Cape Fear Surfing Archive William Randall Library, UNC Wilmington

The Cape Fear Surfing Archive was created in 2002 and is a subset of Special Collections at UNCW's Randall Library. The archive's collections focus primarily on preserving the heritage of surfing along North Carolina's southeastern coast although some materials reflect surfing history at the regional, national, or international level.

Surfing's Impact on American Culture

Nat Young, an influential Australian surfer once proclaimed, "Surfers are members of a different race of people from the man in the street." It has also been noted that our coasts "evoke many personal images: quiet sunrise walks, family vacations long past, [days of big surf with close friends], finally landing the "big one" that didn't get away. These are the images that remind us about what we are truly trying to preserve. Throughout our history writers and poets have helped us crystallize these feelings." With a stated mission to "make optimum use of available resources and to celebrate, study, and protect the rich heritage, the quality of life, and the environment of the coastal region in which it is located," the University of North Carolina Wilmington's relationship with the community has long been established.² Supporting this mission, William Madison Randall Library's presence in the region has been equally notable. With special collections that highlight various facets of the area's history, Randall Library has served as a community beacon for preserving and celebrating the Cape Fear Region's rich heritage. While viewed by many as simply a recreational activity, surfing has been an integral part of generations of individuals and families in many coastal communities, especially those in the Cape Fear Region. Not only has surfing served as a physical activity, it has also served as a cornerstone for families, friendships, and social interaction and development. It has transcended the ocean and become culturally visible in many lives through fashion, art, film, music, literature, and craftsmanship, while also developing a sense of appreciation and respect for the coastal environment. Surfing luminary, Bruce Brown, noted that "what became a "lifestyle" later was just how we lived without giving it much thought."³ Of course, while surfing has been discussed generally as a subset of beach history, its foundations, development, and impact on the region's cultural fabric or economic landscape has not been comprehensively documented or understood. With extensive documentation and preservation of the region's surfing history, William Randall Library ultimately hopes to provide a forum where future generations of scholars, students, and community members can study, enjoy, and actively celebrate this special aspect of life in the Cape Fear Region.

Surfing as a Special Collection

The challenge in developing a special collections area is twofold. On one hand there is the mandate to keep special collections unique or special. On the other is the need to support the academic mission of the institution. Can the two goals be successfully met? In the case of a surfing collection, the presence of surfing and its relationship with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and regional community has long been long established. What has not been established is tangible documentation of that connection. One may question the uniqueness of collecting surfing related material, and it could be said that surfing is just another student pastime, similar to catching frisbee or playing hacky sack. The argument for collecting surf related material is that in addition to affecting the university makeup, surfing has had a lasting regional, cultural and social impact, arguably more so than many other recreational activities. Furthermore, as a collecting subject other area institutions have either ignored the possibilities or relegated surfing to a subset

¹ State of the Coast: Evoking the Coast. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1998. http://state-of-coast.noaa.gov/intro/html/evoking.html Last accessed March 5, 2003.

² Mission Statement. University of North Carolina Wilmington. Adopted by the Board of Trustees, July 21, 2000.

³ Drew Kampion, *Stoked: a History of Surf Culture*, 1st ed. Santa Monica, CA: General Publishing Group, 1997: pg.21.

of general beach history. By actively collecting and developing a surfing collection, the Special Collections Department at Randall Library has the opportunity to set itself apart from similar departments at its peer institutions while actively celebrating a special aspect of life in the Cape Fear Region.

Goals and Objectives

Embarking on a multi-year endeavor to document surfing's presence in the Cape Fear Region, William Randall Library hopes to capture the essence of surfing through the collection and preservation of artifacts and interviews. The acquisition of such artifacts includes art, music, films, photographs, posters, t-shirts, surfboards, and other materials in its efforts to preserve surfing's story. While these articles will convey a certain physical representation of surfing's development, they alone will not describe the passionate relationship shared between surfers and the ocean. As such, Randall Library will also be supplementing the collection with video-taped interviews of individuals who helped to shape and define the area's surfing community and bring life to this already impressive collection.

- 1. To collect, organize, preserve, and make permanently available a historical record documenting the development of surfing in the Cape Fear Region of North Carolina;
- 2. To collect and maintain an archive of contemporary Southeastern North Carolina surfing history;
- 3. To collect and preserve, through the use of videotaped interviews, unique and valuable information about Southeastern North Carolina surfing history that exists only in people's memories and would otherwise be lost;
- 4. To develop and maintain a website highlighting the history of surfing in Southeastern North Carolina;
- 5. To increase and promote the value and visibility of William Randall Library at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) in Southeastern North Carolina;
- 6. To further strengthen the relationship between UNCW and the Southeastern North Carolina community;
- 7. To promote UNCW and the Cape Fear Region as an ideal academic experience for prospective students who wish to obtain a quality education while enjoying unique coastal lifestyles;
- 8. To increase awareness regarding the environmental and recreational values of North Carolina's coastlines.

How can you participate in this important project?

We are always looking for donations to support the collection. This can take the form of art, music, film, photographs, posters, letters, diaries, t-shirts, surfboards, and other ephemera. Oral histories are another significant component of the archive which describes the personal contributions of individuals in their own words to the development of surfing in southeastern North Carolina. These interviews supplement the collections and provide insights from prominent individuals as well as those who may be otherwise absent from official histories on the subject.

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