

The Complete Surfing Guide for Coaches

**By Bruce C. Gabrielson PhD
the "Original Huntington Beach Snake"
"Founder of US High School Surfing"**

Author's Surfing Biography

I began surfing at the Seal Beach power plant in the early 1960s. Since surfing wetsuits were unknown back then, the warm water made this break one of the most popular places around. It was there that I got to know Chuck Linnen, Chuck Dent, and many of the other early day surfing locals.

My parents moved to Huntington Beach in 1964, where they still live. The primary local breaks I frequented in the early longboard days were between 22nd Street and the cliffs. There were a lot of isolated groups to surf with back then. I knew most of the local high school crowd, and had a few surfing buddies that I hung around with. My brother Carl also had a few surfing buddies that I surfed with occasionally. Raul Duarte (yes the Golden West College Surf Coach), John Geyer, Tom Hawk, Brian Taylor, Randy Overton, Brad Bayless, and the Leonardo brothers were some of my local surfing crew. Later surf friends included Chuck Ray, David Nuuhiwa, Jeff Smith (whom I took to Hawaii with me his first time), David Van Druff, John Van Ornum, LaRoy Dennis, Gary Diss, Tim Wirick, Jack Sahakian, John Guild, Dana Kimbrow, Randy Lane, Rusty Johnston, Bernie Keech, Mike Fisher, and all those on the HBHS surf teams I coached. I still occasionally visit with former team member and good friend Rick Fugnetti at Rockin Figg's on Main St. in Huntington.



Jeff Smith and I at the HB Pier (North Side)

In the late 1960s, after becoming HBSA president, I started to surf the pier regularly. From then until around 1977 I virtually lived near there. While the south side was my favorite spot, I also

spent a great deal of time up and down the West Coast and in Hawaii for surf contests and on various trips.

It was the locals around the pier who gave me the nickname "Snake". I don't remember being super aggressive as a pier surfer, although as a HB local all of us were somewhat aggressive when we were younger, but I did make the south side my home. I think Greg Duzich first started calling me Snake because of a female disagreement, but somehow the name really caught on. Robert Milfield started air brushing me Snake boards after that which I subsequently rode for many years. One of those boards is on the cover of my coaching book. I should also note that snaking had a little different meaning back then. Also two of my proteges, David Van Druff and Jeff Smith, also earned the nickname. In their cases, they were usually called "Snake Juniors" when I was around.



Me at the HB Pier (South Side)



Me Dropping in at Sunset

During the late 1960s to early 1970s I also attended California State University Long Beach, and was one of the founders of the first inter-collegiate surfing association. Then, while in graduate

school, I founded the first official high school surfing league and first varsity surfing team in the US at Huntington Beach High School.

Around 1969, Chuck ray and I decided to open Wave Trek Surfboards, first in Costa Mesa, and then moving to an old building behind my parents home in Huntington. I mostly shaped and glassed at first, but finally did about everything. Many great surfers rode Wave Treks over the years, and the business did well until a robbery about 1978 forced me to close down. By then LaRoy Dennis and I were building all the boards.

Wave Trek

SURFBOARDS

In 1976, I married Kim Way, daughter of Jim Way, Huntington's then Director of Beaches, and suddenly had much less time to spend in the water. I became a weekend surfer and full time parent shortly thereafter.

I moved to Maryland in the early 1980s and started surfing for Sundancer Surfboards. Dale, then owner of Sundancer, had been around about as long as I have, and we seemed to get along well. I entered local contests for the first few years I was here, and had a decent Maryland ESA ranking. When the local contest format changed a few years ago so I couldn't plan when to show for heats (I don't like to ruin an entire day), I decided to retire after over 25 years competing. The local ESA director at that time didn't want "outside" judges, so I don't judge in Maryland anymore either.

My favorite spot now is 64th Street in Ocean City. I also have recently decided that I enjoy the Indian River Inlet in Delaware, and Wildwood in New Jersey.

