



Saturday, October 22, 2005

A DAILY PUBLICATION OF THE 2005 NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

## Band of Sisters: Groundbreakers, Not Wallflowers



Christine Pointer, of  
Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

There is one word commonly heard at the Festival and VA's other national programs, and that word is "camaraderie." An excellent example of that is the special tie among the women veterans who are present.

**Christine Pointer**, 42, of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., entered the Army in 1982, right after high school. She believes that being in the military prepared her for other things. "Out in the civilian world, people notice a difference in you – in the way you carry yourself. There's a 'take charge' attitude," Pointer said. "The military is about teamwork.

Not just one person can get the job done, you have to work with other people. Veterans know how to lead *and* how to follow."



Barbara Saunders of San  
Antonio, Texas

**Barbara Saunders**, 47, a visual artist and Army veteran from San Antonio, Texas, entered the military in 1976 and was in the last class to go through the Womens Army Corps (WAC). "I was one of the last women to wear the Palace Athena Badge," Saunders remembered. "Twenty-three years ago, it was strange to be a woman in VA – there were no facilities for us." Saunders said. "By the same token,

men wanted to help me all the time – I was very popular," she added with a smile.

**Martha Gross**, 58, from Douglas, Ga., was in the Navy from 1966 to 1968 and was the first woman to work in the radiation department of the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Md. "Being in the Navy gave me a sense of purpose. I learned about camaraderie," she recalled. She is now a member of her local American Legion post and encourages other women veterans to get involved.



Martha Gross, of  
Douglas, Ga.

**Denise Smith**, 49, an Air Force veteran from Chillicothe, Ohio, and **Kathy Riojas**, 51, a Navy and Marine Corps veteran from San Diego, Calif., met at the Creative Arts Festival several years ago and quickly became friends. Both joined the military in 1974 and consider themselves among the group of groundbreakers.

"My flight was the first to go through the confidence course and weapons training," Smith said. "The experience for women veterans, from the time you enter the military to the time you enter the veteran world, is totally different. We fought for the rights and privileges of military service. We weren't wallflowers." Smith and Riojas maintain contact throughout the year. "We're not just individuals now, we're a family," Riojas said. "She's my sister."

**Marie Findlay**, 74, an Air Force veteran from Herbster, Wis., served stateside during the Korean War. "The years you spend in the military help form of a woman's personality," she explained. "You recognize that men can be your friends. It makes a difference in the type of woman

See, "Band of Sisters," on page 6

## Gala Event Planned for this Evening!

If you look up the word “gala” in a dictionary, you will find this meaning, “A festive occasion, especially a lavish social event or entertainment.” That is exactly what’s in store tonight at the Denver Renaissance Hotel beginning at 7 p.m. in ballrooms A, B, C & D.

The theme, in keeping with a local flavor, is “Purple Mountain Majesty.” This special night will feature Colorado-themed favors, food and beverages. If you’re wondering what to wear, anything with a Western flair will certainly work. If that concept is not part of your Festival wardrobe, casual wear of any type will do just fine.

Our host site committee from Denver has been working on this awesome activity for many months, and even planned a special awards program for the evening. (Watch for some “special and fun” awards that are in store for a few selected veterans and staff members!)

One of the main features of this celebratory evening is special entertainment provided by Lannie

Garrett, presenting her famous (or infamous) *Patsy Decline Revue*. Garrett created and stars as “Patsy DeCline” (not to be confused with a legendary singer of a similar name) in her tongue-in-cheek spoof of country music. In this side-splitting show, Patsy pays tribute to all of the big-haired country music queens who came before her. Backed by her loyal, five-piece, pedal-steel driven band, she is sure to delight us as they rip and roar their way through a laughter-inspiring parody of songs, and some of country music’s all-time favorite, classic chart toppers.



Lannie Garrett

Sure to be a good time, the Gala dinner begins at 7 p.m., followed by the entertainment at 9 p.m. The evening’s events are scheduled to conclude at 10:30 p.m. This is a great way for everyone to have some fun before we get serious again for the art exhibit and stage performance tomorrow.

Tonight’s festivities are definitely not to be missed – hope to see everyone there!

