



Steel Will: My Journey Through Hell to Become the Man I Was Meant to Be

Shilo Harris , Robin Overby Cox

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On February 19, 2007, SSG Shilo Harris was patrolling an infamous southern Iraqi roadway when his Humvee was struck by an IED. Moments later, three members of his crew were dead and Shilo had sustained severe burns over 35 percent of his body, lost his ears and the skin off his face, and lost much of the use of his badly mangled fingers. This fiery moment was just the beginning of an arduous road laced with pain, emotional anguish, and much soul-searching. For forty-eight days Shilo lay trapped in a medically induced coma as his wife, unable to ease his suffering, had to come to grips with a man utterly changed.

This is the story of a young boy raised in a small Texas town under the heavy yoke of a father struggling with the personal aftermath of his service in Vietnam. This is the story of the first human being to participate in extracellular stem cell regeneration to regrow lost body parts. This is the story of the survivor not only of an explosion but of more than sixty surgeries to restore both form and function to his broken body. This is the story of the wife who stood by his side, made hard decisions, and continues to support her husband through his struggles with PTSD.

This is the story of a God who reshapes us into the people he wants us to be. And in that way, this is the story of all of us.

Anyone whose life has been touched by tragedy and loss, especially military families dealing with PTSD, TBI, amputations, and other realities of wartime service, will find strength, encouragement, and inspiration in this moving memoir.

Steel Will: My Journey Through Hell to Become the Man I Was Meant to Be Details

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From Reader Review Steel Will: My Journey Through Hell to Become the Man I Was Meant to Be for online ebook

Sharon Heavenly Machuga French says

I received this book through Goodreads First Reads program.

This was truly an amazing book. I can't even begin to say enough about it. I read the book with mixed emotions: anxiety, anger, pride, gratefulness. Shilo Harris is a hero, a man with utmost courage, endurance and perseverance. That anyone has to go through what this man did is frustrating to me. But he showed me just how dedicated our servicemen and women are. I am so glad that I read this book. It gave me a new perspective on what our servicemen and women have to face on a daily basis following tragic injuries in war. God Bless you Shilo Harris and many thanks to you and all of our many service men and women present and past.

Gunnyshore says

a must read for anyone that doesn't understand the impact of war on the country, people that think they've had a bad day...think again.

Shilo does a great job putting it out there, what it is like to go thru the horror of war and how this never goes away.

If you reading this, thank a teacher...if you like your freedom, thank a vet!

Semper Fi,
Gunny

John says

Think you've had a bad day, NOT LIKELY. This is a MUST READ for a parent, spouse, brother, sister aunt, uncle or anyone who is a family member of a combat veteran (or any burn victim).

This book gives an in depth look at what it's like to live the life of a wounded soldier. "Steel Will" shows the life of Shilo Harris, who was wounded and burnt over 85% of his body, and the trials and tribulations he and his family endure. It details not only what the injured goes through but what the spouse, children, parents, Dr's, therapists and everyone else involved in the long and lengthy recovery period must go through.

"Steel Will" is a and is a great guide to healing and therapy physically, mentally and spritually. It also gives an extensive listing of resources and Biblical reading available for the whole family.

Mariejkt says

"Steel Will: My Journey Through Hell to Become the Man I Was Meant to be" is about the life of retired soldier Shilo Harris. As you can tell by the cover Mr. Harris was severely injured by an IED (improvised explosive device) in the Middle East. First off I really appreciate that at the beginning of the book our author gives a run down of what the military terms he uses mean. Also I am very thankful that Mr. Harris does not hold anything back about what our men and women go through in war. This book is not for the faint of heart as he talks about his rough children, young adults years and goes into detail of horrific things our soldiers have seen in the middle east. Also details on sufferers of PTSD which he description has really helped me to understand more on what our soldiers are going through. Yes, I will never completely understand but now I can be more caring with knowledge. I highly recommend this book for anyone to read.

I was given this book by Baker Publishing and was not required to give a positive review.

A.C. Cuddy says

"On February 19, 2007, SSG Shilo Harris was patrolling an infamous southern Iraqi roadway when his Humvee was struck by an IED. Moments later, three members of his crew were dead and Shilo had sustained severe burns over 35 percent of his body, lost his ears and the skin off his face, and lost much of the use of his badly mangled fingers. This fiery moment was just the beginning of an arduous road laced with pain, emotional anguish, and much soul-searching. For forty-eight days Shilo lay trapped in a medically induced coma as his wife, unable to ease his suffering, had to come to grips with a man utterly changed.

