

My 2001 Trip Home Huntington Beach Bruce "Snake" Gabrielson

October 4-10, 2001

I had been on the road during the previous week at the Eastern Surfing Championships in Hattaras. Seeing a lot of friends on the beach during a competition just isn't the same as getting in some quality water time with surfers you've known for most of your life. This was to be a good trip home for me. I wanted to visit my parents for my mother's birthday and I hadn't been to Huntington for nearly a year, so despite all the international turmoil, a vacation it was.

I didn't arrive in Huntington until late on Thursday. I made some calls to friends and visited with my parents, then off to bed suffering jet lag for a few hours sleep. Next morning at 4:30 am I was up and ready for a session at Churches with long time friends Mike Downey and Bob "The Greek" Bolen. Actually, it was Bob, Mike, and several other old time Huntington locals who showed up for a surf. Mike lives near San Luis Obispo but was in town for a few days visiting his father as well.

It was still dark when we arrived in the state park lot and we couldn't see up to the break about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north. Mike and I were ready so while everyone else was socializing we began the long walk up to the break. Churches produces mostly rights but this day the lefts were hollow, chest to overhead, and smoking. I was riding a 9' Greek with a rounded pin, plus was using a Turbo Tunnell fin. Greek is a great shaper who knows his stuff. However, I admitted to him that I hadn't ridden one of his boards since the time I had him shape a board for me to use at a US Championships around 1971. I placed on a Greek with a Wave Trek decal. He will never get over that one.



You would think that showing up with your own crowd would reduce the waves you got but this wasn't the case. There were a couple of good peaks breaking and everyone but the shortboarders got nearly all the waves they wanted. I stayed with the hollow lefts while most everyone else wanted the longer rights. Mike, who still surfs for Hurley, was the only shortboarder in our group so we would give him a wave every now and then.

The HB locals group in the picture at Churches are left to right: Shane Lindsey, Jim Hoskins, Bob " the Greek" Bolen, Bruce " the Snake" Gabrielson, Mike Downey, Pat Honrath.

As we were driving back after our long session, Greek got a call from Corky Carroll who it turns out was not far behind us on the freeway. I get emails every now and then from Corky, but

hadn't spoken to him in over a year. Corky and Greek were having lunch at Avila's later and I planned to stop for a visit after a meeting I had that morning with some old South Bay friends.

When I arrived at Avila's, Greek and Corky were talking about my argument with Corky at the 1970 US Championships shown in the movie 5 Summer Stories. Corky will likely never get over it no matter how old we get. It's always interesting to speculate on though.



I stopped at the International Surfing Museum on 5th after lunch and saw Anne Beesley and her husband. I know Anne isn't around that often and it's great that the last two times I visited HB she happened to be at the museum. We talked for quite awhile and I met with some visitors before I had to leave for my next scheduled activity.

I headed over to Golden West College to visit with old buds Dale Deffner, GW's Head Wrestling Coach and Raul Duarte, GW's Assistant Wrestling Coach and Head Surfing Coach.

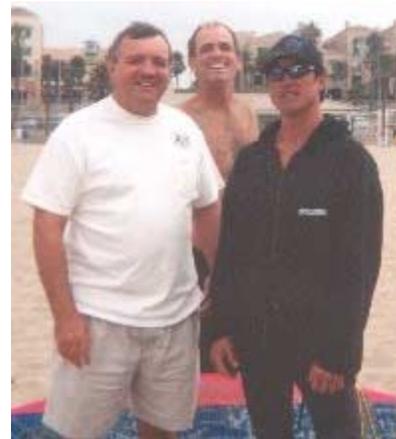
Raul was one of my first local surfing partners in the early 60s, then later also became one of my regular wrestling partners at Long Beach State where Dale wrestled and coached. Raul was Senior Class VP when Robert August was President at Huntington/Marina HS in the early 60s. Although my age, he still rips on a shortboard when he surfs. I keep in contact with Dale all the time but Raul refuses to use email.



Maybe one of these days?



Next morning I was up early having breakfast with my father at Denny's when George Draper happened to sit down at the table right next to us. I've known George since he started George's Surf Shop on Main Street in HB during the 60s. He brought me up to speed on what all his old crew were doing, plus I mentioned to him about the emails I get from "weird" Harold every now and then.



