



AS IT IS

## 89-year-old Japanese Man Has No Plans to Stop Surfing

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In the early part of his life, Seiichi Sano was a busy business owner. Later in life, he took on other difficult activities. At the age of 80, he climbed Mount Fuji, Japan's highest mountain. Soon after, he started surfing.

Sano turns 90 later this year. After being recognized by Guinness World Records as the oldest male to surf, he's considering trying other activities.

"Maybe I'll try bouldering," he said, suggesting he might do it first in a gym. "Outside it might be a bit dangerous."

But maybe he will just stick with what he knows.

"I think it would be interesting to try to surf until I'm 100," Sano said. "I think I take better care of myself when I have goals like this. Even now, I take better care of myself than I did before."

Sano lives in a place about 20 minutes from Yokohama. He gets out most weekends on the black-sand beach near Enoshima. It is the small island that held sailing competitions during the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympic Games that took place in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sano said he got the idea to try surfing from a worker at his local bank. The man's skin was always tan and he did not look like a usual banker. His secret, he said, was surfing. So, Sano found a teacher.

“I don’t consider myself an old man,” he said in his wet suit, board standing next to him. “I have never thought of myself as an old person. I always feel that I can still move forward. I can still do it. I can still enjoy it.”

Sano joined hundreds of other surfers recently at Enoshima. All the surfers were younger, of course. Several young students who also work with Sano’s surf teacher, 46-year-old Kazuto Shimizu, talked about Sano.

“I think age doesn’t matter in surfing,” 12-year-old Iroha Shimabukuro said.

Added her twin sister, Fuka: “He’s more like a family member regardless of age.”

“I think he’s amazing,” said their younger brother, Shua.

Rokka Saito, the other young surfer in the group of four, summed it up. “I respect him,” she said.

“To be honest, I was surprised by his age,” said Shimizu, Sano’s surfing teacher. “I was most worried that he would get injured. I did not know how fit he was, physically.”

Sano still runs a business that supplies wood to building companies. He works 9-to-5 at the job. Surfing eases tension for him.

Sano joked about surfing in the delayed Tokyo Games, held just under two years ago.

“I was hoping to participate in the Tokyo Olympics, not as a competitor but as an old-age demonstrator,” he said.

Sano regularly does a complete set of stretching exercises before going out. When he stands, he’s straight as his board — though at 1.65 meters, far shorter.

“People often say that surfing is life, itself,” he said. “If I describe it in one word, I think it really applies to me right now.”

I’m John Russell.

*Stephen Wade reported on this story for the Associated Press. John Russell adapted it for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**surfing** – *n.* the activity of riding waves on a special board

**bouldering** – *n.* a kind of free climbing practiced on indoor walls or outdoor rock formations

**sailing** – *n.* the sport or activity of traveling on water in a sailboat

**tan** – *adj.* having skin that has been made darker by the sun's rays

**wet suit** – *n.* rubber clothing that is worn by swimmers and divers to keep their bodies warm

**demonstrator** – *n.* a person who shows other people how something is done

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