

About the Cover Art

One of the valuable benefits of using the creative arts in rehabilitation therapy is that it provides a means and a venue for bonding between people with similar interests who also may have had similar experiences. Veteran artist Charles McKinney had that thought in mind when he named his entry in the 2013 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival “Kizuna Reflections.” Kizuna, a Japanese term, translates as bonds between people, and according to Mr. McKinney, it was the bonds that he made during his rehabilitation that helped him gain strength.

A Navy Veteran, Mr. McKinney enlisted at 31 years old and served on the U.S.S. Independence, a forward-deployed aircraft carrier. A Petty Officer who spent much of his career as a logistics specialist, Mr. McKinney said there weren’t many opportunities for creativity in logistics. While he had expressed some interest in photography in high school, his real interest in photography came later in life as he sought outlets to relax and reduce stress. It turned out that photography not only helped him physically and mentally, but he also discovered that he had a talent.

While roaming the Botanical Gardens near his Colorado home, Mr. McKinney came upon Kizuna, an exhibit by two Japanese artists. Finding some comfort in the exhibit, he looked at it from several angles and found the one he liked. The image he created was selected as the top entry in the 2013 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Color Photography Division.

Mr. McKinney says that during his lifetime he has developed five or six skills that he has used as a career, including working with computers and his CIS degree. He has also incorporated his photography skills in his “post-Navy” career working as a landscape designer and photographer.

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.”