## Jane Powell – Mistress of Ceremonies



There are many special moments for veterans attending the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Meeting Jane Powell, star of Hollywood’s golden era and the Festival’s stage show mistress of ceremonies, has to be one. Better yet is sharing the stage and actually working with this famous star of radio, movies,

Broadway and TV. This year marks Powell’s seventh time attending the Festival.

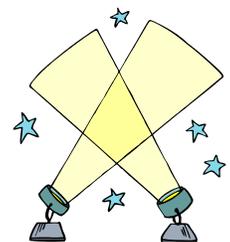
“You feel like you know her personally,” said vocal soloist Steve Hensley of Tomah, Wis. “Jane Powell is a true professional – she doesn’t interrupt your work and she works with you.”

That feeling of inclusion carries over after the Festival. James Sterrett-Bryant, another vocal soloist from Palmdale, Calif., remembers the first time he met Powell at the 2001

Festival. “We went to Sedona to do a bit of sightseeing and stopped for lunch. Miss Powell was there. I took a chance and went to her table to say how much I enjoyed meeting her and you would have thought we were old friends. I thought I would rise out of my wheelchair and actually walk to my table, I felt so tall!”

Jane Powell is known for her celebrity, but is also remembered for her kindness and professionalism. As Hensley put it, “She knows that the real show is the veterans, and she gives us that feeling.”

*Jane Powell came to Hollywood at the age of 14 from Portland, Ore., where she had her own radio shows. She starred in 20 major MGM musicals, and many of the songs she introduced became standards. She has starred in every entertainment medium, written an autobiography, produced an exercise video, and appeared on the lecture circuit. She lives in Connecticut with her husband, Dick Moore, and enjoys gardening and cooking. Jane Powell has served as Mistress of Ceremonies of the Creative Arts Festival in 1991, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004 and again this year.*



## VA's "First Lady" is in her Element at Creative Arts Festival!

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is not just another event for Suzanne Nicholson, wife of VA Secretary Jim Nicholson. It touches her passion and life-long avocation for the arts.

"I have been drawing and painting since I was a child," Mrs. Nicholson said. "Art allows a person to discover hidden talents. For me, it is life-affirming."



*A painting done by Suzanne Nicholson of an Anacostia storefront was used by the Mayor of Washington, D.C. for his Christmas Card.*

Although she primarily paints cityscapes and landscapes in oils and acrylics, Mrs. Nicholson has also used watercolors, and modeled both clay and alabaster figurines. An art history major, she taught art history before marrying, and since then raised her three children to also appreciate and love the arts.

When asked about community outreach, Mrs. Nicholson recalls an event for an underprivileged neighborhood in the Washington, D.C. area. The event, called "Anacostia: A Place of Spirit," featured artists from across the country who came to celebrate the beauty of a neighborhood typically shunned by tourists. One

of her cityscape paintings of an abandoned building was made into a poster for the event, and the mayor of D.C. even used it for his Christmas card.

"Art is a wonderful way to show appreciation and provide expression at the same time. No matter what the age, we have unexplored creative abilities that may have lain dormant for years. Never stop learning about yourself. None of your life experiences – good or bad – are wasted. They teach us something, and many times these are lessons that are best shared with the world through art."



*Suzanne Nicholson, wife of VA Secretary Jim Nicholson*

Mrs. Nicholson emphasized that the Creative Arts Festival is a wonderful program that VA sponsors. Like the other VA national programs, it provides veterans with a goal to reach for throughout the year. "Many of our veteran artists have suffered and learned from pain. None of us lead perfectly tranquil lives. Art helps develop us as human beings. We need the vast experience and to translate it into ways others understand," she concluded.

"I feel honored to be a part of this."

## Thank You to Our Denver Hosts!

The VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System has done a tremendous job hosting the 2005 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Their efforts, not only this past week but well over the past year, have cumulated in an experience none of us will soon forget. Special kudos to our host site coordinator, Donna Lonergan, and all of the local planning committee chairpersons, members and volunteers, who worked tirelessly to make sure the 2005 Festival was a great success. In addition to the Denver's VA Medical Center, VA employees at the Denver Distribution Center, VA Regional Office, Office of



Public Affairs and Health Administration Center all joined together in various committee activities, and we appreciate their collaborative efforts.



A special thanks to VA Eastern Colorado's top management team, Lynette Roff, director; Barry D. Sharp, past acting director; Leigh Anderson, M.D., chief of staff; and Rebecca Newsom Williams, associate director, for their continuing support and leadership during the past year.

