

Hobby became a profession... and it's better than working

By KAREN REGAN

Some people spend most of their lives looking for the perfect profession. Then there are others who never really have to search at all. Such is the case for Norman Allin, a 57-year-old Etobicoke resident, whose 13-year hobby as a painter has recently blossomed into a second profession.

Allin's work is on display until the end of the month in the cafeteria of the Mississauga Hospital.

"I've had no formal training as an artist," admits Allin. "It's really just a hobby that has become a second career."

Allin attributes most of his artistic talents to knowledge he has gained working as a cinematographer for the past 42 years. After arriving in Canada in 1952, he spent seven years with Crawley Films in Ottawa before coming to CBC in Toronto, where he has been working ever since. After completing a 14-month series, *The White Oaks of Jalna*, Allin felt he needed something further to fill his time.

"When the series came to a halt I wanted to do something creative," said Allin. "Cinematography taught me composition, light, shade and clarity. It gave me my start as a painter."

Allin first began dabbling with water colors back in 1970, but has recently expanded his efforts to include black-and-white pen sketches.

THREE SERIES

He has established three series into which all of his work can be classified. These include the Canadian Arctic series, the North American series and the African series. His paintings centre around wild animals, although he admits he does lots of domestic dogs and cats as well.

Limited editions are available of six of his

black-and-white sketches and two of his watercolors. The sketches sell for \$6 each or two for \$10. The watercolors usually sell for \$100. Each copy that is sold is signed by Allin, numbered and certified. Allin has been offered up to \$5,000 for his original watercolor of a tiger's face, however at this time he is not interested in selling.

Allin is now working on his 50th watercolor and has completed 195 sketches up to this time.

When it comes to his work, Allin is very particular. He uses only the finest and best-quality brushes available. Before beginning on a new painting or sketch, he will research the animal to determine exact size and proportions. From five or six different pictures, he is able to formulate his own impressions. He is able to conceive a desired mood and has previously spent up to 225 hours on one painting in order to establish the exact effect he is after.

REALISTIC

Allin explained, "It's not just a splash with a blob of paint. I'm a very realistic painter. I have to see every detail or I'm not satisfied."

When creating, Allin tries to capture three dimensions from his two-dimensional image. In each painting he strives to capture a split second in the life of the animal. He always works down the body and never goes back.

"I always go for detail in the eyes," said Allin. "Eyes are the first thing that you look at when you see another person and I feel you

look for the same in an animal. Once the eyes are complete the animal's expression will instantly develop."

Allin is also careful not to allow snarls on the faces of his subjects.

"I don't want children to ever be afraid of my animals. They will sometimes growl but never snarl and there is a definite difference," he explained.

Allin also admits to painting only jungle animals. He feels that zoo animals have lost the look that they would otherwise have if

they were in their natural environment.

Allin's very first public showing was at the Laurier Gallery located at Bay and Yorkville in April of 1980. Since that time he has never looked back.

An exhibition displaying all of Allin's work will be held in his home at 1 Shadeteer Cres. in Etobicoke on the April 30-May 1 weekend.

LAURIER GALLERY

At the end of May, Allin will be returning to the Laurier Gallery for the third time. From there, he will go on to his first exhibit at New York State's Clayton Gallery. In mid-August, he will make his third appearance at Buckhorn's wildlife exhibition. This four-day event draws close to 25,000 people a day. In October, Allin will travel to Ottawa for another wildlife exhibition, then returns to host another "home show" scheduled for the end of November.

Allin's work is always available for display or for private showing. If you would like more information, you can contact him at home at 621-5463.

Allin, who was born in Yorkshire, England, is married and has two teenage children, John 17, and Jennifer 13.

Due to the continued success of his artistic career, Allin has formed Norman Allin Productions Limited. He is now after an agent who, as he puts it, "will really get out there and get my work known."

For Allin it seems there just aren't enough hours in the day. He will often work an eight-hour shift at CBC, then come home and spend the rest of the night working on his paintings.

"I have an inner demand to do it," said Allin. "Actually, I'm lucky. I've never worked a day in my life. I enjoy what I do. Fourteen hours is a hell of a long day but I always look forward to tomorrow."