

A Promise Kept... by Victoria M. Owens

If you are a life-long resident of St. George the name Joe Tallon may ring a bell. More than likely, a school bell.

Tallon, along with his wife Martha Anne, resides in Summerville, but long ago he made a solemn promise in St. George. Tallon taught social studies and eventually chaired the Social Studies Department at St. George High School (1981-1999) and Woodland High School (2000-2001). He was also serving in the U.S. Army Reserves while teaching school and made a promise to his students that he would one day write a book about the stories of war that he had shared in his classroom and that he would definitely let them know when the book became a reality.

The writing and publication of this book is the fulfillment of that promise. Tallon, along with his oldest son Matthew, put their knowledge, talent, and time together to compose Tallon's book titled "*100 Days in Vietnam: A Memoir of Love, War and Survival*".

Matthew currently serves as the senior project manager for the Public Education Leadership Project at Harvard University

The website for the book is www.matthewtallon.com.

The foreword for the book is written by Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster.

The book description reads as follows: *AS AMERICAN TROOPS CONTINUE* their steady exodus on the last day of their ground war in Vietnam, Lieutenant Joe Tallon is shot down by an enemy missile. Forced to eject at a dangerously low altitude from their OV-1 Mohawk, Joe and his tactical observer, Specialist-5 Daniel Richards, land in the flaming wreckage. Lieutenant Tallon survives, but Specialist Richards does not. Stateside, Lieutenant Tallon begins to heal and proceed with his life—but the loss of his tactical observer is never far from his mind. Forty years later, Joe embarks on a quest to bring recognition to the sacrifice of Daniel Richards and secure a Purple Heart for his family.

Painstakingly recreated from wartime letters and remembrances and contextualized by contemporary news accounts, *100 Days in Vietnam* is a collaboration between Joe and his son Matt—also an Army veteran. Here



Joe Tallon, as he looked in his high school teaching days.

we experience the war through the emotions of the man who survived it: the drudgery and monotony of airfield life, the heartache of a newlywed missing his wife, the terror of combat missions, the agony of injury and rehabilitation, and the bittersweet relief from the completion of his final mission to bring recognition to his fallen comrade.

The following are just three of many endorsements for the book by well-known people in the Lowcountry and around the U.S.

"Joseph Tallon's story, told through his wartime letters, recollections, and the words of his son, is a moving account of an American family's experience with war, loss, and remembrance. *100 Days in Vietnam* offers readers both a rare window on the final days of our painful national odyssey in Vietnam and a remarkable record of an individual's determined quest to honor a fallen comrade."
-- Ken Burns, filmmaker of *The Vietnam War* and others

"Starting with a childhood on Charleston's Bull Street and culminating with a Purple Heart quest in Summerville some 66 years later, Joe's story is steeped in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Whether he's surviving a plane crash on the last day of the ground war, meeting Miss America in the China Beach hospital, getting the attentive support of Betty Ford at the White House visit, or surviving a horrible storm off Morris Island on a shrimp boat with his cousin Bubba, Joe's serendipitous adventures would bring a smile to the face of any *Forrest Gump* fan. The beautiful love story with his wife sustains him on a long, winding road of recovery. Joe's story is a magnificent one told quite well in concert by father and son."
-- Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Former Mayor of Charleston (1975-2016) and current Professor of American Government & Public Policy at The Citadel

"Whether in uniform or civilian clothes, I've never seen Joe Tallon when he didn't appear to be standing at attention. He was a proud American soldier through and through. This book, *100 Days in Vietnam*, is a riveting read that includes uncanny detail about his experiences as an Army pilot. The love letters he exchanges with his wife, Martha Anne, add an additional human texture to an otherwise chaotic existence. It's in those same letters, though, that Charlestonians will appreciate his memories of fishing in Colonial Lake and eating shrimp at the Sand Bar restaurant on Folly Beach. There are moments of turmoil, danger, angst, heroism and homesickness as Tallon counts the days to his return to his new bride. It's a compelling story told in a first person narrative sure to grab your attention and maybe, even, make you stand a little taller as an American."
-- Warren Peper, television and print media award-winning journalist

For info on his upcoming book signings this month you may contact the author, Joe Tallon, at [redacted] or 843-302-1637, or [redacted] or see his advertisement, above, on this page for dates, times and places.

