

CARLETON PROF SURFS MORE THAN THE WEB

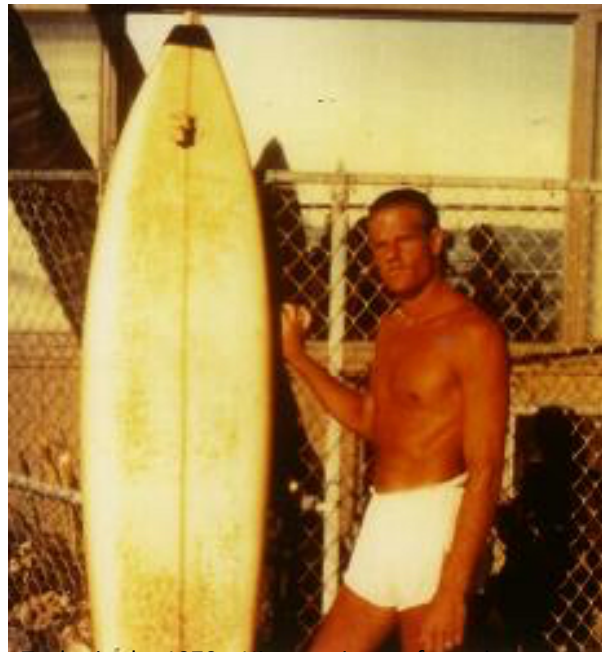
By Lauren Krugel

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Richard Taylor discusses surfing surfing and life in his new book.

In his travel memoir, *House Inside the Waves: Domesticity, Art and the Surfing Life*, Richard Taylor uses his experiences surfing in virtually every exotic locale as a backdrop to discuss his family life and tackle some of life's most profound questions.

Taylor currently lectures on 20th Century Literature and leads writing workshops at Carleton. He wrote a draft of *House Inside The Waves* while his family was on a house exchange on the Australian coast.



Taylor in the 1970s. His experiences from these years of his life inspired much of *House Inside the Waves*.

"It was a fantasy of mine to write a book about the big mystery of life in a house on a beach with a sea view," says Taylor, sporting a red Hawaiian shirt, his face browned and roughened by years of sun exposure. Hopeless romanticism is a core theme in *HOUSE INSIDE THE WAVES*. In a chapter entitled "Romantic Egoists," Taylor recounts his trip to Hawaii in 1972, when he spent six weeks surfing, falling in love with an American girl and living in a mansion with her.

"After that, I had to come back to reality. My feet haven't been on the ground since," Taylor says. "It kind of set the pace for me. It melded the fantasy of being young and in love and in a magical place."

Taylor, a self-proclaimed hopeless romantic, alludes to writers like Kerouac, Miller, Hemingway and Fitzgerald frequently in the book. "I talk about these writers being hopeless romantics in the sense that they were people who over-reached for a lot more than life had to offer," he says.

"That's what a hopeless romantic does. A hopeless romantic is someone who falls prey to their own fantasies or their own hopes and desires."

While Taylor says the book is a lot of fun, he says, "It's not just a hedonistic romp. There's sort of a dark thread through it."

In one chapter of the book, Taylor writes of how his sister and nephew died in a tragic house fire a month before he and his family left on the exchange to Australia.

"I use the metaphor of the shark to describe those dark things you can't really avoid," he says.

"It's the same when you are sitting a quarter of a mile out on a reef on a surfboard with waves the size of drive-in movie screens. It's the most amazing experience, but there is also the chance that a shark can get you."

Unlike the quintessential hopeless romantics cited in his book, Taylor stresses the importance of security and balance. "My stability is my kids and a very long, strong marriage. You need things to ground yourself," he says. "I've been able to balance travelling and being at home - having security and the sublime open road. It's great, but it's a tight rope walk."

Of his 27 year marriage to his wife, Dale, Taylor says, "We have the same sort of travel bug and the same sort of restlessness, and we've managed to keep it going even with our kids."



Taylor with his daughters Quinn & Sky, with a surfboard made to commemorate his book, and his wife's wave painting.

While living in Australia, Taylor filled the unconventional role of 'househusband' while his wife worked as a teacher.

Taylor says being a househusband was a difficult experience for him. "I spend a lot of time being involved with the world of women and children," he says.

"It's a neat thing to experience, but definitely something I had to work at."

Despite the frustration that naturally came along with it, Taylor adds, "Looking after children is one of the most meaningful things you can do in life."

Since Taylor's two daughters, Sky and Quinn, will be starting high school shortly, the family will remain in Ottawa

- at least for now.

In the meantime, Taylor has been busy promoting his book. Of the arduous promotion process, he says, "A writer lives like a hermit most of the time to get the work done. And then when the book's out, suddenly you're promoting yourself like Britney Spears. You've got one foot in and out of seclusion." Taylor used a unique mixture of different media to promote *House Inside The Waves* at the book launch held on Sept. 10 at Nicholas Hoare Books. His wife's wave paintings (one of which graces the cover of the book) and stained glass waves were displayed, as well as an eight-foot surfboard with the book cover glassed into the deck of the board. A former student also performed an original song with the same title as the book.

After having spent so many years of focusing on his family and his writing career, when asked if he still considers himself a hopeless romantic, Taylor replies, "After all this time, living in this house on the beach and being able to write about it, I still feel that same thing."

"I'm still looking for that perfect wave."