Dave Thorne knew when he was a young child growing up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, that he wanted to be an artist and a cartoonist. Dave spent a great deal of his childhood drawing; the various characters from the Disney Studio were among the subjects that he drew, along with any other cartoon that caught his fancy. He also branched out into creating his own characters and giving them names. His bedroom wall was literally covered with his drawings.

While still a freshman in high school, he made his first sale. He has continued to freelance since junior high school. “When you do what you love, you don’t want to stop,” he says.

The scope of Thorne’s career as a cartoonist has been broad, although much of Thorne’s work has been in the field of education. Up until his retirement from the State of Hawaii Department of Education in 1985, he was an art teacher, followed by many years as an educational media specialist, where his cartoons and ideas helped heighten the appeal of reading material for generations of students. Dave Thorne was also a lecturer in UH Mānoa’s College of Continuing Education from 1976 to 2001 teaching cartooning, and found that experience to be most joyous.

Besides illustrating instructional manuals, Dave gave numerous workshops, not only on cartooning, but also on developing and producing educational materials for teachers and other education personnel. Dave was called upon to give workshops in Micronesia, American Samoa, and given a grant in 2000 to teach a cartooning class in Sri Lanka. He has had the honor of being a guest cartoonist at four international comic conventions in Mexico City and is now in negotiation for doing some projects for one of the most popular cartoon studios there. In the 1980’s he collaborated with Dr. Milton Diamond of UH-Mānoa’s College of Medicine, along with a prominent Japanese journalist, on an AIDS awareness book done in manga format for Japanese consumption.

Referred to as “the force behind cartooning in Hawai‘i” and “the most influential cartoonist in Hawaii,” to aspiring cartoonists he emphasizes, “Sensitivity and the innate knowledge of what is funny are the most important parts of the cartoon. Cartooning is both a left and right brain activity, and surprisingly, the writing is more important than the drawing.”

You can find Dave’s “Thorney’s Zoo,” a funny animal comic strip in the Sunday edition of the Honolulu Star Bulletin.