

Mike Doyle

Surfers, friends and fans gathered at the Hermosa Beach Pier on Sunday, Oct. 20, to pay tribute to one of the South Bay's greatest surf innovators.

A paddle-out and memorial was held in honor of Mike Doyle, one of the original "hot doggers," who helped put the South Bay on the map not only with his stylish and powerful skills on waves, but also through his craftsmanship shaping boards in the early years of modern-day surfing.

Doyle, who spent his later years living in Mexico with his wife, Annie, following his dream as an artist, died April 30 at age 78, after a long battle with ALS.

Doyle was born in 1941 and grew up in Lawndale. He caught his first wave at the Manhattan Beach Pier in 1954, at age 13, after watching South Bay icons such as Dale Velzy and Greg Noll ride waves there. He worked as an apprentice to those same surfers building balsa boards in 1959.

It wasn't long before Doyle, himself, became a pivotal figure in the South Bay and Malibu surf culture.

He paved the way for the massive explosion of surf popularity, selling Kathy Kohner-Zuckerman, the real-life "Gidget," her first surfboard and later appearing as a stunt double in a Gidget film. He also worked alongside boogie board inventor Tom Morey in 1970 to create the first soft-top surfboards, the same designs seen today around the world as novices take to the water on beginner boards.

"If there's a show, Doyle's in it ... he's one of the original hot-doggers," said Morey, after his longtime friend's passing.

Competitively, Doyle was among the world's best in the '50s and '60s, earning numerous surf championships including the Duke Kahanamoku title and the West Coast Surfboard Championship.

He was inducted into the Surfer's Hall of Fame in Hermosa Beach in 2013.

Doyle also is a member of the Surfers' Hall of Fame and Surfing Walk of Fame in Huntington Beach, inducted to both in 2003, and the International Surfboard Builders Hall of Fame, where he was inducted in 2009.