

**Telem, Benyamin (Bini)**

Born in 1928 in Germany

Came to Palestine in 1933

Joined the Palyam in 1947

Commander of the Navy (1972-1976)

**This is the Way it Was**

I was born in Germany in 1928, and in 1933 I came to Palestine with my parents and we settled in Haifa. When I finished studies at the Naval School near the Technion in 1947, I joined the Palyam. I was sent to work on the passenger ship "Kedma". Three months later I was assigned to the platoon at Yagur, where we did our basic training under the command of Simcha Asaf.

In January of 1948 I was again sent to the "Kedma" where I served as a squad leader. We brought weapons which was purchased in France, mostly in the Marseilles area. During this period I also became acquainted with Kippy, whose business it was to unload crates of "pianos" filled with weapons that arrived in the port of Haifa, and also to receive small arms which I and others brought from Marseilles.

In June I was transferred to the navy, and my first ship was the "Wedgwood" on which I served as communications officer. The ship's captain was Yarchovsky and the commander was Kippy. In November of that year I married my wife, Ruthie (of blessed memory). While serving on the "Wedgwood," the ship participated in a battle with an Egyptian corvette near the Ashdod-Ashkelon shore. Our biggest problem there were the German 88mm cannons that the Egyptians had on the coast and were using against the two Israeli corvettes, K-18 and K-20. We were hit by a shell from one of the cannon but it struck the side of the ship and, to our great relief, didn't explode. Until this very day I can't understand what the division of command was between Yarchovsky and Kippy, but the ship did its duty in a commendable manner.

The "Wedgwood" also took part in firing at the "Altalena" when it accompanied her from Kfar Vitkin to the shore of Tel Aviv. The "Altalena" opened fire on us with machine guns at close range and hundreds of bullets hit the sides of the ship. One bullet wounded a gunner on the "K-18". We did not answer their fire, perhaps because we were surprised by their violent reaction to our attempt to block them from reaching shore.

The crowning achievement during my service on the K-18 was the part we played in "Operation Pirate". We sailed for Cyprus together with the K-20 and rendezvoused with a ship carrying 8,000 Czech rifles. Dudale and the Gideoni Oved Sadeh were on this ship. We approached the vessel and all of its cargo of guns and ammunition was transferred to the two corvettes. The "Wedgwood" was then ordered to sink the abandoned ship. We rammed it several times from close range to no avail, so distanced ourselves further and then rammed into the ship at greater speed. This accomplished the task and the vessel sank to

the sea bottom. By this time Kippy was the only master of the ship, and there was no civilian captain.

In November, 1948 I was transferred to a small squadron and began a career in the navy that continued for 32 years and ended in July, 1979. I served in many capacities, the most important of which was the four year period as commander of the Navy from 1972 to 1976 with the rank of rear admiral. This period included the 1973 Yom Kippur War.