This is the story of the survivor not only of an explosion but of more than sixty surgeries to restore both form and function to his broken body. This is the story of the wife who stood by his side, made hard decisions, and continues to support her husband through his struggles with PTSD. This is the story of a God who reshapes us into the people he wants us to be. And in that way, this is the story of all of us.

I don't know that I have words to describe this book - **Steel Will**. It's more than a mere book. It's more than a mere story, or memoir. I don't know what it is. But from the moment you begin the first page, you are pulled into not just the life, but also the fight for life of SSG Shilo Harris. This man's story will leave you emotionally raw. You will NEVER again look at life... or war... or our fighting men and women in the same way. You will never again wonder why they do it. You will know that it is, in fact, more than a job for these men and women. It is the mission, it is their life's calling. This story should leave you questioning your own place in the grand scheme of it all. It should make you wonder what it is that you have to complain and whine about. And it should make you want to get out of your chair and grab a hold of this life and do something worthy of their sacrifice.

Author's Website: <http://www.shiloharris.com/>

About the Authors:

Shilo Harris enlisted in the US Army after 9/11. On his second deployment, he sustained catastrophic injuries when his vehicle was struck by an IED. Harris spent nearly three years in the burn unit of Brooke Army Medical Center. Harris retired from the military in 2010 and is now a motivational speaker, urging audiences to welcome veterans and wounded warriors home with open arms and open minds.

Robin Overby Cox is a career educator and librarian. Born in Augsburg, Germany, as an Army brat, she collaborated with Shilo in order to call communities to action on behalf of veterans. She graduated with honors from Florida State University and the University of South Florida. She calls Texas home and has five children and six grandchildren.

Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Books through the Baker Books Bloggers www.bakerbooks.com/bakerbooksbloggers program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/wa...>

*Reviews of this book were posted at the following locations:

Amazon, Christian Book, Deeper Shopping, Goodreads, and to be featured on my blog at <http://titus3.wordpress.com>

Michelle Tejada says

This gave me a better understanding of what our wounded warriors are experiencing.

Yibbie says

Thank you. Thank you for your service, Mr. Harris. Thank you, Mrs. Harris, for your sacrifice. It is very motivating. It makes you want to do everything in your power to reach out and help those hurting around us. Shilo Harris helps us see and to a small degree understand the pain and damage war does not just to his body and spirit, but also to his family. It is just heartbreaking at points. There are parts that are gruesome, heartwarming, sad, and motivating.

He does deal with some of the changes to the intimate side of his marriage. He does it as discretely as he can. I was very disappointed to find that the author and the publishers made the choice to include swearing. I really didn't expect that from Baker Books and Christianaudio. I understand that he makes no claim to faith at that point in the story and that they were soldiers in a war zone. Actually, I'm sure the language was considerably worse there than it was in the book. So if you are going to clean it up somewhat, why not all the way?

There was one more thing that disappointed me. Even though it's marketed as a Christian book there really isn't much about Christianity. God, grace, prayer, and faith are mentioned maybe half a dozen times in passing. I think one Bible verse is quoted. He is quite open about the fact that faith really didn't mean much to him till later in his story. Okay, but what made it become more important to him? Is he saved? I don't know spiritual salvation isn't even mentioned. God's love for us is barely mentioned. Jesus is barely mentioned. God's comfort isn't mentioned. I'm trying to say that Christianity, Christ isn't the focus of this book. Instead, the focus is on the struggles of this family and other veteran families and what the community can do to help them.

If I had picked this up with the assumption that it was a secular book, I would have heartily recommended it. But because I, and I assume others, picked it up as a book that will in some way help us in our Christian walk, and because I was disappointed by the lack of a spiritual focus in the book; I can't really recommend it that highly.

Alysen says

I really enjoyed this book! Its clean and faith promoting. What an amazing story!

Rebekah says

Steel Will

Staff Sgt (RET) Shilo Harris with Robin Overby Cox

Shilo Harris is one of the many veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who have come home with scars from wounds that anyone who comes across them can easily see. In fact, his scars are hard to avoid. Harris was riding in a Humvee that was blown up by an IED while he and his men were clearing a road referred to as Metallica. The blast caused his ears, part of his nose, and some of his fingers to be blown off, and the heat and flames from the ensuing fire burned much of his body. Due to the nature of these wars, wounds like this are nothing new. Harris and Cox detail many of them--all horrifying to imagine, but some gut wrenching to endure through Cox's almost too-vivid descriptions--in Steel Will.

