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## A surfer waxes poetic

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**SDSU graduate student Kimball Taylor publishes his first book, 'Return by Water,' about his life's adventures**

**By Nina Garin**  
STAFF WRITER

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When writer Kimball Taylor heads to work each morning, more often than not he's going to the beach.

As a journalist for magazines such as *Surfer* and *Transworld*, Taylor's workday can range from covering a surf competition in Orange County to hopping a last-minute plane to Bali to investigate Indonesian surf phenoms.

Naturally, with nearly 10 years of this type of mobile existence, Taylor has amassed plenty of exotic stories – his run-in with mosquitos in Ecuador, fishing in Tahiti, his trip to a leprosy colony in Hawaii.

"I think because of my personality, I'm willing to endure a lot of weird, weird situations," the Ocean Beach resident said. "And along the way, I've been able to get to know people all around the world."

Over the past few years, Taylor, 32, has been gathering his favorite adventure pieces in hopes of one day publishing a book. As he worked on this dream, he grew frustrated watching his friends start their own careers and families while he still had the same lifestyle he's had since graduating from San Diego State University in 1997. "I thought I wasted my time," he said. "Everyone else I knew was building their life, and I was on one long surf trip, you know?"

But last month, Taylor finally reached his goal and published his first book, "Return by Water."

The 145-page book, which includes nine nonfiction tales and one short fiction piece, is written in a humorous and friendly tone, but at the same time, it educates land dwellers on things such as the Humboldt current.



SCOTT LINNETT / Union-Tribune  
Kimball Taylor, who is pursuing an MFA at San Diego State, published his first book, "Return by Water," last month. The book is a collection of some of Taylor's favorite real-life surfing adventures.

Taylor's natural sense for storytelling started early on when he was a Southern California fourth-grader. His class was studying explorers Lewis and Clark, and they were told to write a story from the point of view of a slave.

Taylor wrote his story phonetically, the way Alice Walker writes in "The Color Purple."

"The teachers saw it and called my parents," he said. "They thought I had a mental disability, and I had to go see a therapist. After that, I started writing normal again."

By the time Taylor entered San Diego State, he knew he wanted to continue as a writer. Journalism was the only way he could think to make a steady living at it.



SCOTT LINNETT / Union-Tribune  
Kimball Taylor, with surfboards at the ready, worked from his home in Ocean Beach. He has written for Surfer and Transworld magazines.

Even before he got his journalism degree, Taylor started to freelance for skateboard and surf magazines. At one point, he got a gig as the editor in chief of Plow, a short-lived snowboard magazine.

But that job ended strangely.

"We put together a trip where we took a mobile home and two snowmobiles off to explore the backcountry," he said. "When we got to Tahoe, it was dumping snow and the mobile home broke down."

When Taylor called the publisher to ask for more money, he was told the magazine had folded. Despite the bad news, Taylor and his group of snowboarders went ahead with the trip.

It's this adventurous spirit that drives the stories in "Return by Water," a book Taylor published himself.

It was a momentous afternoon when Taylor's shipment of books arrived to his house.

"I was so excited, I helped the guy unload 1,600 pounds of books into the garage," he said. "I don't think I celebrated officially, but I ran around giving away free copies to everyone, which, as a businessman, I shouldn't have done."

In his heart, Taylor is no businessman – he's a writer. He is enrolled in SDSU's Master of Fine Arts writing program, and he hopes this is just the beginning of his publishing career.

"I think this book captures my growth as a young surfer to a professional surf journalist," he said. "I wasn't sure I had a career when I started, but now I feel I have something to show for it."

"Return by Water" is available at Borders in Mission Valley and at several surf shops throughout the county. For more information, go to [www.kimballtaylor.com](http://www.kimballtaylor.com).

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