

AUTHOR PROFILE OF ALIVIA C. TAGLIAFERRI

(Written by JAKA Consulting Group)

When Alivia C. Tagliaferri spent time working on a corporate video project for the USO of Metro DC at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, her assignment was to videotape celebrities visiting and boosting morale of the war-wounded, but it was an experience that would impact her deeply and ultimately change her assignment in life. In August of 2003, at age 27, it was the first time she saw casualties of war, the physical wounds that is, months later met with a Vietnam Veteran who confided that he had spent 9 months serving in-country as a Marine, lost his best friend and every former sense of self he had. Alivia was struck by the parallel. "Nine months," she said to the veteran, "that's the same amount of time it takes a woman to give birth to a baby. I bet going to war as a 19-year old and coming out a different person must have felt like you were being born again." The old veteran replied, "Exactly. Except this time, you're not born *with* your innocence, you're born *without* it." Inspired, Alivia began writing. What resulted is her debut novel, entitled *Still the Monkey, What Happens to Warriors after War*, a reality-based work of historical fiction that depicts the relationship between a Vietnam veteran and Iraq War veteran facing their post-combat struggles.

The first edition was released in March 2007 by Ironcutter Media, LLC, Tagliaferri's boutique publishing company based in Northern Virginia. The book relays stories, historically accurate depictions of battles in Vietnam and Iraq, and journeys through the minds of warriors struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and the rigors of rehabilitation for loss of limb and emotions. For the character of Dennis Michaels, a Marine veteran still battling with cycles of survivor's guilt and the 'body bag syndrome' after nearly forty years, his life changes when he begins mentoring a young Marine double-amputee wounded in Iraq undergoing rehabilitation at Walter Reed's Mologne House. As their personal histories of fighting for their country and their sanity intersect, they begin a cathartic journey of transforming pain into healing while honoring their Marine code of conduct - never leave anyone behind.

Tagliaferri's follow-up article, "What Every Veteran's Family and Friend Need to Know about Post-Traumatic Stress and PTSD," is currently featured in the July 2007 edition of *The Veteran's Voice*. The article, based on advice gleaned from experts in the field, outlines what families and friends of veterans should do and not do if their loved one shows signs of post-traumatic stress.

In light of the Pentagon's recent assessment that the current mental health care system is falling short, the National Institute of Mental Health study finding that male veterans have a higher risk of suicide, and the U.S. Army's initiative to hire more mental health care experts, *Still the Monkey, What Happens to Warriors after War*, is insightful material that is well-positioned to make an impact by delving directly into the heart of the matter.

Why is Tagliaferri, a civilian, so passionate about raising awareness on PTSD? She feels that many civilians, whom like her at one time, aren't truly aware or understand the far-ranging consequences of life after war and the realities of being a post-combat warrior. She feels compelled to share the stories she's learned and the knowledge she's obtained while researching her book and subsequent article. In her eyes, if her novel helps bring awareness and compassion for what thousands of new veterans and their families

may go through in our lifetimes, than she will feel as though she served her 'duty' to our society in some small way.

Of the estimated 25 million veterans living in this country today, 30 percent of those who served in Vietnam have reported symptoms of PTSD, and an estimated one in six veterans returning home from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom are reporting disabilities attributed to this anxiety-based disorder. Combatants who serve in multiple tours of duty have a 50 percent increased risk in developing PTSD. "This is a very telling statistic, in my opinion, for what our generation needs to be prepared for, as a large number of our current service members are serving in two, three, even fourth tours of duty. It is important for us then, as a society to have a basic understanding, awareness, and level of compassion for mental health disorders, such as PTSD, and remove the stigma often attached."

The book, reviewed in the April Midwest Book Review as a "poignant and powerful novel, written out of the deepest respect and admiration for the men and women who put their lives on the line for the sake of their nation," has thus far been well received in the veteran and military community. Jim Strickland, a notable Veteran's Advocate, wrote a favorable review of her book and subsequent article in his web-blog for the VA Watchdog. *Salute Magazine*, recently featured Tagliaferri and her book-signing event at the new USO Lounge in Dulles Airport in the June issue. Many veterans and active duty troops have reached out her, citing that while the material was "hard" or "difficult" at times to read, it was also therapeutic in many ways, and have thanked her for writing it and for helping others understand. She saved an email from a distant family member and Vietnam veteran who wrote to her after reading the book, "I would say that your book brought up memories for me, but the truth is, the memories have never really gone away..."

Currently scheduled to speak at bookstores and Veterans Affairs Medical Centers this summer and fall, Tagliaferri is able to discuss her research on PTSD, her experiences and journeys while writing this book, with the goal of helping friends and families of veterans, and future healthcare providers better understand how veterans may change physically, mentally, and spiritually after the traumatic experience of war and how to strategically cope with these changes. Her company, Ironcutter Media LLC, donates a portion of all books and book-signing event proceeds, to charities and non-profit organizations that benefit veteran's assistance programs.

About Alivia

A native of Williamsport, Pennsylvania and a 1999 graduate of the Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, Ms. Tagliaferri immediately began her career in the private sector working as a sales associate for SAVVIS Communications, a private networking and hosting company. In 2003, she embarked on her career in film and video production, working at iKoya Productions, first in a sales capacity, and later as production assistant, coordinator, and manager where she became involved in corporate video projects for Yorktel Media and the USO of Metro DC. Leaving the corporate world behind in 2005 to focus on her passion – writing, she completed her debut novel, *Still the Monkey*, and has since dedicated herself to write, publish, and produce non-fiction and historical fiction material that matters through Ironcutter Media, LLC, a company she founded in 2006. Alivia is scheduled to appear at several bookstores across the country in 2007, and believes in giving back to the community by donating a portion of proceeds of her novel to charities and presenting speeches to high school students on how to market ideas and creativity.