



William Seldon Hixon

July 8, 1943 - April 12, 2012

Bill Hixon was a legend in the rarefied world of Florida surfing, where intrepid young people relish tropical storms and other coastal upheavals that send normal people fleeing, to test their skill and courage against the wild waves.

He opened one of the East Coast's first surf shops in Neptune Beach in 1964. He went on to open two more surf shops, and organized surfing teams that competed on both coasts. And he created his own boards. He was, in short, a surfing legend at a time when the Beach Boys were singing about catching a wave and capturing the imaginations of young would-be beach bums, who would then join the "cool" guys at Hixon's Surf Shop and soak up the ambience.

Move on to Pennsylvania a couple of decades later and Bill Hixon had become a successful commercial real-estate appraiser, much in demand for his efficiency and integrity. The contrast was not as dramatic as it seems, because Bill was a guy who took his natural entrepreneurial gifts, his creative energy and his work ethic to every endeavor he undertook.

"He always thought outside the box," said his wife, the Rev. Beth Hixon, an Episcopal priest. "He was always on the cutting edge of things."

William S. Hixon, who was also active in the three Philadelphia area churches

with which his wife was associated, lending his smooth baritone to the choirs and serving as a leader in working out the logistics of a vital medical mission to Guatemala, died April 12 after a six-month battle with metastatic esophageal cancer. He was 68 and was living in the Keystone House, a hospice in Montgomeryville, and had formerly lived in North Wales since 1997.

Bill Hixon always had a compassionate concern for others since his childhood in Daytona Beach where his parents took in troubled young people who needed a loving home.

“He said he never knew who he would find at the dinner table,” his wife said.

While running his surfing business in Florida, he enjoyed mentoring the young people who were attracted to the surfing world. He taught math at a local junior high school and at church schools. He and organized a triathlon in Jacksonville to raise funds for a fine-arts program.

Bill Hixon was raised in Daytona Beach by his late father, Alvin Eugene Hixon, an Army Air Corps colonel in World War II and a veterinarian and teacher, and mother, Martha Backus Hixon.

He was a 1961 graduate of Daytona’s Mainland High School and went on to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Florida.

Bill was an outstanding swimmer, specializing in long-distance events, and was a skilled surfer. He opened his first surf shop when he was 21 and remained a legend in the Florida surf world for 25 years.

He arrived in Neptune Beach with 25 surfboards in the back of an old bread truck. He leased a site next to Red and Jim’s Barber Shop and opened his business. He and his first wife, Betty, lived in the shop and washed off behind

it with a garden hose.

“He put Jacksonville on the surfing map,” the Florida Times-Union quoted a surfboard shaper in a January article.

“He laid the groundwork for what this surf town is today,” another man was quoted. “He’s the godfather of surfing here.”

With a degree in real-estate appraisal, Bill began working in that field in Florida, and later moved to New York City for a short time before moving to the Philadelphia area where his wife was pursuing her church career. She was associated with St. Matthew’s in Maple Glen, then St. Martin in the Fields in Chestnut Hill and then at the Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr, where she is associate rector.

As a real-estate appraiser, Bill did a lot of work for the Corps of Engineers, working on its many regional projects.

He became active with the Epiphany Medical Mission to Guatemala and he and his wife, a former nurse, traveled there. Bill arranged the financing, transportation and other logistical challenges.

“He had those gifts,” his wife said.

Bill met Beth when both were singing on the University of Florida choir during its tours. Bill was attracted to the young singer and told the choir director that he could do a better job of placing the singers in the most advantageous configurations. “I found myself always right in front of him,” she said.

Bill was a passionate collector and loved garage sales. He left his family with

an extensive collection of old artifacts, including a floor-type cash register that was the very devil to transport from Florida.

“He was very bright, very flexible,” Beth said of her husband. “He was a phlegmatic person who could always roll with the punches. He was open and easy to get to know.”

Besides his wife, he is survived by his mother; a son, Jerry Hixon; a daughter, Victoria Hayes; a brother, John Hixon; two sisters, Kathy Brown and Lee Gittner, and four grandchildren.

Services: 11 a.m. May 19 at the Church of the Redeemer, 230 Pennswood Road, Bryn Mawr. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Episcopal Relief and Development, P.O. Box 7058, Merrifield, Va. 22116-7058.

Contact John F. Morrison at 215-854-5573 or morrisj@phillynews.com, or on Twitter [@johnfmorrison](https://twitter.com/johnfmorrison).

Previous Events

Service

MAY **19**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Church of The Redeemer
230 Pennswood Road
Bryn Mawr, PA