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Performer Profile

Paul Boruff – Born to Sing!



Paul Boruff, a 55-year-old Navy veteran from Salt Lake City, Utah is a natural on stage. He grew up singing and playing musical instruments, talents that have taken him far in life. “I always knew I’d be in the entertainment business,” Boruff says. “I got my first guitar when I was eight or nine years old and I began singing even before that.” During his high school years, Boruff and a group of five other teenagers formed a band called the “Miscellaneous Assortment,” and he was also a key member of his church choir. When graduation rolled around, Boruff chose to follow his family’s tradition of military service and join the Navy.

Enlisting in 1969, Boruff was trained to be part of an aviation squadron in Albany, Ga. Soon after training, he got the orders sending him to Vietnam. Assigned to the aircraft carriers USS Ranger and USS Saratoga as part of a reconnaissance attack squadron, Boruff saw a great deal of combat. After completing his military duty in 1973, he picked up his musical interests right where he left off.

Taking only his backpack and guitar, Boruff set off looking for places to earn a living as an entertainer. He traveled all over playing in venues that included Officer’s Clubs and National Parks. Making his living this way since 1973, he has been very successful at it. His musical talents have even led him to experience some of life’s other happy moments. In fact, it was while Boruff was working as Yellowstone National Park’s historical theater entertainer in 1992 that he met his wife, Nan.

Boruff was first introduced to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival by Heidi Hatch, an extremely dedicated music therapist at the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System. Encouraged by her and some fellow veterans at the medical center, Boruff entered his first Festival in 2000. He won first place for his own rendition of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” and was invited to attend the Festival in Washington, D.C. that year. Boruff remembers being unexpectedly awed by the talent he saw that first time. “As a professional artist, I wasn’t really sure what to expect of the talent at my first Festival,” Boruff says. “I was extremely impressed, and I felt humbled to be a part of something with such a great purpose.”

This year will mark Boruff’s seventh performance at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. This time, he will not be performing one of his own pieces. Fellow veteran and special recognition winner Frank Scout, of Hot Springs, S.D., wrote a winning song entitled “Sioux Valley,” which is all about his Lakota heritage. Because Scout’s mobility and speech are impaired due to a stroke several years ago, Boruff agreed to sing the song as part of the opening act at the Festival’s gala stage show performance. “The Festival is about everybody helping each other,” Boruff says. “It feels good to be in a position of service to my fellow veterans who are in need. I feel like I’m doing something of value.”