

About the Cover Art



Some Veterans use creative arts to overcome emotional and traumatic scars. Others use them to battle demons such as drugs and alcohol. And then there are artists like Nancyjean Tripp, whose collage *Cityscape* is featured on the cover of this issue of *JRRD*. Nancyjean has had a lifelong relationship with the arts, which she credits with her ability to maintain a sense of strength and resiliency even during the worst of times.

“When I went to the 2015 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, I was amazed to hear how many of the attendees credited their engagement with the arts for having saved their lives,” said the Air Force Veteran, who also has 15 years of service working as a medical support assistant in the addiction clinic at the Department of Veterans Affairs Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle, Washington. “I had no such story to tell, but in looking back, I realize that having the arts in my life is likely a major reason why I am the strong and resilient person I am today. When things have been difficult or when I have been dealt some kind of trauma, I simply turned to one of the many forms of artistic expression that has been available to me most of my life.”

Nancyjean’s creativity has ranged from singing and acting to writing and crafts, but she says she always comes back to paper, paste, and scissors. As for her interests, she adds, “I prefer skulls, skeletons, and crows over hearts, angels, and teddy bears, and I consider ‘cute’ a four-letter word. But I also believe googly eyes improve almost anything, and when in doubt about art, put a bird in it.”

“I’ve seen the value the arts have in the rehabilitation of our Veterans, encouraging them to express themselves in various creative ways and also to support the creativity of others,” she said. “It is only after having seen so many of my fellow Veterans who were not engaged with the idea of artistic expression until after their military service that I realize how truly blessed and fortunate I have been to have had a lifelong relationship with the arts in many forms.”

Nancyjean says the only difference between her and the Veterans who describe the arts as their lifeline is that art has been in place almost all of her life. “I never realized until recently that my art is indeed a lifeline. I’m not sure where I would have been without it.”

