

## Oconomowoc artist honors those who serve in military

*Stencel will tour Iraq next month*

By KEVIN PASSON - GM Today Staff

January 12, 2005

OCONOMOWOC - Military historian and artist Tony Stencel brings a unique perspective to his works, through his uncommon combination of artistic talent and military service.

"My passion is to tell the story of the soldier, from a soldier's point of view," said Stencel, 45. "You will often hear a veteran say, 'If you weren't there, you'll never know ...' so, in essence, this is what I'm trying to capture in my paintings."

As a selected artist with the U.S. Air Force Art Program, Stencel will be flown to Iraq sometime in late February or early March, where he will be embedded with troops at a triage unit north of Baghdad. The sketches and photographs he will have taken there will be the basis for future paintings, at least one of which will be presented to the Air Force at a formal ceremony in 2006.

"The actions and deeds of Air Force men and women are recorded in paintings by eminent American artists in a way that words could never tell," Stencel said. "These paintings are both historical and educational. The Air Force does not dictate what we are to paint, or the style."

The art program, which began in 1950, has amassed more than 8,000 pieces of art, mostly paintings, that document aircraft, people, battles and locations significant to Air Force history.

The first 800 or so paintings were donated to the Air Force collection by the Army when the program first began. The remainder of the works were done mostly at the request of the Air Force and were donated to the collection by the artists themselves.

The Air Force Art Program does not buy art. Rather, the program coordinates with various agencies to get artists out of the studio and in the field, embedding them with Air Force units so they can photograph, sketch and collect other source material they will need to produce a painting. The Air Force essentially sends them on a temporary-duty assignment for the purpose of producing art.

Stencel said his paintings must be historically accurate, sometimes taking hundreds of hours of research before beginning a project.

"I strive to create historically accurate, yet human, depictions of military life, from the home front to the front lines," he said. "My art is for the veteran, their families and for future generations, so that they may honor those that serve."



Ann Marie Keller

**Oconomowoc resident Tony Stencel works on a painting of a naval scene from his home. Soon, Stencel will be leaving for Iraq to depict some of the scenes of war for the Air Force.**



Ann Marie Keller

**Paint brushes and military decorations are just the beginning of Tony Stencel's inspiration to honor military veterans through works of art. Stencel will be embedded in Iraq as part of the Air Force Art Program.**

When Stencel leaves for his three-week assignment, he will leave behind his wife, Vicky; sons, Andrew, 7, and Alex, 4; and 2-month old daughter, Julia.

"Initially, I questioned the safety of the trip, but he assured me they would not be directly in harm's way," Vicky Stencel said. "I'm very proud of him and the U.S. government for commissioning it. What better way to reflect what the soldier is going through?"

Stencel served with the National Guard for nine years and was deployed overseas on three joint military training exercises, cross-trained as an intelligence noncommissioned officer and received the Army Commendation Medal and the Army Achievement Medal with an oak leaf cluster.

He holds a degree from the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design and has studied at the Disney Institute.

As the former director of design for a \$40 million display company, Stencel has designed multimillion dollar exhibits for Fortune 500 companies and museum exhibits for the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame and Harley-Davidson, among others.

He is also a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Art Program.

#### Stencel art on display at Shorehaven

OCONOMOWOC - Local artist Tony Stencel is bringing his unique perspective to the halls of Shorehaven Health and Rehabilitation Center through February.

"This is a special privilege for me to share my talents with people of this generation," Stencel said, referring to his resident audience. "If I can bring back memories for veterans in these facilities, terrific. My mission is to honor those who serve. That's what my art is all about."

The Lutheran Homes of Oconomowoc Service League features artists at Shorehaven Health and Rehabilitation Center on a rotating basis.

The public may view and purchase the artwork, with a portion of the proceeds returning to Shorehaven to enhance residents' lives. The art exhibits take place on the first floor at 1306 W. Wisconsin Ave. Cash and checks are accepted.

Stencel's work can also be seen at his Web site, [www.tonystencel.com](http://www.tonystencel.com).

Artists interested in displaying their work at Shorehaven should call art coordinator Betty Schneider at 567-6807.

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*This story appeared in the Waukesha Freeman on Jan. 12, 2005.*