

Art Fights Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

By Henry M. Holden

Barry Jensen is one of thousands of wounded Vietnam veterans who is still dealing with the horrors of war. He was drafted in 1968 and served with the Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRPS), small groups of six to eight men who go deep into enemy country for intelligence information.

"I was on a line going through the discharge process and when I got to the end of the line, there's a young man with two mechanical arms, Jensen said. "He looks at my record and since I had been wounded in the left arm and leg, he says to me 'you're entitled to disability.' I'm standing there, and I look at him, and his mechanical arms and I

said, 'no, I'm not disabled.' So, he says to me do you want to waiver it? I said yes. "So, unfortunately, as a young man I waived my claim in 1970. It was not the brightest thing I ever did. We didn't know anything about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) back then."

When Jensen got out of the army he first started working as a shoe salesman but then went into carpentry. Eventually he retired as a carpenter.

"One night, at a meeting of The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), somebody asked me how much disability was I getting. I said 'none.' He said, 'That's impossible. You were wounded!' Later they helped me file a claim, and I was awarded a 50 per-

cent disability. They are now trying to help me get 100 percent because of my PTSD."

The MOPH also saw something that Jensen did not see. "They said I was a 'Godly person' and they voted me in to be the Chaplain for their chapter.

"The way that came about was I have a ministry for veterans, called Pointman International Ministries, a Christian ministry for vets, and by vets. Its purpose is to connect the hurting veteran as well as their families and friends with others who have already begun the transition home. Jensen has been ministering to the northern New Jersey area since 1990.

"One day I'm at the vet's center in Secaucus, and one

of the counselors said they were going to start a new art program. It was going to be a 12-week program called "Paint Your Pain." Because I had drawings hanging up in the hallway that I did in Vietnam, they asked me if I would help teach the class. I hadn't painted in 30 years but I said, 'I'll do it.' Right now, we're in our fourth year, so I guess the 12-week course has been a big success."

The painting is a form of therapy. Jensen has about 15 men in his class.

"Some of them are absolutely super, they are very good," Jensen said.

Jensen uses his art talent to earn a living, and paints different subjects.

"I do some military paintings and sometimes I get off that subject and



do subjects such as landscapes, anything that I think will sell. I sell a lot of eagles with the American flag as a background."

Art is very therapeutic says Jensen.

"It calms many of the men down," he explained. "They find talents they never knew that had. They learn to draw and paint. The original concept behind this

was to illustrate their nightmares and purge the nightmares and feelings."

Some of the students are at a point where they can sell their work.

"Right now, we have quite a few entries at the Lyons VA hospital for the annual Creative Arts Contest. We're hoping to get some winners from that contest."