

Zaid, Yochanan (of blessed memory)

Born 2 November 1920 in Jerusalem

Joined the British Army in 1943, joined "The Gang" in 1945

Died at Givat Zaid on September 4 1999

Written by: Tzvia Zaid

This is the Way it Was

Yochanan was born on November 2 1920 in the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. He had a twin brother, Yiftach, a sister Kochava, and another brother, Giora. Their parents, Tzipora and Alexander Zaid, were among the founders of Tel Chai and Kfar Gileadi. In 1926, his family settled at Sheikh Abreik and the children went to school at Kfar Yehoshua and Nahalal. When the riots of 1929 began, Tzipora and Alexander feared sending their children to school in Kfar Yehoshua, and set up a school where they lived. Other children in their area also came to study there. When Yochanan and his twin brother Giora were 12, they went to study at Kfar Yeladim.

At age 14, Yochanan went to the Kadoorie Agricultural High School and was in its second graduating class. After completing his studies, he returned to Sheikh Abreik and became a Ghaffir (policeman). In July 1938, his father was murdered by a Bedouin living in the area, who was a mercenary of the Mufti.

In 1940 Yochanan was a youth leader in Jerusalem, and his brother Yiftach was a leader in Mikve Yisrael and Holon. They organized groups of youth that settled in Kibbutz Givat Zaid, that was founded at that time. Tzviah from Holon, was also in this group, and she later became his wife and the mother of his children. In 1943, while WW II was raging, Yochanan joined the British Army. He was assigned to the Transport unit that later became the center of activity in saving survivors of the Holocaust. He became a member of "The Gang" and from 1944 was active in Aliya Bet until the "La Spezia affair", in 1946.

In the summer of 1946 Yochanan was discharged from the British Army and returned home to Givat Zaid, and it was there that he married his girlfriend Tzviah, in 1947. In 1948 Yochanan joined the Palmach and took part in the battles of Mishmar Haemek and Beit Keshet, and later, he participated with the Negev Brigade, in the capture of Eilat. When the War of Independence was over Yochanan returned to Givat Zaid and worked in farming. He was frequently called to reserve duty in the armored corps.

During the Sinai Campaign in 1956, Yochanan served as a company commander in the battles of Abu Ageila and Um Katef. Afterwards, he again returned home and worked in farming. Following the Six Day War, in 1967, he was drafted into Military Intelligence and served in the West Bank area until the early 1970s. Again he returned to farming but this time, did so independently.

Nachum Shafir said the following at his eulogy: "Yochanan joined the British Army and served in the 8th Army under Montgomery in North Africa and in

Europe. When the War against the Germans was over, Yochanan and his friends did everything “by hook and by crook” to help the survivors of the Holocaust to reach the Land of Israel. This was a turbulent period which the members of “The Gang” recalled, and will continue to recall to the end of their generation.

Yochanan died on September 4 1999 at Givat Zaid.