

# Publication of journal shows late artist Jack Unruh's mastery of color

By Ray Sasser, Staff Writer, SportsDay  
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"Willie Mae, one of Jack Unruh's favorite bird dogs. An illustration for his "Fish and Other Stories as My Pen Remembers Them - A Journal by Jack Unruh," coming this fall from Herring Press.

Readers might not recognize the name Jack Unruh, though they've surely seen his illustrations in dozens of magazines and multiple books. Unruh's style was unique, unforgettable and instantly recognizable.

His work was published in publications as widely varied as *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Rolling Stone*, *National Geographic*, *Sports Afield*, *Field & Stream* and *Texas Monthly*, where he illustrated a whimsical monthly column called "The Texanist."

Unruh died at his Dallas home May 16. He was 80. Unruh was an unassuming man, though he'd won many art awards, including a listing in the Illustrators' Hall of Fame alongside Norman Rockwell

For many years, Unruh kept a hunting and fishing journal. During outdoors adventures from Chile to Alaska, he jotted notes and observations and drew scenes that caught his attention.

These scenes could be anything from a small frog in the middle of a leap to a 2,000-pound bull moose crossing a river in the last light of day. The journal illustrations, many of them unpublished, have been melded into a book entitled *FISH & Other Stories as My Pen Remembers Them -- A Journal by Jack Unruh*.

The book's Dallas launch event is Wednesday from 5-7:30 p.m. at Tailwaters Fly Fishing Company, 1933 East Levee, Dallas.

The journal of more than 200 pages was assembled by a group called Friends of Unruh. The book costs \$75.

"When Jack got a tough cancer diagnosis in the spring, several of us decided to make his longstanding dream of publishing selected excerpts of his hunting and fishing journals and related art, a reality," said Schuyler Marshall, who was a close friend of Unruh's for 30 years and a companion on many of his hunting and fishing trips.

All profits will fulfill another of Unruh's dreams by funding a scholarship at Washington University in St. Louis.

Born in Kansas, Unruh, the son of an Air Force pilot, began drawing at an early age. Lying in front of a radio, he would draw story panels based on what he heard. Unlike most kids, he never stopped drawing. He graduated from Washington University, then he began his illustration career in Dallas, where his one-of-a-kind style won numerous awards.

Bubba Wood, founder of the Dallas sporting art store Collectors Covey, said one of the things that great artists have in common is how many others try to copy their style.

"If you look at all the sporting magazines, almost all will have an illustration done by some young artist who wants to be the next Jack Unruh," he said. "Nobody has yet come close to mastering Jack's use of color. His sense of whimsy was out of this world. As great an artist as he was, he was an even better person."

Marshall said Unruh was a skilled angler and hunter with a true conservation ethic. He refused to fish with anything but a fly and loved that he could release the fish sore-lipped but otherwise unharmed. When quail hunting, said Marshall, he imposed a personal bag limit that was lower than the legal limit.

"Jack saw the world differently than most people," he said. "We all love a West Texas sunset, but Jack would marvel at something that to most of us appeared mundane -- until he drew it. Only then could you recognize the beauty that he saw."

The book is available from Tailwaters Fly Fishing Company ([tailwatersflyfishing.com](http://tailwatersflyfishing.com)), Collectors Covey ([collectorscovey.com](http://collectorscovey.com)) and from the publisher Herring Press ([herringpress.com](http://herringpress.com)).

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