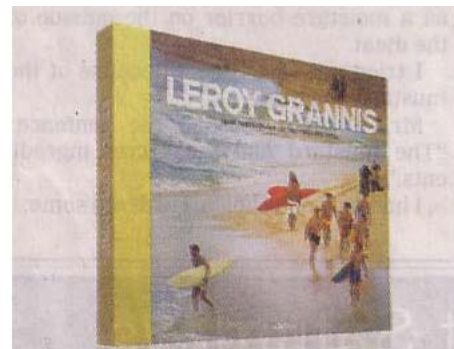


It might seem that the physically blessed soul that is the typical pro surfer would not be well served by enshrinement in a volume as hefty (and costly) as a headstone. Yet that is how the publisher Benedict Taschen

has seen fit to commemorate the work of Leroy Grannis, godfather of surf photography, whose "Surf Photography of the 1960's and 1970's" comes in a pretentious slipcase, weighs more than 10 pounds and carries the rather daunting price of \$400. Despite its bloated production, the book retains some of both the ornery pluck and the enduring sprightliness of the 88-year-old Mr. Grannis, who took up the sport 75 years ago in Hermosa Beach, Calif., and only stopped in 2001 when a doctor advised him that knee paddling was probably not the best thing for the hip he had just had replaced.

"Back when I started out, money never entered into it," said Mr. Grannis last week by telephone from Carlsbad, Calif. "It was a lot more relaxed before 'Gidget,' which changed everything, and when there wasn't all the movies and television programs bringing more and more surfers into the fold."

As much as for their images of perfect young bodies framed in the flat light of Southern California or the lambent aura that seems to characterize Hawaiian days, Mr. Grannis's pictures are most startling because the scenes they record and breaks they document are pristinely beautifully and impossibly vacant. "It's getting to be so crowded now," said Mr. Grannis, referring to today's nearly three million surfers. "It probably isn't as much fun." Unless, of course, it is.



BIG KAHUNA Leroy Grannis, whose work is the subject of "Surf Photography of the 1960's and 1970's," published by Taschen. Out last month, the book weighs more than 10 pounds and costs \$400.