

# National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION CATEGORY

### PHYSICAL DISABILITY ART DIVISION

#### *In the Army*

**LEAYLE TODMAN**  
**JAMES J. PETERS VA MEDICAL CENTER**  
**BRONX, NEW YORK**

At the age of 43, Army veteran Leayle Todman had a stroke that left him paralyzed on the right side of his body. Previously right-hand dominant, the stroke caused him to permanently lose all functional use of his right arm as well as the ability to walk. Although Todman could understand spoken words, he had great difficulty writing and speaking, thereby living with limited abilities to communicate.

Through therapy, perseverance and patience, Todman, who is now 60, met the challenges he faced and worked toward recovery. He gradually developed the ability to ambulate with the aid of a right leg brace and a four-pronged cane. He attended art therapy sessions at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center in the Bronx, and began the arduous task of retraining his left arm to do what his right arm no longer could. With extraordinary patience and determination, he learned to handle a palette knife, mix his own colors, blend, shade, and attend to very fine detail in his artistic endeavors.

*In the Army*, an acrylic painting, is a strong example of Todman's incredible achievements in rehabilitation. The painting depicts another veteran from the art therapy group at the time he was serving in the Army in 1953. Working from a photograph that the veteran had given him, Todman initially drew the image in pencil, and then painted and completed it.

Todman continues to attend art therapy sessions, striving to further improve and develop strength, coordination and skill in his non-dominant left hand. His motivation and positive perspective are an inspiration to others faced with similar challenges.

