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Artist Profile

Terry Carr – Moving from Athlete to Artist at the Creative Arts Festival

Terry Carr, a self-described military brat originally from Wilmington, Del., spent his teen years traveling with his family throughout Europe. His father, an avid amateur photographer, used a slide camera to capture their travels. It was then, while living in Germany, that Carr's interest in photography began.

Now a 57-year-old Army veteran living in Sharon, Tenn., Carr saw combat in Vietnam and also became interested in leatherwork after his discharge from the service. Now, he also enjoys painting, metalwork and collecting military artifacts. The arts are not his only area of interest, however. A paraplegic, Carr was recruited by the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville to play on their first wheelchair basketball team, and he continues to compete in a variety of wheelchair sports to this day. That is when he's not taking pictures.

While studying in the film and lecture program at the University, Carr developed a serious interest in visual imagery, correlating the elements of motion pictures – camera, edit, *mise en scène*, which refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement – to his work in still photography. He studied the work of highly influential American cinematographer Gregg Toland, noted for his most innovative technical work in the Orson Wells classic, *Citizen Kane*. Carr notes that each opening scene in the movie was a well lit, perfect still photograph.

In his own work with black and white portraiture, Carr uses strong shadows reminiscent of the 1930s Greta Garbo era, and worked in the field for some 20 years after college. Then, Carr became ill and learned that he was allergic to the chemicals used in black and white photography so he had to switch to color format. Now, he misses the ability to see the job through from start to finish since he can not longer print his photos.

That didn't stop him from being recognized in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, though, winning first place in the national art competition in the color photography category. His winning entry is a color photo of B.B. King, and its creation happened in an interesting way. With tickets to the concert, Carr believed that photography would not be allowed so left his camera at home. Then, he saw a woman taking still photos while the blues legend sang his theme song, "*The Thrill is Gone*," and he asked to borrow her camera, handing her his business card. Recognizing Carr as someone who had photographed a friend, she and handed over the camera. He chose the piece because of the intensity of the facial expression and the wonderful colors in the shot. "I have always been a fan of B.B. King and I'm happy to have such a fine photo of him," Carr said.

"I have been entering the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for ten years because of the encouragement of the recreation therapists at the VA Medical Center in Memphis," said Carr. "Staying actively involved in artistic endeavors reminds me that I can still make creative contributions to the world of art and society as a whole, and the lack of physical mobility doesn't have to restrict one from pursuing goals." This is Terry Carr's first invitation to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. He has, however, attended the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and competed many times in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games.