

Syd Abrams

Volunteer on the "Geula"

This is the Way it Was

Syd Abrams was born & raised in Seattle, WA.

Passionate about the plight of European Jews throughout his school years, it was during Syd's early college years when he heard about the plight of Holocaust survivors, and felt compelled to help survivors reach Palestine which had been designated by the League of Nations to be the Jewish Homeland.

In May 1946, Syd and his friends (since 2nd grade) Eli Bergman & Bailey Nieder volunteered as crew on the *SS Paducah*, aka *Geula* (built in 1905, as an ice breaker for the US Coast Guard, and used as a US Navy training ship on the Great Lakes during WWII). Syd, with no previous experience, became an "able-bodied seaman & purser". The ship's Captain, Rudolph Patzert, was also an American. He later became the author of the book, *RUNNING THE PALESTINE BLOCKADE*. Mossad (Ha'Mossad Le'Aliya Bet – the Jewish organization responsible for developing ways to bring Jews into the land of Israel) had a representative on the ship, Mordecai "Mocha" Limon, who later became, at age 24, the head of the Israeli Navy [editorial note: *Mocha*, a *Palyam* member and the senior Mossad representative on board (there were few others), joined the ship after she arrived in Bayonne, France].

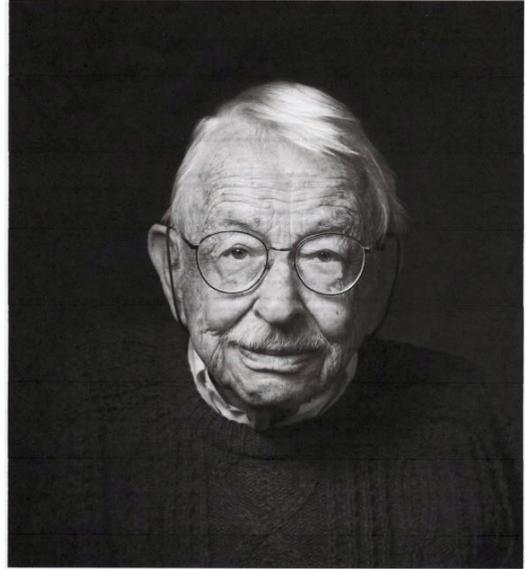


IMAGE: JOSHUA HURTON

By May 1947, the *SS Paducah* was ready to set sail for Bayonne, France. Plagued by low fuel, insufficient water for the crew, and various mechanical problems, requests for help were denied in such ports as Miami, New York, the Azores, and Lisbon, Portugal. Finally, by June 18, the *Paducah* arrived in Bayonne, France, where it gave up its cover as a banana boat, and was outfitted with bunks for people.

In late September, the *Paducah*, having evaded the British destroyer following it, arrived at the Black Sea port of Burgas, Bulgaria. Jewish survivors from Romania arrived by secret night train and 1388 people (including families with small children) silently boarded the boat. Syd claims that this was the most moving experience of his life.

In October, the British captured the *Paducah*, and towed it to Haifa (then Palestine). All 1,400 persons on board, including the captain and crew, were then transferred by prison ship (the *Empire Rest*) to Cyprus where they were interred with other survivors in what

had been a British POW camp for Germans. Each month, 750 persons (out of the approximately 12,000 prisoners) were transferred to another detention camp, Atlit, near Haifa, before being admitted into Palestine. Syd managed to escape by successfully posing as a journalist, and within hours was issued false identification by an Israeli intelligence organization as "Avraham D" (copy attached). This identification card allowed Syd freedom, and on November 30, he entered Jerusalem for the first time. Syd attended Hebrew University for a short while until it closed, and worked on Kibbutz Maayen Baruch, and another near Lake Kinneret.

In February 1948, Syd was asked to evade British Airport Security and secretly escort (via an airliner, out of the Lod airport) an Italian aliya bet captain to Marseilles, France. When his assignment was completed successfully, Syd was assigned to join another aliya bet ship that was scheduled to sail out of New York, and was issued a temporary passport that allowed him to fly from Paris to New York. Upon his arrival in New York, Syd learned that the voyage of the aliya bet ship, Mayflower, had been indefinitely postponed due to needed repairs, so in late March, 1948, Syd returned to Seattle.

Back home, Syd continued to work for the benefit of the new Jewish Homeland, Israel, primarily through the Land & Labor Organization. Syd's commitment to the cause of the Jews in Israel continues to this day.

SA March 14, 2019

No. 72067/H IDENTIFICATION CARD	
Name of holder AVRAAM D	Place of residence Haifa - חיפה
	Place of business Jerusalem - ירושלים
	Occupation Clerk - שומר
	Race Jew - יהודי
	Height 5 feet 10 inches
	Colour of eyes Grey - אפור
	Colour of hair Fair - בהיר
	Build Tall - גבוה
	Special peculiarities
	Signature of issuing officer
	Appointment
Signature of holder	Place Haifa - חיפה

Syd's Palestinian ID card



Syd Abrams (*left*) and Eli Bergman in the Xylotymbou detention camp, October 1947.

Syd Abrams (left) and Eli Bergman in the Xylotymbou detention camp, October 1947