and just enjoy visiting.