

# Answering the Call of the Wild

By Wendy Edwards

"I started drawing when I was 4 and to this day remember some of the first things I did," says Little Rhino Studio creator Bob Anderson, of Charlottesville. "I used to draw constantly. I'd use No. 2 pencils with a really sharp point, do the outlines and color it in."

Where did he find inspiration at such an early age?

"In the old days when they would have encyclopedias, copy the illustrations. There was a point when, because there were no animals in Hawaii (where he lived), I had this fascination. I wanted to have a jungle surrounding me with all these animals in it—African and Asian animals."

He made a map of his perfect world. "I had a name for it. It was an island. I would do little tiny drawings, images of different animals amongst mountain ranges, swamps, and the savannah, hours and hours and hours just working on this stuff."

Anderson often referenced books as a kid. That's how he discovered the work of German artist Albrecht Dürer.

"He had a very famous lithograph he did of a rhinoceros based on a verbal description he got from a sailor he met in Lisbon, Portugal."

Attracted to Dürer's use of fine lines and three dimensions, Anderson set out to imitate the work before he'd even turned 9 years old.

"I'd copy it over and over. I didn't even know what a lithograph was, but I developed a style for myself where my drawings look like they try to be lithographs."

A theme continued for the young artist.

"I just loved jungles," he says. "Jungles became a major center or topic of my artwork—and they are to this day."

During a family vacation, Anderson remembers sitting in the backseat, squinting his eyes and imagining animals lived in the dense greenery all around him. "I would put the animals in, knowing which ones came from where."

His drawings were impressive to many, and although his talent increased with age, Anderson's parents didn't look on art as a



Courtesy Photos

real profession. "My father was a professional military officer. My parents put all their energy in preparing me for West Point. Finally at some point in time I applied, took at the exam, but I didn't get in."

It was the suggestion of an older friend of his parents that helped him turn his artwork from a hobby to a vocation that his parents could accept. As much as he loved illustration, while he was raising children and working as an architect, nobody aside from friends and family knew of Anderson's drawings, but he couldn't stop making them.

"I'd sit down and I'd draw [subjects] over and over, in different positions. Sometimes there's no motive behind it it's just...I love this animal and I love to draw."

His kids are fascinated by it. "They're always asking to see it. My daughter is the oldest of the three kids. She's really smart and I'll show her and ask her for feedback; she'll be honest. The two boys like it. They all have my work in their homes. My oldest grandson, who's 10 years old, loves to come to the studio with me and work with me."

While his work mostly remains out of sight, Anderson's world of animals can be found in the form of paintings, drawings and books of his illustrations available from Meguffey Art Center's studio 22 where his prints and jungle books might serve to inspire budding artists.

