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Posted on Tue, Nov 11, 2008

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- Ymca Fundraising brew
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Fighting inner demons after Vietnam

'Fishing with Hand Grenades' is former Manayunk author's first book

Former Manayunk resident Ari Pontz has recently published "Fishing With Hand Grenades," a book based on the true story of an eighteen-year-old US Marine who fights for his life in Vietnam in 1968, and must then battle his own inner demons in the conflict's aftermath. The story contains a first-hand account of the war experience and post-war battle for survival of "Danny Sullivan," a working-class teenager from Philadelphia.

It is filled with brutal combat action, heart-warming anecdotes of friendship and brotherhood, and detailed descriptions of life in the trenches in Vietnam.

From Dan's enlistment in the Marine Corps while a high school senior, through his grueling Marine training and the harrowing tour he served in Vietnam, to the adversity he faced when he returned home, the riveting story describes a young man struggling through the worst of circumstances to survive a war he had never intended to fight.

The book also closely examines the underlying factors that made returning home such an ordeal for many Vietnam veterans, and challenges Americans, now confronted with a comparable situation as a growing number of US soldiers return from Iraq and Afghanistan, to learn from history.

According to Pontz, the book is unique insofar as it relates a Marine's experience through the eyes of another eighteen-year-old (Pontz began the manuscript as a high school senior, and completed it, for the most part, during his four years as a student at Penn State).

Pontz notes that the reader will find the story "uplifting, will be humbled by the courage and sacrifice it depicts, and will gain a new respect for the American foot soldier."

"Though the Vietnam War ended more than 30 years ago, and the story has been retold countless times in various permutations, I believe my book is unique in that it looks at the conflict through the eyes of another eighteen-year-old (I was in fact only eighteen when I started to write the book, finishing most of it while I was a student at Penn State)," Pontz said.

"Perhaps more importantly, I believe that my book conveys a message that is no less relevant today than during the Vietnam War era.

At a time when our country is again at war, the book speaks to the importance of supporting our young kids in the military, especially as they return home, regardless of one's political affiliation or beliefs regarding the validity of our involvement in the particular conflict."

To learn more, you can read the book jacket and an excerpt, as well as learn how to obtain the book, by going to www.fishing-withhandgrenades.com.

Author Ari Pontz was born and raised in Philadelphia and continues to live in the Philadelphia area with his wife, Corey.

He is a 1999 graduate of Penn State University and a portfolio manager and partner in an investment management company.