Congratulations on a "mile high" job – and thank you for your commitment to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival!

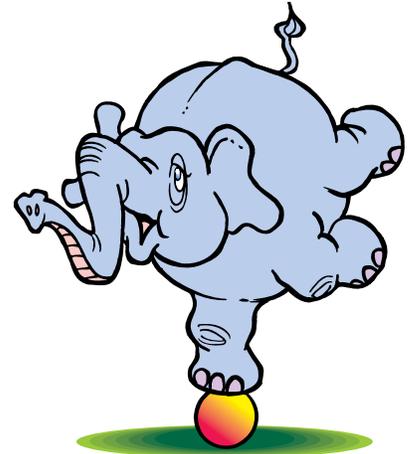


## Memorization Tips

Many of our performers often need to memorize large amounts of material. Here are a few ways to help:

1. Repeat the information in short pieces. Repeating all of the information at one time, no matter how many times you do it, won't help lodge the information into your noggin.
2. Try repeating the information out loud. (A lot!)
3. Write the information on a piece of paper several times.

We hope these little tips will help our singers and chorus members, narrators, actors and everyone else memorizing parts for the stage show! Break a leg!



## Painting Tips

Here are a few painting tips that might come in handy in the days ahead:

→ If you have an artists' brush that has been damaged by standing in water, follow the following tips. Dip the tip into water, squeeze into a point, wrap tip tightly in newspaper and bind with sticky tape. Leave it for 24 hours, and when you remove the wrapping, it should be nearly as good as new.

→ To add interest to paintings, you can sieve soil from the garden and heat gently in a saucepan (no water). Mixed with acrylic paint, it gives unusual texture and colors.

→ Use a cardboard tube for storing your brushes. This allows them to

breathe and they will not get moldy as they can in plastic containers.

→ A cardboard box with an

open side and the top cut into a lid makes ideal framing for still life objects. The lid can be opened to change the light effects.

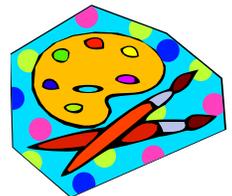
→ An old toothbrush can be used to add texture to paintings. Load the brush with paint and then, with the brush near the paper, rub your fingers along bristles to flick the paint onto the paper. This is great fun, if a little messy. (Children would love doing this!)

→ An old teabag stirred in water makes an ideal color wash to take away the whiteness of paper. Remember to use within four days, though – after that it grows fungus!

→ If tubes of paint get “gummed” up and the lid is hard to remove, don't try to force the top off as this could split the tube. Instead, put some hot water into a bowl and hold the top of the tube in the water for a short time. When you remove it from the water, the top should open easily.

→ To keep paints moist on a palette for several days, cover it with plastic wrap after use.

→ If painting outdoors and you want to mix up a lot of paint, use an empty tray of individual yogurt containers (or an ice cube tray). This can be placed inside a box and covered with a lid.



→ If you make a mistake when painting in oils, scrape off the surplus paint with a razor blade so when it is painted over, it will not show.

→ To remove grease marks from paper, sprinkle talcum powder over the grease mark and leave it overnight. The mark will be gone in the morning.

→ Set up a clothes line to dry paintings to create more room on surfaces.

Hopefully, these tips will help you the next time your creative spirit strikes!





*Doug Keller practices for the show*



*Chorus rehearsal at the Festival*



*Meeting with the Team Leaders*



*ALA Volunteers mark off the meal ticket of Festival participant John Botsford.*

*Artist Workshops*



*Photos from Thursday's tours*



*Photos from the Festival*



## Meet the Artists - Today in the Hospitality Suite

Since 2001, VA's *Journal of Rehabilitation and Research (JRRD)* has featured artwork from the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Edward Tricomi's pastel painting entitled "Pond" was selected as the feature cover artist for the upcoming year. For the first time, in an effort to increase their support of creative arts therapy, the *JRRD* has also chosen a second piece, "Let He Who Knows Not How to Pray Go to Sea," an oil painting by James Nelson, to grace the covers of supplemental issues.

