

Bob “the Greek” Bolen

Bruce Gabrielson interview 12/29/2006

Q: Tell us a little about your history. When/where did you first begin surfing?

A: I started surfing in Dohenny Beach in 1958. I had a home made 9' 4" balsa. I surfed on a Holden beginning in 1959.

Q: When did you open your Greek Surfboards shop, get into shaping, and did anyone help you learn?

A; In 1960 I moved to Huntington Beach. I started shaping with a blank I got from Holden and basically learned on my own. I started selling Greek Surfboards in the Hang 5 T-shirt Shop on Main and Pacific Coast Highway in 1961.

Q: What is one of your greatest surfing memory?

A: I've had many great memories. Some of my most memorable early day trips were in 1961 when I went on a 2 week surfing safari north to Santa Cruz in a 1947 Mercury Woodie. I went on another trip to Wind and Sea where I met Butch Van Artsdale.

Q: What surfers influenced you most in your life and from what perspective?

A; I liked to watch the early day surfing movies. Some of the early surfing stars who influenced me included Illia Kalama, Mickey Munoz, Phil Edwards, Corky Carroll, and David Nuuhiwa.

Q: When did you get involved with the contest scene?

A: I'm not really sure. I've surfed contests off and on for many years. I surfed in the US Championships in 1964.

Q: Describe your surfing "stoke". What is most pleasurable to you?

A: It's relaxing with just you and the wave. When I'm on a wave I forget everything else. You can't have problems cluttering up your mind when you surf.

Q: What was your worst surfing wipeout?



A: I was surfing Tamarac Street on a head high day when I got a face first wall. I went over the falls backwards and was really hammered into the bottom.

Q: Describe your perfect conditions.

A: I like a slightly overhead long right with slight off-shore winds and one other person out. You need someone in the lineup to talk to and watch your good waves.

Q: What is your preferred longboard design?

A: I like a full nose rounded pin or square tail noserider with low rails. I prefer a 9' to 9' 4" length with a 7 ½ inch fin. The Turbo Tunnell fin design in invented works great with this board shape.

Q: What is your favorite maneuver?

A: Noseriding

Q: What do you consider the greatest threat to surfing?

A: Pollution is the number one threat.

Q: Is there any thoughts or wisdom you would like to pass along to future surfers?

A: If we want to keep surfing we absolutely have to start taking better care of the ocean – learn to respect it.

Other ideas:

What was your best model and why?

What were some of your surf shop experiences around Huntington Beach in the 60s and 70s?

What is most appealing to you about the surfing lifestyle – then & now?

