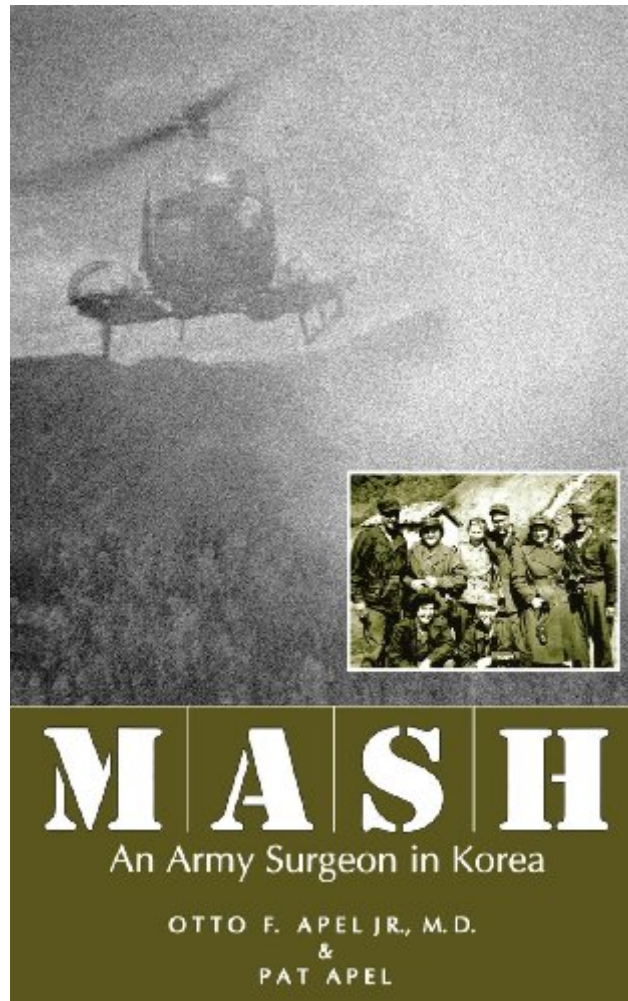


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MASH: An Army Surgeon In Korea



Synopsis

When North Korean forces invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950, Otto Apel was a surgical resident living in Cleveland, Ohio, with his wife and three young children. A year later he was chief surgeon of the 8076th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital constantly near the front lines in Korea. Immediately upon arriving in camp, Apel performed 80 hours of surgery. His feet swelled so badly that he had to cut his boots off, and he saw more surgical cases in those three and a half days than he would have in a year back in Cleveland. There were also the lighter moments. When a Korean came to stay at the 8076th, word of her beauty spread so rapidly that they needed MPs just to direct traffic. Apel also recalls a North Korean aviator, nicknamed "Bedcheck Charlie," who would drop a phony grenade from an open-cockpit biplane, a story later filmed for the television series. He also tells of the day the tent surrounding the women's shower was "accidentally" blown off by a passing helicopter. In addition to his own story, Apel details the operating conditions, workload, and patient care at the MASH units while revealing the remarkable advances made in emergency medical care. MASH units were the first hospitals designed for operations close to the front lines, and from this particularly difficult vantage, their medical staffs were responsible for innovations in the use of antibiotics and blood plasma and in arterial repair. On film and television, MASH doctors and nurses have been portrayed as irreverent and having little patience with standard military procedures. In this powerful memoir, Apel reveals just how realistic these portrayals were.

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Customer Reviews

As a long time M*A*S*H fan I've always wanted to know more about the actual history behind the show I've always wanted to know more of the history behind the show and how the MASH came to be; with Dr. Apel's book I can say some of those questions have been answered. It's readable and not boring but I imagine Bernini a fan of the show and the history of the Korean War helps. Also it can be very funny in parts. In short if you've ever been curious about what life in an actual MASH unit was like this it's the book for you.

An enjoyable read. Highly recommended to M*A*S*H fans who are interested in the sources of the show and anyone who is interested in learning about the experience of doctors in the Korean War. So glad I bought this!

I finally ordered Dr. Apel's book years after it first came out the day after my aunt's military funeral. When the book was first published, the author had sent her a copy. There's a story about her on p. 105 and pictures on the cover and on pp. 106 and 99, LT. Marilyn Brown. She recommended the book highly, but I'd never managed to read it when I'd found it by inter-library loan or when I'd borrowed Dad's copy. But after Marilyn's funeral I sent for my own copy and read it. For years she had shared her adventures, her fear, her funny stories, her painful PTSD memories. I had always known MASH, even before the TV show. Marilyn lived it, both the laughter and the tears. Through her, I got it second-hand. Through this book many others can come to understand what these men and women, these ordinary heroes, accomplished and suffered as they set the standard for battlefield medicine in the modern era. I highly recommend this book and would even if I didn't have a personal connection to it. The reader is presented with an historical angle rarely seen, with insight into the staffs' daily lives, with events and anecdotes that educate, inspire and entertain-- some of which made their way into MASH scripts for TV. The story about everyone at the 8076 coloring their hair with henna was turned into everyone at the 4077 bleaching their hair blonde while Hot Lips was on leave in Tokyo. Look for other parallels. You'll find them. Enjoy. Kim Lawrence

I was stationed at the 44th M.A.S.H. in 1957. Dr. Apel's book is accurate and on target. Great read for someone there. The docs, the nurses, the techs, the chopper pilots were all first class and would make Gen. Patton proud. I was honored to be there. Never forgotten. Floyd Cooper, Capt. MC

I knew the author & was very pleased he shared his story. Reading about the heroic efforts by the medical staff & recognizing some TV episodes was a real pleasure. I have given this book as a gift several times.

Very readable. Don't expect to see Hawkeye or Trapper here: this is the real war--the real story

From the literary side, this work is a little rough around the edges. From the historical side, I am glad to finally find some firsthand information about the 8076 MASH. I wish there were more stories about the MASH units and the contributions they made during the forgotten war. My dad was in the 8076, after Dr. Apel served there, but unfortunately he never talked about his time in the Korea. This book helped fill that gap and will always remain in my library.

Dr. Appell's book "M. A. S. H.: An Army Surgeon in Korea" is an excellent tribute to the men and women of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals by a veteran surgeon of the 8076TH M. A. S. H. unit. My only complaint is that the book was not a little longer. For any fan of the movie or t. v. series this book is a must-read. Dr. Appell (who was a consultant for the series), tells us what life was really like in a M. A. S. H. unit. The series took some liberties with actual events, but its overall portrayal was fairly accurate-though the series lasted 10 years compared to the three years of the Korean War itself, and the average length of stay for surgeons in a M. A. S. H. was about 8 months. Dr. Appell has written a very interesting book.

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