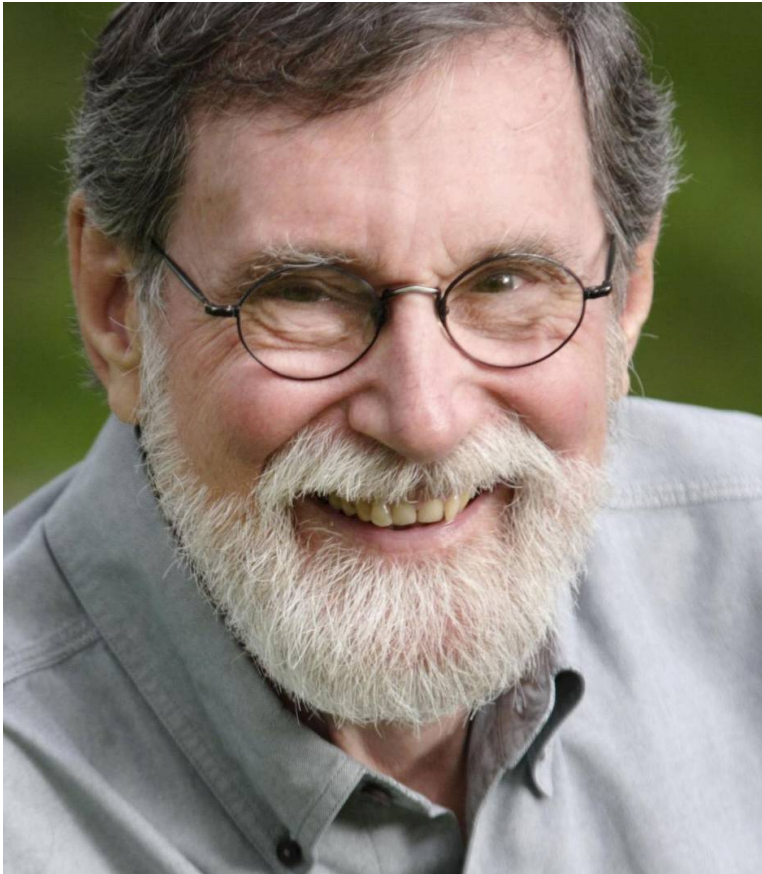


Dallas illustrator Jack Unruh, whose work took him around the world, dies at age 80

By Joe Simmacher
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As a child, Jack Neal Unruh drew what he visualized while listening to radio heroes including the Lone Ranger, Captain Marvel and Sky King.

The son of an Air Force pilot, he attended first grade in four states, moving at a nomadic pace that left little time for developing lasting childhood friendships. He bonded with pencil, pen and paper.

A storyteller with an unfettered imagination, Unruh settled in Dallas, where he became a hall-of-fame illustrator. His work graced the pages of books and magazines from *Rolling Stone* to *Texas Monthly*. His subjects included Bob Dylan, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy and B.B. King.

A passionate outdoors-man, he also captured an array of flora and fauna

for publications including *National Geographic* and *Field & Stream*.

Unruh, 80, died Monday at his East Dallas home of esophageal cancer that was diagnosed less than three months ago.

A Dallas tribute is being planned for late June. Private graveside services will be in his hometown of Pretty Prairie, Kan.

Unruh began developing his skills visually interpreting radio programs.

“It was in him to draw,” said his wife, Judy Whalen of Dallas. “Most kids start drawing and they stop. He just kept on drawing.”

National Geographic flew Unruh to France to capture the prehistoric cave paintings of Lascaux.

“He went into a cave that only forty-five hundred people have ever gone into,” his wife said. “They sent him there because photography wouldn’t have done it. He had to draw it and make it come to life for people.”

The paleolithic artists — like her husband — communicated through visuals, Whalen said.

Unruh also did illustrations for Fortune 500 corporations, a host of smaller companies and groups like The Nature Conservancy.

“After people see his work, they go, ‘Oh, I’ve seen his work before.’ It’s very unique,” his wife said.

While a freshman art student at the University of Kansas, Unruh was on a Christmas visit to St. Louis when he was introduced to the work of Bernie Fuchs, a gifted illustrator and 1954 Washington University graduate. Unruh transferred to the St. Louis University, where he earned his degree.

Modesty led him to Texas.

"I was one of the four or five better artists in my class when I graduated in 1958," he once said in *Graphis* magazine. "I was sure that I couldn't compete in New York or Los Angeles. I thought Dallas might be the next growth area."

His first job was a pro bono logo for the Keep Dallas Clean campaign.

Unruh received many honors and was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in New York in 2006. Fellow members include Norman Rockwell, Frederic Remington and N.C. Wyeth.

As word of his illness spread, people stood in line to visit Unruh in the hospital.

“He taught us how to live, but he also taught us how to die, with this incredible dignity and fearlessness,” his wife said.

In addition to his wife, Unruh is survived by daughters Chris Unruh and Kim Whalen Aman, both of Dallas, and Susan Unruh of Istanbul; a son, Chris Whalen of Dallas; a brother, Jesse Unruh of Ruidoso, N.M.; and four grandchildren.

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