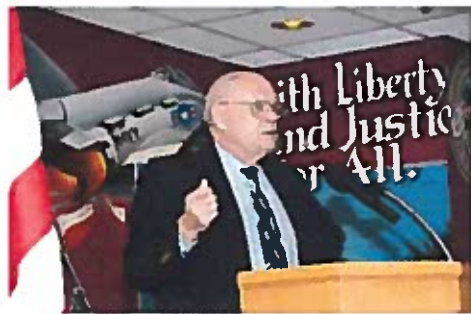


Brian Cripps



MEET THE CREATIVE MIND BEHIND THE ART FOR VETERANS' HOMES PROGRAM, A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION THAT DECORATES VETERANS' HOMES AND HOSPITALS WITH PAINTINGS.

By Jessica Goody, *SunSations* team

Born and raised in Southampton, England, Brian Cripps, who is known as "the governor" to some, immigrated to the United States in 1962 and came to Sun City eight years ago.

The idea for the Art For Veterans' Homes Program was born after Brian attended a lecture in 2007, given by Dorothy Hodges, on the living conditions in veterans' nursing homes. He asked her how he could help. She told him, "You know, the walls of our homes are very barren and sterile. Could you do anything that might brighten the hallways, and maybe the lives, of the residents?"

Brian's World War II memories influenced creation of the Art For Veterans' Homes Program. He recalls when his father, who tested landing craft in the Home Guard, one night asked him to climb the hill near their home with him. They set out the next morning. As dawn approached and they reached the hilltop, they heard what sounded like an approaching thunderstorm, a sound that grew into "an ungodly roar in the heavens." That sound was part of the 13,743 airplanes going off to join the Allied invasion of Europe.

It was Tuesday, June 6, 1944, D-Day.

This recollection, as well as what he had learned from Dorothy Hodges, inspired Brian to begin the Art For Veterans' Homes Project.

A core group of volunteers known as the Alliance Team, all of whom reside in Sun City, transport donated artwork and

hang it in veterans' homes. They supply many different types of art: murals, portraits, photography, mixed media pieces. All in all, 1,100 pieces have been installed in South Carolina's three major veterans' homes: The Veterans' Victory House in Walterboro, the Richard M. Campbell Veterans' Nursing Home in Anderson and the C.M. Tucker Jr. Nursing Care Center in Columbia. Nearby Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center in Augusta, Ga. has also received artwork through this project.

The donated artwork comes from local artists, members of the Society of Bluffton Artists Gallery (where Brian was gallery manager from 2005-2007), the Beaufort Art Association, the Hilton Head Art League, the Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities in Greenville and several of the top art students at Bluffton High School. Many diverse themes appear. There are colorful abstract pieces, florals and nature scenes, and portraits of celebrities (including Marilyn Monroe and Bob Marley).



"The criteria of the art are to stimulate," Brian says.

In addition to enlivening the decor, the artwork is psychologically beneficial to veterans who live in the homes. Vivid colors cheer and inspire them. They can relate to works with a military theme, such as soldiers' portraits or a seascape featuring battleships. Landscapes bring the outside to the inside for the less mobile and the bedridden. Nature scenes of water, flowers, animals and trees are restful and soothing.

Brian has said that he would like to expand the Art For Veterans' Homes Program to national scale. The first step in achieving this is the establishment of the National Photography Archive website, which will be seeking a sponsor upon its completion.

As another step, a lecture, "Let's Do It," was presented at the Albuquerque National Convention for State-Run Nursing Homes in New Mexico last July. A blueprint for establishing similar programs in other states was presented. The response was encouraging as 23 nursing homes in different states showed interest.

"It was a team effort and several others were involved. They all deserve credit," Brian said.

The Alliance Team is comprised of Sun City residents Carol and Dennis Snyder, Tommy Captaliano, Jim Hines, and Karen and Vincent Taylor. In addition,



Above and opposite, top: Brian Cripps at the Albuquerque convention. **At right and opposite, below:** examples of some of the artwork.

Photos courtesy of Brian Cripps.



frames for the artwork were constructed by volunteers from the Sun City Woodworkers Association.

Brian holds a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Southampton (England), and was an electrical engineer on the Queen Mary I. He is also an artist, though he has no formal artistic training. He did study with his uncle, a

talented oil painter, during summer vacations as a child.

Brian uses a number of media and materials used in his work, including oil paints, acrylics and pastels. He also does photography and has created mixed media pieces. Brian says he prefers to paint large-scale murals in acrylic with gold backgrounds. His favorite types of

art are contemporary and modern. Brian is not only an artist; he has also written his memoirs, which he self-published and presented to his grandchildren.

The website for the Art for Veterans' Nursing Homes National Photography Archive can be found at www.rumzdad.com.