



Dave Imus looking west from the summit tower on Spruce Knob, state high point of West Virginia

## *The Cartographic Art of Dave Imus*

Several billion years of interacting forces have sculpted the world into a perfectly balanced and beautiful work of art. But the world is so large and incomprehensibly complex that we cannot fully observe or appreciate its beauty without a special geographic lens, cartography.

Cartography has the power to illuminate the world's broad strokes, letting us observe its exquisitely interwoven patterns as if we were looking at a flower under magnification.

In general, Americans are unaware of geography, so they do not enjoy the enrichment of observing the world's geographic beauty. There is a reason for this lack of geographic awareness: In America, the making of maps, geography's most basic tool, has been practiced almost entirely by technicians and rarely by artists. Cartographic artists, not technicians, create maps at the high level of artistic expression with which a botanical illustrator draws a flower or a great novelist writes a book. This is the high level of expression needed to create well-crafted maps that can enable viewers to form coherent mental images of geography. Because only a minute percentage of American-made maps are the products of trained artists, most Americans have never observed geography through a servicable geographic lens, so they have not seen the perfectly balanced and beautiful work of art that is the world in which we live.

My impulse was to remedy this shortcoming by approaching cartography as a form of artistic expression. The welcome result has been that my readers perceive my work to be both richly informative and beautiful. While remaining dedicated to the creation of geographically accurate maps, I ask you to step outside the idea that my maps are primarily informative and also beautiful, and move into the idea that my work is art that reveals the beauty of the world in the form of a map.

Having beautiful maps in your environment helps you more fully appreciate the places you love, and allows you to share those places with others.