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Performer Profile

Andrew “A.J.” Miller – Making Magic in Each Piece

A.J. Miller, a 59-year-old Air Force veteran from Clearwater, Florida, began painting as a hobby while serving in the military. A Florida native with a flair for creativity and a steady hand, Miller began custom airbrushing on some of his friends' motorcycles and vans in the 1970s. He says, “Art gave dimension and focus to my life at a time when I most needed that. Once I discovered I had a talent for it, I never wanted to stop creating.”

After serving four years and completing his Air Force service in 1972, Miller says that only through the use of the VA's GI Bill was he able to continue his creative interests by attending the prestigious Center for Creative Studies in Detroit. After two years working in his major in Illustration and completing several apprenticeships, Miller was hired immediately out of art school at a national art studio.

Now, Miller continues working as a professional illustrator in the commercial art industry and says he is been very fortunate being able to do this for the past 32 years. “I still love it,” he says. “I still ache to make something special and make magic happen in each piece.” He also believes that creating his own personal art is very satisfying. “My art is my art,” he says. “I can create the images and designs that I want on my own timeline. I find it very relaxing as well as rewarding that others enjoy my art.”

Miller was originally encouraged to enter his artwork into a local creative arts competition in 2005 by creative arts therapists at the VA Bay Pines Healthcare System, where he receives care. This year, he entered the competition in two categories and was shocked to learn that both pieces won a first place in this year's National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

His first place win in the acrylic painting category secured his spot at the 2008 event, taking place in Riverside, California in late October. Miller says, “It is a true honor to be selected as a national winner. The congratulations and recognition from my family, friends and co-workers is a treasure in itself.”