Tricomi, of Woodside, N. Y., is a 72-year-old Army veteran who first expressed creative interests many years ago. Before being drafted at the young age of 18, he studied industrial arts during high school. After he completed his



"Pond" by Edward Tricomi of Woodside, N. Y.

tour, Tricomi worked as a commercial graphic artist, creating title designs in the motion picture industry. When he was in his 50s, Tricomi developed diabetic retinopathy, rendering him legally blind. He was receiving care at the VA medical center in Manhattan, where an employee

suggested he might benefit from specialized care at the Eastern Blind Rehabilitation Center at the VA facility in West Haven, Conn. Though Tricomi had never studied fine arts, his team leader, Ray Demeola, encouraged him to attempt pastels.

Tricomi's winning piece, "Pond," was created using a low vision device incorporating a closed-circuit TV with a camera attached. Tricomi places pictures and other reference materials beneath the camera and the images are magnified onto the TV screen. This device, coupled with eyeglasses, allows him to paint some extremely artistic and

### "Band of Sisters," continued from page 1

you become." Findlay went to college on the GI bill and studied art. She is enjoying the Festival, the first event just for veterans she has ever attended.

**Rebecca Heissler**, 36, of Zephyrhills, Fla., is an Air Force combat veteran of the Gulf War. Heissler has been purposefully meeting and talking to the women veterans at this year's Festival. "We are mothers and wives, and many of us have had to overcome either physical or mental

inspirational pieces.

"Pond" is a solitary and dark impressionistic painting," said Tricomi. "But there is a glimmer of hope in the picture. Maybe there is a fish in the water or a lily pad. The pond is lonely, but alive."

In 1944, James Nelson, of Minneapolis, Minn., also entered the military at a young age. After attending Navy cooking school, Nelson was assigned to the gunnery division aboard the battleship U.S.S. Arkansas, during the final months of World War II. When the war ended, he was transferred to the Landing Ship Tank (LST) 70. The inspiration for Nelson's oil painting, "Let He Who Knows Not How to Pray Go to Sea," came from a fateful day in 1945 during a typhoon aboard LST 70. "I have never been so afraid in my life," said Nelson. "An LST bends in a storm and it was truly a dreadful sight to see."



"Let He Who Knows Not How to Pray Go to Sea" by James Nelson of Minneapolis, Minn.

Encouraged by the chemically dependent seniors Nelson now counsels, he entered his painting in the Festival. Nelson is proud to have won, not so much for himself but for the men aboard LST 70. "This recognition is not for me," he said. "I am so happy to be representing all the men of the U.S. Navy during World War II."

The Journal is a bimonthly publication distributed to an international audience of more than 7100 readers. *JRRD* is a rehabilitation research publication, a resource for scientists and doctors as well as veterans with disabilities.

Meet both Tricomi and Nelson today during the Meet the Artists session in the hospitality room on the third floor, from 9 – 11 a.m.

problems," she said. Heissler is convinced that women veterans have a unique journey.

There are 20 women veterans attending this year's Festival. The common denominator for all – as well as those who competed on the local level – is the passion they feel for the arts and the dedication and devotion they share about their military experiences. In that way, perhaps, they are just like the men.

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Remember to visit the hospitality room, located on the third floor, rooms 301 and 303. It is open today

from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., offering snacks, soft drinks, juices and coffee for all Festival participants, staff and volunteers. Enjoy!



The medical support team is on the third floor, room 318 and is available at all times during the remainder of the

Festival week. Medical support team members will also accompany all tours away from the hotel. If you have a medical concern or health issue, please contact your team leader. We hope you have had a great stay here in Denver.

## Meet with Your Team Leader



Meet with your team leader this morning at 9:00 a.m. Check with your team leader for the location of your meetings. Tomorrow, team leader meetings begin at 11 a.m.



## Transportation Schedule



Monday Departure Info:

For those with flights departing before 7 a.m. please use the hotel shuttle (check with the hotel front desk).

<u>Flight time</u>	<u>Depart from hotel</u>
8 - 9:40 a.m.	6 a.m.
10:05 - 10:45 a.m.	7 a.m.
11:06 - 11:27 a.m.	8 a.m.
11:30 - 11:55 a.m.	9 a.m.
12:15 - 12:50 p.m.	10 a.m.
1:19 - 1:55 p.m.	11 a.m.
2:25 - 3:20 p.m.	Noon

For all other flight times, please check with the front desk.

