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[Bullets to Bandages: Life inside the Israel Defense Forces](#)

by Mark Terris

Xlibris

book review by Joe Kilgore

"The Zionist ideas I had been exposed to in high school and the scout movement had taken root. It was my responsibility to serve the country that I had called home the past years."

This is a tale of one young man's military service. It takes place in Israel in the late 1970's and recounts three years of what the author experienced as a member of the armed forces.

Memoirs, by their very nature, are sometimes accused of faded or selective memory. Terris's tome, however, is constructed from an initial draft completed immediately following his discharge. Then he revisited it frequently, polishing and providing additional remembrances over subsequent years. He has no qualms about calling it a true story.

While the book copiously details the training he experienced, initially as a would-be paratrooper and then as a potential combat medic, it is first and foremost a story of friendship and camaraderie. There was an oft-quoted axiom in the Israeli Defense Forces at that time which said, "There are no friends in the army." Terris's book is a testament to the fallaciousness of that phrase.

A skilled writer and an expert at describing detailed medical procedures, the author depicts vivid recreations of learning about phlebotomy, not simply in dry academic terms, but rather in wince-inducing dramatizations of vein hunting. There are also memorable depictions of tracheotomy training, chemical warfare exposure, and more. While the content of the memoir is heavily laden with combat medical procedures and military instruction, the continuing emphasis throughout is focused on the bonds forged between Terris and the close friends he makes. He keeps their collective feelings of tedium, their mutual stress, their ongoing frustrations, fears, and humanity center stage. In doing so, his account reaches beyond what he personally experienced in Israel and becomes a universal reflection of how young people learn and grow through shared service to their country.

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