What makes Staff Sgt. (RET) Shilo Harris different from many veterans is that he has chosen to talk about his journey. Steel Will is subtitled "My Journey Through Hell to Become the Man I was Meant to Be." This is an accurate description for the road he walked--he describes the flames and the heat so intense it caused ammunition in the Humvee to discharge and his uniform to melt into his body--and a figurative one as well. Harris doesn't shy away from sharing his own growing pains and mistakes as he grew up in the home of a Vietnam vet suffering from undiagnosed and self-medicated PTSD. He also doesn't shy away from his own selfishness as a young adult and the pain those choices caused for the people around him. So it's no surprise that he doesn't sugar coat the realities of living through his medically-induced coma as his body struggled to heal, the impact of his new life on his family, his guilt over surviving, the cost of his activism, and his children's desire to protect him from stares while they are together in public.

And, through it all, the missteps, the pain, the hell on earth, the hell in his mind, the suicidal thoughts, Harris credits God with helping him endure. I expected faith to play a bigger, more active role in the story Harris and Cox lay out in Steel Will. Instead, it is sort of an underlying theme. And, true to his willing transparency, the faith often belongs to Harris's wife. When he doesn't have his own, he draws on hers. When he can't draw on hers, he humbly draws on his young daughter's. In the end, the steel will to endure might not belong to Shilo Harris. It might belong instead to Kathreyn and Elizabeth Harris.

As the daughter of a former National Guard chaplain who survived my father's deployment to Iraq--a deployment that brought home a different father than he brought over--I can recognize that there are no unwounded soldiers. And there are no unwounded soldiers' families. Being one of those, this was a hard book to read. I read portions of it to my husband, and he asked me to stop. The descriptions turned his stomach. But you know what? Those are the costs of freedom. When we don't have family members or friends or neighbors who serve, it gets easy to debate the merits or horrors of war as theory. When we read a book like Steel Will we are forced to confront them. I think that even though it's hard, this is a book well worth reading. It's worth it to understand just a bit about where our soldiers and their families are and what

they endure. It's also worth it to see that in our own ways, God brings each of us through a hell in order to make us into the people we were meant to be. And when it gets too hard to endure, He gives us the steel will of the faith of those around us to help us make it.

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Sarah Ewald says

Such a good book. I found Shilo Harris's journey inspirational. Thank you for your service, and the same to all of our armed forces vets and current service personnel. (I received this as a GoodReads free book, but I would have read it anyway.)

Theresa K says

Thank you for the opportunity to win this book from Goodreads.

Steel Will is about a soldier severely injured while serving in Afganistan and how he persevered trying to get back to normal life.

This was an interesting read while getting to know Shiloh. Thank you for your service, for sharing your highs and lows, helping other soldiers and educating the populace about your experiences.

While sometimes it was difficult to read the difficulties dealing with life while healing, Shiloh somehow kept pushing forward. Inspirational. A recommended read. Also brings to light all the ways we all can inspire each other.

I will keep this short so I don't ruin someone else learning about and getting to know Shilo. I only wish I would have the opportunity to know the amazing person he continues to be.

Michelle says

Undeniable honor, bravery, the courage of military service, love and commitment to family, the journey towards healing, recovery and the desire help/advocate for others are among the themes of this powerful patriotic memoir: "Steel Will: My Journey Through Hell to Become the Man I Was Meant to Be" authored by retired Army Staff Sargent Shilo Harris.

Just looking at the cover of this book will leave no question of the burn injuries Sgt. Harris suffered. On February 19, 2007 in Al-Farat Iraq, Sgt. Harris and his driver were injured, 3 of his crewmembers were

killed:

Adare W. Cleveland 20, (January 14, 1987) from Anchorage, AK.

Matthew C. Bowe 19, (June 17, 1987) from Coraopolis, PA.

Shawn Michael Dunkin 25, (February 27, 1981) from Colombia, SC.

The Humvee they were traveling in exploded upon contact with a roadside IED. Sgt. Harris face, hands, and body were catastrophically burned. He was immediately transported to a combat support hospital in Bagdad and prepared for transport to Landstuhl, Germany until he could be stabilized (his wife Kathreyn was immediately flown to Germany to support him) then sent to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX. Doctor's were unsure if he would make it, his family was advised to prepare for at worst his death. What follows is an incredible story towards recovery.

The military prepares the spouses and families for deployment and death, according to Harris but not catastrophic injury. Harris spent years in regenerative surgeries/therapies, he was challenged constantly to lead by example and be the husband and the father he wanted and needed to be, overcoming adversity all his life. He and Kathreyn had a large blended family with 4 sons and a daughter. Plagued by survivors guilt, PTSD, and Kathreyn compassion fatigue; they worked together to overcome the difficulties they faced, Kathreyn worked and earned her masters degree. The family wanted to avoid moving again, so Harris retired with a full disability from the Army. As a gifted public speaker Harris wanted to advocate for wounded warriors and other organizations supporting veterans. This memoir is also a written extension of Harris work, and provides listings and references for veterans and their families.