**NVCAF WEB SITE**  
[www.creativeartsfestival.org](http://www.creativeartsfestival.org)

Would you like your friends and family back home to be able to see what you are doing this week? Log onto the Festival Web site to check out the daily editions of the *ArtsGram* (on the main home page) as well as individual news releases and photos, located on the "Participant Information" tab.



**Saturday, October 22, 2005**

### Breakfast - Traditional Continental

Breakfast Pizza  
 Muffins, Pastries, Croissants, Danish  
 Butter, Margarine, Preserves, Cream Cheese  
 Oatmeal and Dry Cereal  
 Milk, Soy Milk, Juices, Coffee, Hot Tea  
 Fruit and Berries  
 Cream, Sugar, Sugar Substitute

### Lunch - Mexican Buffet

Macaroni Salad, Adobo Grilled Chicken Breast  
 Beef Taco Bar, Spanish Rice, Refried Beans  
 Rice Crispy Treats, Brownies  
 Tropical Blend Ice Tea, Limeade  
 Milk, Soy Milk, Coffee, Hot Tea, Iced Tea  
 Cream, Sugar, Sugar Substitute

### FESTIVAL GALA

#### Taste of Colorado

**Theme: Purple Mountain Majesty**  
 BBQ Brisket, Broiled Chicken  
 Bratwurst, Condiments, Sauerkraut  
 Chips and Salsa  
 Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, Baked Beans  
 Corn on the Cob, Corn Bread, Rolls  
 Apple and Pumpkin Pies, Vanilla Ice Cream  
 Wynkoop Root Beer  
 Milk, Soy Milk, Coffee, Hot Tea, Iced Tea  
 Cream, Sugar, Sugar Substitute

### Check it out!



KCNC, the local CBS affiliate, has a slide show of many of our artists' works. Check it out at: [www.kcnc.com](http://www.kcnc.com) and type in "veterans art" in the search box.



**Today's Weather**

**Mostly Sunny**  
**High 62°**  
**Low 29°**



### Schedule for Saturday, October 22, 2005

7 – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast at hotel  
– Ballrooms C, D

8:30 a.m. Team leaders meet with  
Katy Ryan, National Arts Chair  
– Stapleton Room, Atrium Level

9 a.m. Team leaders meet with artists

9 – 11 p.m. Hospitality Room Open  
Rooms 301 and 303, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

9 – Noon “Meet the Artist”  
Hospitality Room  
Rooms 301 and 303, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

9:30 – 11:30 a.m. CEU Session  
“Assisting Others in Writing  
Memoirs” – National Room  
Atrium Level (Staff)

11:30 a.m. Lunch at hotel

12:30 p.m. Load buses and depart for  
Red Rocks

1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Red Rocks Park  
Ampitheater and Museum

5 p.m. Depart for hotel

7 – 9 p.m. Gala Dinner (casual dress)  
– Ballrooms A, B, C, D

9 – 10:30 p.m. Special Entertainment  
– Ballrooms A, B, C, D

7 – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast at hotel  
– Ballroom C, D

8:30 a.m. Team leaders meet with  
Amy Kimbler  
Performing Arts Assoc.  
– O’Hare Room

9 a.m. Team leaders meet with  
performers

9 a.m. – 11 p.m. Hospitality Room Open  
Rooms 301 and 303, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

9 a.m. – Noon “Meet the Artist”  
Hospitality Room  
Rooms 301 and 303, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

9 – 10 a.m. Ensemble brush-up rehearsal  
– Ballrooms A, B

9:30 – 11:30 a.m. CEU Session  
“Assisting Others in Writing  
Memoirs” – National Room (staff)

10 – 11:15 a.m. Coaching: Individual Acts  
with directors/asst. directors  
(look for signage)

11:15 a.m. Lunch at hotel  
– 12:15 p.m. – Ballrooms C, D

12:30 p.m. Performers depart for  
Gates Concert Hall

12:45 – 1:25 p.m. Performers into costume  
and makeup

1:30 – 5 p.m. Final dress rehearsal with  
orchestra – Gates Concert Hall

5:30 p.m. Performers depart for hotel

7 – 9 p.m. Gala Dinner (casual dress)  
– Ballrooms A, B, C, D

9:00 – 10:30 p.m. Special Entertainment  
– Ballrooms A, B, C, D

