

About the Cover Art

Growing up, Robert Gold always dreamed of being an artist. He started drawing on his own when he was five, using tips he learned on television. But as he grew older and made decisions about the direction of his life, he instead chose a different path: dental school.

Dental school was stressful and challenging, according to Gold, not because he didn't understand the classroom teaching or the techniques, but because of attention deficit disorder and illiteracy. "I was really good at memorizing things," said Gold, "and that worked well enough to get me through the tough parts." With his dental degree in hand, Gold joined the Army in 1970, stationing at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, where he stayed for 2 years of Active Duty service as a Captain in the Dental Service. Then he spent 4 years in the Reserves at Fort Drum in New York. While he received orders for Vietnam, he was never sent.

It was an interest in art that finally helped Mr. Gold feel like he was in control of his life. "There were always so many things I couldn't do because of my brain injury, but the art brings me back to center and helps me to relax. I'm not afraid to try anything, including performing arts."

Man and Guggenheim, Gold's entry in the 2014 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in the acrylic painting category, depicts a scene he says he's seen countless times near his brother's home on 88th Street in New York, which is near the Guggenheim Art Museum. "I was walking with my sister-in-law and saw the scene, photographed it with my cell phone, then using different technology and software manipulated it to create a rough draft."

"I'm much happier as a person when I am being creative and using my art," says Gold. "Much happier than I think I would be if I was still a dentist. Daily meditation also helps. But it has been my art that has been my most valuable therapy. I am a big proponent of finding ways to incorporate art therapy into rehabilitation and appreciate the importance my local VA has placed on it. At some point I would love to have the opportunity to share my experiences and what I have gained with other Veterans who might benefit."

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 benefit our Veterans," said Shirley Groer, the 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."

