

Big Wave Surfing Pioneer Mickey Muñoz to Join Watermen's Plaza in Dana Point



An artist's rendering of the statue of legendary surfer Mickey Muñoz (right)), next to a vintage photo of him in action, will be the eighth statue added to Watermen's Plaza in Dana Point. Photo: Courtesy of City of Dana Point

BY BREEANA GREENBERG

After surfing for over seven decades, legendary big wave surfer and longtime Capistrano Beach resident Mickey Muñoz will join Hobie Alter, Phil Edwards, and Joyce Hoffman with a life-sized statue at Watermen's Plaza in Dana Point.

The Dana Point City Council unanimously approved the next addition to Watermen's Plaza during its meeting on Tuesday night, Nov. 19.

A statue of Walter and Philip Hoffman, the seventh of 11 total statues planned for the plaza, is set to be unveiled soon. Muñoz will be the eighth life-sized, bronze statue to join the plaza along Pacific Coast Highway.

Bill Limebrook, who designed each of the bronze statues at Watermen's, will craft the life-sized bronze statue of Muñoz. The project is budgeted to cost no more than \$220,000.

The statue will be modeled after a photo taken from the Encyclopedia of Surfing depicting Muñoz surfing in the “quasimoto” stance he invented in 1959, a hotdog maneuver in which the surfer hunkers over while angling across a small wave, head just above the knees, and stretches both arms out horizontally in line with the surfboard.

It’s similar to a head-dip, but with added flair. He once told Dana Point Times that the stance “is like a bull-fighting matador” and is the best position to get into the tube as far as possible. He also invented other stances including “mysterioso” and “el telephono.”

Muñoz began surfing at 10 years old and was among the first to surf big waves at Waimea Bay, Hawaii.

“Up to the point we rode it, Waimea was considered unrideable,” he once told DP Times. “But we were young and dumb enough.” He added that he didn’t realize how big the wave was – it was about 20-footplus – and that the critical takeoffs and lack of leashes led to a “very dramatic moment.”

In 1965, Muñoz won the Tom Morey Invitational nose-riding contest, placed second in the U.S. Championships and fourth in the World Championships, according to a City of Dana Point staff report.

Muñoz, nicknamed “The Mongoose,” later began designing and shaping surfboards for Hobie and was inducted into the Surfer’s Hall of Fame in Huntington Beach in 2006.

He has appeared in over a dozen movies since 1958, including Search for Surf and Liquid Stage: The Lure of Surfing. He also was featured in the 2004 surf documentary Riding Giants.

He also is well-known for his work as a stuntman in the surf movie Gidget in 1959 in which the 5-foot-4 Muñoz donned a wig and a bikini and rode waves as Gidget, portrayed by actress Sandre Dee.

Councilmember Michael Villar noted that having surfing pioneers such as Muñoz living in the community makes Capistrano Beach a special place to live.

“I just find it interesting that we live in such a great place; you have a guy like Mickey Muñoz walking around, and you probably saw him at, like, Ralphs or

Albertsons and didn't even know that this guy was a super famous surfer," Villar said.

The city anticipates the statue to be completed by December 2025.