I ride a shorter 8' fun board and a Greg Noll Skip Savage Model longboard. Close surf friends include Skip, who is a very good "old timer" (ESA Legend), Darryl Hatheway of Surfrider fame, Art Martens, Walley Abrams, plus several younger hot shots and beginners. While both my sons, my youngest Kevin is the most active. I also like skateboarding and some snowboarding in the winter. I've got arthritis in my ankle, so can't surf in the winter here.

I still get to many of the big contests on the West Coast, but now only as a visitor and spectator. I always manage to see old friends, "catch a few waves", visit the local shops (especially Rockin Fig's), and tell stories to visitors at the Surfing Museum (along with many other of the old crew I've noticed) when in Huntington. Chris Cattell and I go way back, and he always seems to be around when I stop by.

Although I live in Maryland, when the International Surfing Museum was founded in Huntington Beach, I was one of the first 10 life members to enroll. I have also donated several articles and historical objects to them.

Regarding early to mid-90's activities, my wife and I were members of the AAU Surfing Committee. Hopefully, through efforts of organizations like this and others, surfing will become an Olympic sport someday. I also am a regular speaker at various schools and organizations on the East Coast talking about historical surfing activities and Surfrider. For local activities, I hang around with the 62nd Street Longboard Club in Ocean City, Maryland. In 1993 I visited Hawaii's North Shore after a 20-year lapse and saw old friends Jimmy Blears and Glen Kalakaquii.

As for other old friends, "Snake Junior" Jeff Smith still keeps in close contact, and I nearly always visit him when I'm in Huntington. Jim Lucas and I have also become friends in recent years due to our background in both surfing and wrestling. Many of the old HB surfing crew email me often particularly David Nuuhiwa, John Mitchell, Des Whelan, Randy Overton, David Hilts, Steve Holt, Greg Escalante, and Bryan Taylor. Bernie Keech also sends me updates.



Walley Abrams, Me, Art Martens, Skip Savage at Indian River

Few of the old time surfers ever make it to Maryland, but some do visit occasionally. I have become a very good tour guide around Washington D.C.



Jimmy Blears and I at Sunset

This biography was last updated in January 1998

Author's Current and Past (some way past) Affiliations

President, South Sea Surf Club

Semi-sponsored by Surfboard's Hawaii during longboard era (mid 60s)

President, Huntington Beach Surfing Association (1967-1977)

Designer and Surf Team Member, Soul Surfboards (where I was taught to shape by Dale Velzy)

Surf Team Member, Petrillo Surfboards

Surf Team Member, Walden Surfboards

Shaper, Designer, Glasser and Owner, Wave Trek Surfboards

District 5 Director, Western Surfing Association (WSA)

Competition Rules Committee Chairman, WSA and USSA

#3 Competition Ranking, WSA

3rd Place, United States Surfboard Championships

Board of Directors, United States Surfboard Championships

Contest Director, United States Surfboard Championships (I'm the person telling Corky Carroll that I didn't make the rules in the movie 5-Summer Stories)

Judge, United States Surfboard Championships (and many other events)

Co-founder, Coach, and Captain, Cal. State Long Beach Surf Club

Founding Member, Western Intercollegiate Surfing Council (First US College Surfing Organization)

Founder, Edison High School Surf Club

Founder and First Varsity Coach, Huntington Beach High School Surf Team (First US HS to Formally Recognize Surfing as a Varsity Sport)

Founder, Orange Coast Surfing League (First Official High School Surfing League in US - Recognized by CIF)

Eastern Surfing Association, Maryland District Member

Eastern Surfing Association, Delaware District Member

Co-Founder, 1st Delaware High School Surfing League

Sundancer Surfboards Contest Team

Surfing Chairman, Potomac Valley Association, AAU

Surfing Contest Director, Capital Games (DC State Games)

National Surfing Committee, Amateur Athletic Union

Life Member (one of first ten), International Surfing Museum

Established the Internet's First Surfing Oriented Web Site (1993)

Member - Washington DC Chapter, Surfrider Foundation

Member - Big Stick Surf Club (Santa Cruz, CA)

Member - 62nd Street Longborder's Club in Ocean City, MD

Member - "Ironman" Surfing/Wrestling Hall-of-Fame

Chairman - USSF Olympic Recognition Committee