



J.R. Martinez

J.R. Martinez and dance partner Karina Smirnoff are the winners of the silver ball trophy of season 13 of ABC's "Dancing with the Stars." He was also the 2012 Tournament of Roses Grand Marshal, which included riding in the Rose Parade and tossing the coin to start the Rose Bowl Game on Jan. 2, 2012.

He is an actor, spokesman and retired soldier. He played 'Brot Monroe' on the Emmy Award winning daytime drama "All My Children." In true Hollywood fashion, J.R. was encouraged by a friend to go on the open casting call that AMC put out for a veteran to join the cast. After several meetings with producers he was cast and an actor was born. Due to his popularity, what started as a three month story arc developed into a three year stint. His role as an injured Iraq combat veteran mirrors his own life.

Jose Rene Martinez was born June 14, 1983 in Shreveport, LA to Maria Zavala. He has two sisters, Consuelo and Anabel, who were raised in El Salvador with his mother's family. Anabel died as a toddler before he ever met her. At nine years old J.R. moved with his mother to Hope, AR, where he lived until he was 17. At 17, he moved to Dalton, GA, a place he proudly calls his hometown. During his senior year he played strong safety for the Dalton High School Catamounts when they went to Georgia's State Championship. Playing professional football was his dream until he suffered an injury his senior year.

After high school he joined the army. J.R. was proud to serve, as a way to give something back to a country that had already given so much to him and his family. In September of 2002, J.R. underwent Basic and Advanced Training at Fort Benning, Georgia, where he gained skills as an 11-B Infantryman. After reporting to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in January of 2003, he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division.

In March of 2003, J.R. was deployed to Iraq, and on April 5, less than a month into his deployment, he was serving as a driver of a Humvee in Karbala, when his left front tire hit a land-mine. Three other soldiers with J.R. were ejected from the burning vehicle, but he was trapped inside and suffered smoke inhalation and severe burns to more than 40 percent of his body. J.R. claims that while he was fighting for his life and awaiting medical help in Iraq, his sister Anabel, appeared to him, giving him the strength to stay alive.

After he was pulled out of the Humvee, J.R. was evacuated to a local medic station in Iraq and then Landstuhl, Germany, for immediate care. He was eventually sent to Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) in San Antonio, Texas. He spent 34 months in recovery at BAMC and underwent 33 different surgeries including skin grafts and cosmetic surgery.



During his time in recovery, a nurse asked him to speak to a burn patient, who had just seen his body for the first time and had become withdrawn. After an approximate 45-minute visit, the patient opened the curtain letting light in his room and his heart. J.R. then understood the impact he had on this patient and decided to use his experience to help others, visiting with several of the patients in the hospital, sharing his story and listening to theirs.

J.R. has become a highly-sought motivational speaker, travelling the country to spread his message of resilience and optimism. He devotes himself to showing others the true value in making the most of every situation. He is called on by a wide-range of groups, including large corporations, veterans groups, non-profits and schools, and has shared the stage with the likes of global self-help guru Tony Robbins and Evangelist Dave Roever. J.R. has been featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *PEOPLE Magazine*. He has appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *60 Minutes*, *The View*, CNN, FOX News, *Good Morning America*, Univision, along with other major national news outlets.

While J.R.'s experience was certainly life-changing, amazingly he claims this is actually a change for the better. "I discovered it is what is inside a person that matters most and I wouldn't change anything...absolutely anything!" states J.R. "I do believe everything happens for a reason, and I'm extremely grateful for that day because it led me into this life!"

When he does have leisure time, J.R. likes to spend time with his black lab, working out and writing his memoirs. He resides in Studio City, CA.