

About the Cover Art



When Gary Teixeira was selected as a *JRRD* cover artist for 2014, he was pleased because it was his first real experience in a competition. Mr. Teixeira's *Hampton Bays*, which depicts one of his favorite vacation spots, was selected as a finalist in the Collage Division of the 2013 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and was featured in the Volume 51 series of *JRRD*. The U.S. Army Veteran, who participates in the recreation therapy programs at the J. J. Peters Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in the Bronx, New York, said at the time, "I was disappointed that I didn't win, even though it was my first time entering. But my therapist has challenged me to keep working and I'm hoping to win next time."

Making good on his word, Mr. Teixeira's latest paper collage, *Phoenix*, not only won the Collage Division at the 2014 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, but was also blindly selected by the *JRRD* staff and editorial board to again adorn the *JRRD* cover in 2015. "Being selected for the cover last year really inspired me and helped me to see that others also enjoyed my work," said the Trinidad and Tobago native, who came to the United States in 1968

intent on getting a college education. "I used to get up in the morning and spend the day watching television or just sitting around. Now I feel like I have value and so I keep busy conjuring up new creations."

Mr. Teixeira served 4 years as a helicopter pilot in the U.S. Army, returning to New York at the end of the Vietnam war. "My Army experiences changed me, but they also offered many benefits," says the now 67-year-old graphic designer. "I returned from Vietnam and enrolled in the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, thanks to my GI Bill, and discovered my real calling. I always loved the arts—painting, sketching, and drawing in particular—but I developed some pretty severe allergies to many of the acrylics used in painting, so I had to find a new focus."

Mr. Teixeira's artwork, and the form that he has grown to love, is paper collage. He found that taking paper apart by color and shape and putting it back together to create something new was very fulfilling and a great way to express himself visually. "I found that this new form of expression was soothing and helped me to cope with my PTSD, and people who saw my creations really liked it."

While Mr. Teixeira hasn't seen many awards for his artwork, his portfolio landed him a job with NBC television as a graphic artist. Over a 20-year career with NBC and other television networks, Mr. Teixeira evolved his skills into computer arts before finally realizing success as a freelance graphic designer. "Even with the computer knowledge and tools that I have access to, I usually come back to the paper collage because I find it very comforting. I haven't found a better way to continue to do what I do every day, while keeping my PTSD under control." And Mr. Teixeira's experience benefits the other Veterans he comes in contact with during his therapy, allowing him the opportunity to teach and give something back to others who have served.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is one of the programs sponsored by the VA National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events. To participate in the Festival, Veterans first compete at their local VA hospitals. Those selected are then provided the opportunity to attend the Festival and compete at a national level.

"I am an advocate of the Special Events, having seen firsthand how participation in these types of rehabilitation programs benefits our Veterans," said Shirley Groer, PhD, the new editor of *JRRD*. "Since the 1980s, the VA has provided opportunities for Veterans to participate in specific sports programs (such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games) or special events (such as the National Creative Arts Festival and Golden Age Games) as a means to successful rehabilitation. We are honored to be able to display highlights of Veteran's artwork that was presented at the 2014 Creative Arts Festival, and thank the Veterans for their willingness to share their art."

