

## From Nana's Back Porch: Famous Artist Bob Ross

Hello, this is Nana from my back porch. Thank you for joining me today. You are all artists!

Hello, I am Nana, and today we're going to talk about one of my most favorite artists. And you will probably recognize his name when I tell you who it is. It is Bob Ross, the famous painter on TV.

Robert Norman Ross was an American painter, art instructor, and TV host. He was the creator and host of The Joy of Painting from 1983 until 1994 on PBS in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and all over Europe.

Bob Ross was born in Daytona beach, Florida, and his parents, Jack and Ali Ross, a carpenter and a waitress, raised him in Orlando, Florida. As a teen, Ross cared for injured animals, including armadillos, snakes, alligators, and squirrels. A squirrel was featured as a tame pet later in several episodes of his television show.

Bob dropped out of school in the ninth grade and worked with his father as a carpenter. There was an accident in the shop and Bob lost part of his left index finger on the saw. It didn't affect his ability to hold a pallet, though, while painting.

In 1961, 18-year-old Ross enlisted in the air force and became a medical records technician. He rose to the rank of master sergeant and was assigned to Eielson air force base in Alaska, where he very first saw snow and mountains that he later painted many times in his oil paintings.

He held military positions that required him to be tough and mean. You know, the guy that makes you scrub the latrine, make your bed, and screams at you for being late to work. Ross decided that he would not raise his voice again when he left the military.

During his 20 year air force career, Ross developed an interest in painting after attending an art class at the USO club. But he found himself frustrated with his painting instructors who were more interested in abstract painting.

Bob said that they could tell you what made a tree, but wouldn't tell you how to paint one.

Bob discovered a TV show called Magic of Oil Painting, hosted by a German painter named Bill Alexander. Alexander used a 16th century painting style called alla prima (that's Italian for "first attempt", it is also known as wet-on-wet) that allowed him to finish a painting within 30 minutes.

A wet-on-wet painting is oil painting that you take the paint, and with broad strokes, put it across your canvas, and then immediately take another brush and you just start painting your painting. Mountains, clouds, trees. That's what he did. Ross studied and mastered the technique and began painting successfully. Selling Alaskan landscapes that made him more money than his military salary.

After he retired from the military, the origins of his Joy of Painting began. They are still unclear as to how it all started for him. It was filmed in a studio of a PBS station in Muncie, Indiana. The show ran from, as I said before, 1983 to 1994, but reruns continue to appear in many countries and in the United States broadcast areas. In England last year, the BBC ran episodes during the COVID lockdown pandemic.

During each of the 30 minute shows, Ross would instruct his viewers in the quick wet-on-wet oil painting technique. He would paint a scene without sketching it first, but creating the image directly from his imagination in real time. He explained his limited color palette and showed the process in simple steps.

Bob Ross was noted for his permed, tightly curled hair, which he really disliked. But he kept the look after he had used a photo of himself in the company logo. Ross has also been compared to the iconic Fred Rogers, host of Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood, noting that Ross' soft voice and slow pace of speech were similar.

Bob Ross painted three versions of almost every painting featured on his show. The first was painted before taping the show, and sat on an easel off camera during the filming where he used it as a reference. The second

painting, which the viewers actually watched him paint. And then after filming the episode, he painted a more detailed version to be used in his instructional books.

Ross was well-known for the phrases he would repeat while painting. "Happy little trees", "happy little clouds". When asked about this and his relaxed, calm way of teaching, he said that he received a letter from someone who said, "Bob, everything in your world seems to be happy." "That's right," he said. "That's why I paint it, because that's the kind of world that I want, and I can make this happy world as much as I want. If you want bad stuff, watch the news."

He repeatedly said everyone had an artistic talent, and could become an accomplished artist given time, practice, and most important: encouragement. He would say we don't make mistakes, we just have happy accidents.

Bob Ross died at age 52 on July the 4th, 1995, due to complications from lymphoma. He kept his diagnosis secret from the public. It was not known outside of his circle of family and friends until after his death. His grave is in Gotha, Florida, and he rests under a plaque marked *Bob Ross, television artist*.

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*"There are no mistakes in chalk pastel art!" - Nana*

Over the years that I've been blessed and so fortunate to teach so many students here in the United States, and really around the world, England, Italy, India, Australia, the Philippines, South America, I have been, as I said, blessed.

In this process, I've been called the Bob Ross of homeschool. I used to laugh and shake my head at this reference. Now I straighten up my shoulders and proudly thank my mentor Bob Ross for every single happy tree that I paint. Thank you, Bob.

And thank you for being with me today. I have a feeling that Bob is listening in, and I know what he would say right now. He would say along with me, You ARE an Artist.

Love, Nana.

Thank you for listening, artist friends! Please leave a review and share this with a friend. We invite you to join us in the You ARE an Artist Clubhouse at [ChalkPastel.com](http://ChalkPastel.com) where we have over 500 (Yes, 500!) video art lessons. We would also love for you to join us on Instagram, Facebook, and more, and be sure to tag us when you share photos of your artwork. We cannot wait to see. I'll be talking to you again soon.

Editor's note: Nana now has over 700 video art lessons!

