

Israeli Pilot Fights His Way Into the Cockpit

When S. finished high school in Rishon Lezion, he wanted to do the pilots' course in the Israel Air Force, but was rejected.

"I told them that since I was just 7, I have been crazy about planes and that I had seen every exhibit possible and learned all I could about planes and flying them. But they told me that my personal background rating was too low. I tried persuading them, but it was no use," S. said.

Dejected, he enlisted instead to the Israel Defense Forces' elite intelligence gathering unit, 8200, completed an officers' training course and returned to his unit as a commander. At that time, he heard that the air force was again opening trials for the pilots' course and he decided to try his luck again.

"I was denied again because of my personal background rating. It didn't matter that I was already an officer. I submitted an appeal and I was rejected again. Finally, due to all my pestering, I got a phone call from an air force officer asking me to stop trying," S. said.

But he refused to give up.

"I began asking anyone I could think of to put in a recommendation for me," S. said. "The Air Force telling me 'no' made me angry; it disappointed me and also challenged me. At the end, they apparently got sick of me bugging them, invited me to the tryouts and accepted me into the course. All of a sudden I found myself in basic training and saluting sergeants. But it didn't bother me. I was happy the whole time."

S. knew his chances of successfully completing the course were

slim, but his determination pushed him along.

“I knew my chances of becoming a fighter pilot were almost zero, but at least I gave it everything I had. I knew that even if I finished the course but wasn’t assigned to be a fighter pilot, then I would at least be an air crewman, and that is also a dream come true.”

As the days passed and S. proceeded through the course, he began to understand that despite everything, he was close to fulfilling his dream. “When they told me I was a fighter pilot, it was the happiest moment of my life. I had tears in my eyes,” he said.

The ups and downs S. encountered along the way have left him with one message for others: “Make a decision and pursue it with all your strength. Don’t give up, work hard and be the best. Maybe it won’t always work out, but it’s worth a shot.”