

## About the Cover Art

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Air Force Veteran John Smelser wasn't an artist during his military career. The sergeant was a computer technician from the late 1960s to early 1970s and responsible for inventory management. In fact, he didn't even pick up his first camera until the late 1980s, after he was well into his career as a landscape architect. Even with his late start in the creative arts, Mr. Smelser says the camera and his creative vision have been instrumental in his acceptance and understanding of some significant health issues, allowing him to make significant strides to improve his overall quality of life.

Mr. Smelser started visiting the Oklahoma City Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in early 2000, where he participated in several recovery programs. That was when he started to see real improvements in his life. "Had it not been for the therapists, a particular recovery specialist, and one of the Chaplains, I am not sure where I would be today," he says. It was with encouragement that Mr. Smelser first entered his art in the local Veterans Creative Arts competitions. His color or black and white photography "placed" locally for three straight years and nationally for two of those years. In 2013, his submission in the Black & White Photography category, *Hellebore Leaf Study*, placed among the top three nationally and was selected by *JRRD* staff to adorn the cover of the journal.

"I'm proud of what I have accomplished and very humbled that my art has brought pleasure to those who view it," said Mr. Smelser. *JRRD* has been featuring submissions from the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for more than a decade. "We're honored to recognize some exceptional Veterans and highlight veteran-created artwork on the cover of *JRRD*, in partnership with the Festival," said *JRRD* Editor Stacieann Yuhasz, PhD. "Their success proves year after year the value of recreation and art therapy in the healing process for Veterans and others. It also reaffirms the commitment the Department of Veterans Affairs has made to provide long-term solutions for caring for our nation's Veterans. We thank these outstanding artists for their service and contributions."