After breakfast I walked down to the pier's south side for the annual HB Locals Contest. I started that contest 31 years ago so locals could qualify for the US Surfboard Championships. It was interesting that two of the original competitors, Roy Crump and Guy Spagnoli were both still competing after all this time. While I was at the contest I ran into several more

of my lifelong friends. Many of old the HB crew like Robert August, Corky and Buddy Llamas travel a lot and are always off someplace when I see them. The say around home locals I hardly



ever see. I moved to Maryland in 1983, only getting back to visit a few days each year. Last year I attended the HBSA 30 year reunion and saw many of my old friends. However, there were plenty of others at this contest like Randy Lewis and Randy Weeden that I hadn't visited with in several years. One more thing I did notice at the contest was that these young kids I remember are now surfing seniors. I'm getting older and simply have to start visiting more often.

There was a great band playing at the Surf Museum later on in the afternoon so I stopped again to socialize for awhile. When I finally left the beach area, myself plus John Mitchell and his wife had been invited to have dinner that evening with Guy

Spagnoli and his entire family at the pizza parlor he manages. It was a lot of fun but after a few drinks I decided to tone it down a little as I still had one more stop to make before the evening ended.

I arrived at the Newport Beach Golf Club just as the awards were being presented for the Coalition of Surf Clubs "Surf and Golf" outing that took place in Newport Saturday. At the club another large group of surfers were partying the night away to a great band. I really wanted to visit with old friends Mike Spence and Jim Angeley. Our schedules were all so full that this was the only time slot we would be able to see each other this trip. The band was loud and I was tired, so after about an hour I headed to my parents for some sleep before another busy day.



Sunday morning early I was sitting at Sugar Shack waiting for breakfast with John Mitchell and one of my oldest and closest surfing friends, Chuck Linnen. Chuck is a legend in the surfing world having been the area's dominant surfer in the 50s to mid-60s when most of us



were groms. I first met Chuck in the early 60s and we have shared many good times and memories over the years.

After breakfast we headed down to the pier again for the second day of competition and a visit with many more old friends including Pat Downey and Gary Sahagen. Pat works for Southern California Edison and still judges serious surf contests while Gary is busy with the HB Longboard Crew, Huntington's premier surf club. Pat had his kids with him and was getting tugged all over the place. Gary was in the senior finals and seemed geared to win in the still difficult surf. Actually, he did win a little later on.

For lunch, Chuck took me to Jan's Sandwich Shop. Jan's is owned by Jan Gaffney, an early day surfing legend, who still makes smoothies and health food sandwiches just like she did for many years in the back of George's Surf Shop. She also still does most of the sandwich making herself I noticed.



The rest of the day and evening was spent with my brother and family at a party. My brother Carl has just completed a hip replacement and is eager to get back to normal again. We were looking through some old surfing pictures and found one of him in an old South Sea Surf Club group picture.



Monday morning I was at Greek's before 5am for another trip to Churches. Greek was going on about how someone actually wakes up before him to go surfing, then realized I'm three hours ahead and early there is like sleeping in at home. Churches was smaller and not very consistent, but when the waves did come through they were well shaped. There were a few other surfer's out but Greek and I both had plenty of waves. Greek did manage to "Snake the Snake" at least twice during the exceptionally long session.

While we were in the water, I ran into a relative, the husband of my wife's cousin, Debbie Bushard. Mike lives in Cardiff, but was up with a friend named Natcho for the morning surf. Mike looked slightly familiar but I hadn't seen him since the 80s and didn't recognize him at first. He was talking to Greek in the water when he mentioned three of my wife's cousins. I made the connection real quick. All those years in Huntington and this session was the first time I had ever surfed with him. Mike is retired military, so had a pass to the campground right at the break. After pushing a youngster who got his mother's car stuck in the sand, he gave Greek and I a ride back to the state beach, saving us a long walk.

Not much to report during the day Monday as I needed a nap. I did get over to Rockin Fig's Surfboards later on for a short visit with Rick Fignetti. Rick had been competing in a contest out of the area all weekend and I hadn't expected to visit with him this trip. He was not only on my first surf team at Huntington Beach HS, but he was actually in a math class I taught there when I started the team. Interestingly, when I walked into his shop, Bob Conger was there with his son



picking up a new board. Bob's son is currently on the HBHS Surf Team. Rick and I talked about next year's USSF Championships and his plans to finally win it. I told him if he was that serious about winning then I was going to hang in there at contests for another year and be there to party, regardless of where it was held.

Tuesday morning I was on a plane heading home. I wasn't thrilled about flying after the international events of the previous few days, but two rolls of film and lots of memories was well worth the trouble. As Greek says, I'm a displaced HB local who will always have his roots to come back to.