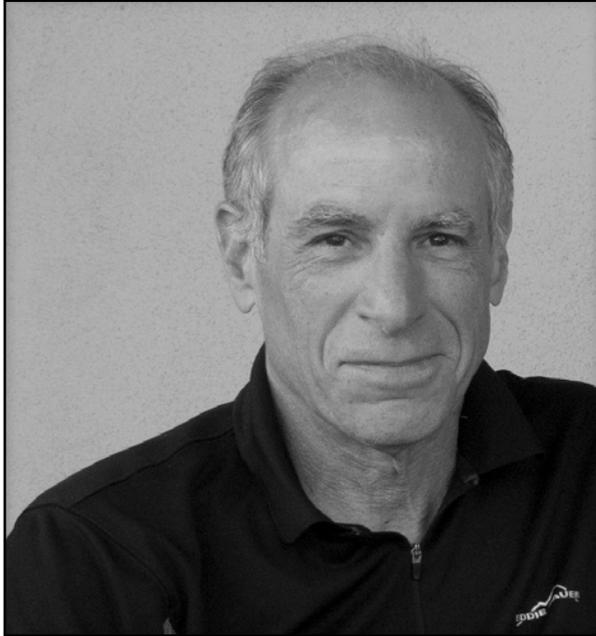


John Bianchi (1947-2017)

Canadian children's book illustrator and author



Bungalo Books is sad to announce that John Bianchi passed away in Tucson, AZ, after a brief illness on Friday April 21. He was 69 years old.

As an illustrator, Mr. Bianchi came to national attention for his large-nosed cartoon characters that appeared by the hundreds in *Harrowsmith* magazine starting in the late 1970s. His humorous drawings reflected his own back-to-the-land challenges (including beekeeping, wood-cutting and house renovations) in the Lanark County village of Macdonalds Corners.

With the launch of *Harrowsmith's* sister publication, *Equinox* in 1982, he expanded his repertoire to include scientific illustration. Mr. Bianchi also provided illustrations for the company's series of bestselling astronomy books by Terence Dickinson. (*Exploring the Night Sky*, 1987. *Exploring the Day Sky*, 1988.)

By the mid-1980s, Mr. Bianchi started illustrating children's picture books for *Groundwood Books*. But his dream was to illustrate his own stories. When he couldn't find a publisher for his first book – a cowboy spoof that featured an inept family of brothers known as the Bungalo Boys – he co-founded his own company.

Bungalo Books's first title was *The Last of the Tree Ranchers*. It became a surprise success, in part thanks to the marketing efforts of Lionel Koffler at *Firefly Books*. Over the next 16 years, Mr. Bianchi and his partner, editor/publisher/author Frank B. Edwards created 38 children's books together. Their sales reached more than 2 million copies by the time the company (and its *Pokeweed Press* imprint) stopped creating new work in 2007.

At the time *Bungalo Books* launched, Mr. Edwards was the editorial director of *Harrowsmith* magazine's *Camden House Books* and the pair ran their small company as a part time venture. It became a full-time occupation by 1989.

Bungalo Books proved a conundrum in Canadian publishing circles. The pair ran it as a professional publishing house with trade distribution throughout North America and high-quality editorial/production and printing values. Fellow writers and illustrators saw it as a model for successful self-publishing but some mainstream publishers dismissed their efforts as vanity publishing. The Canada Council would not allow Bungalo to enter its titles in the prestigious *Governor General Literary Award* competition.

Mr. Bianchi and Mr. Edwards took solace in the fact that their top titles were selling more than 100,000 copies and that each title's average sales topped 50,000 copies.

John Bianchi was born in Rochester, NY and came to Canada about 1968 after a stint in the U.S. navy aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid.

Disillusioned with American politics and the Vietnam War, Mr. Bianchi left the navy and moved to Ottawa. Unable to find work at first, he survived as a sidewalk artist – selling his paintings to tourists outside the National Arts Centre. He had no artistic training but had been drawing cartoons since grade four when he discovered a Mickey Mouse book in the school library.

Mr. Bianchi eventually found work at Crawley Films as an animation background artist and later as an illustrator with CJOH TV. He met his wife, Margaret Cameron, an Ottawa native, at that time and they eventually moved to the country to start a family.

In 1993, John and his family (daughters Jessica and Sascha) moved to the outskirts of Tucson, Arizona, a stone's throw away from the gates of Catalina State Park where he regularly cycled, hiked and painted landscapes.

For more than a dozen years, Mr. Bianchi travelled extensively across Canada and the United States, encouraging thousands of students a year to get active reading, writing and drawing. He was also a popular guest at regional and national literacy conferences.

In recent years, he wrote and illustrated more than 20 learn-to-read books for The American Reading Company.

Diagnosed with multiple myeloma in early 2013, John remained active athletically and artistically to the end. He entered hospital with pneumonia two weeks before he died in the company of his wife and family.

John Bianchi was beloved by his friends and the community of book illustrators and authors in the heyday of Canadian children's publishing. In 2016, he donated his original illustrations and cartoons to the archives of Queen's University in Kingston.

Please contact publisher Frank B. Edwards at fedwards@BungaloBooks.com for additional information and photographs. (He is currently living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam so phone connections are tricky, but possible with planning.)

Partial Bungalo Books bibliography

Author and Illustrator.

Bungalo Boys: Last of the Tree Ranchers.
Bungalo Boys: Champions of Hockey
Bungalo Boys: Flight of the Space Quester
Princess Frownsalot
Snowed in at Pokeweed Public School
Young Authors Day at Pokeweed Public School
The Toad Sleeps Over
Swine Snafu
Penelope Penguin: The Incredibly Good Baby
The Artist

Illustrator (Author, Frank B. Edwards),

Mortimer Mooner Stopped Taking a Bath
Mortimer Mooner Makes Lunch
Melody Mooner Stayed Up All Night
Downtown Lost and Found
Snug as a Big Red Bug
Nightgown Countdown
Robin Hood with Lots of Dogs
Treasure Island with Lots of Dogs
The Greatest Zoo on Earth
The Adventures of Bug and Frogger