Gina says

To be honest, I read this book a while back. The book club meeting to discuss the book was last night, so I finally feel ready to review it. Shilo Harris was extremely injured in an IED explosion. This book covers his early life, his decision to join the Army after 9/11, his marriage, and his faith, but the focus is primarily on his injuries and recovery both mentally and physically. There are few topics I think this book covers well: PTSD and STSD, caregiver fatigue, and the trade-off of service verses sacrifice. His story is a compelling 5 out of 5 stars. However, I wish the story was better written. It isn't that its bad. There were obviously some editorial decisions that left the timeline, both in relation to his injuries/recovery and his faith journey, vague and incomplete. The back and forth between past and present in the beginning and lack of dates in the last half made it hard to follow at times. As a military spouse myself, I would be very interested in reading a book by his wife covering the same topics but from her perspective.

Melissa Embry says

Shortly after Saving Private Ryan appeared in movie theaters, I was aghast to hear that one of my co-workers had taken her then-teenage son to see it. She did it, she said, to keep him from getting any ideas that war was glamorous. But that was the '90's. Then came 9/11, and wars when both civilians and soldiers die—or sometimes worse, live—without any thought of glamour, under circumstances of almost unimaginable, unrelenting horror. Those are the kinds of wars Shilo Harris writes about in his memoir, *Steel Will*.

“This generation of soldiers grew up on video games and TV shows that glamorize violence,” he writes. “We don’t speak of pink mist with you; it represents the vapor that once was a whole soldier. Or it might be the

remains of the enemy after taking a 25mm high-explosive round...Either way, a human being becomes annihilated into pink mist.”

The book’s subtitle, *My Journey through Hell to Become the Man I was Meant to Be*, is perhaps truer to Harris’s theme than the title. It’s the inside story of what his life was like after an IED explosion while on patrol in Iraq left him burned over 30 percent of his body, with broken bones, fingers lost, and almost faceless. And how, although living with still unremitting pain, with PTSD, with occasions when he came close to suicide, he learns to find new meaning in life.

Is that too much for readers to take?

I met Harris last summer at the DFW Writers Conference. Now retired from his military career, he works as an inspirational speaker. Some conference organizer booked him, probably hoping his story would put our writerly whining about meetings with agents into a broader perspective. It did.

Once we recovered from the shock of Harris’s appearance which children at his daughter’s school likened to a Halloween costume his charm (he admits to being the class clown of his high school in tiny Coleman, Texas) and self-deprecating humor, including stories about his “Spock” artificial ears, won us over. Still, I was reluctant to crack open his memoir until recently. I write about vets with PTSD but even so, would Harris’s story be too much to take? Instead, his book turned out to be one of those can’t put it down reads.

It’s full of no holds barred talk about what it’s like to have your Kevlar and ceramic plate body armor melt into your burning skin, to see the horror of your ruined face and body reflected in a comrade’s eyes, even to wake, after your supposed recovery, to your beloved wife returning from her job to find you with a half-emptied bottle of vodka between your knees (because your hands are too ruined to hold it) and no recollection of where the other half went. But beyond all, there’s the acknowledgement that grace and love and meaning still exist.

If readers find the religious faith Harris achieved through his agony too much to take, they need to get over it. His life speaks for itself. A self-admitted wild child before his marriage, fathering three children out of wedlock, he says not that he found God, but that God found him in his agony and convinced him that his life still had purpose despite all his losses.

Those losses have since included a divorce from the woman he credits with the courage to stand by him in circumstances beyond anything they imagined when they promised “for better or for worse.” He doesn’t blame her. “It’s called compassion fatigue. It happens when caregivers who give and give and give get to the bottom of their buckets.” Estimates of divorce rates in families of injured military members can run as high as 90 percent. It’s part of the price.

Harris’s book includes a glossary of military terms as well as extensive lists of resources for veterans, their families, and those willing to help them; a reading list; and brief biographies of the three comrades in Harris’s Humvee who didn’t survive the IED explosion that injured him. It’s widely available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Use a few of those gift coupons and give yourself a new gift for the new year.

Hank Pharis says

This memoir was very moving and inspiring. Shilo Harris and his men were investigating a report of an IED in Iraq when their Humvee ran over one. Shilo and one other man survived but the rest died. Shilo was extensively burned and lost his nose, ears and some of his fingers. He has had over 50 surgeries since the explosion. Despite great stress and suffering, he has come to faith and become an "inspirational" speaker.

(N.B. - I'm stingy with stars. For me 2 stars means a good book. 3 = Very good; 4 = Outstanding; 5 = All time favorites.)
