

Cohen, Avraham

Born in 1922 in Armenia

Made Aliya in 1923

This is the Way it Was

As a youth, in 1936 I signed up for the sea group of Hapoel Tel Aviv. For a long time we practiced swimming and worked on life boats, row boats, and sail boats on the Yarkon River. After many trial runs with instructors such as Catriel, Yoel Lifshitz, Yona Portnoi, Nash and Shmuel Tankus, and after many courses, I was f accredited as an instructor and received a certificate. We also made long sailing trips parallel to the shore. We went to Caesarea, Atlit, Haifa, and Nahariya. I was also appointed to the Directorate of Hapoel by its secretary, Sirkin.

In 1937 I was accepted for work as an helper in the shipyard in Tel Aviv port, which was under the management of Nachum Teicher (of blessed memory) for many years. I built boat models until WW II broke out, and then everyone was discharged and the port was closed. Some of the people there were mobilized into the British Army, but I was called back to work after a 3 month layoff, to help prepare vessels for action in the regions where fighting was going on. The port was emptied of every type of vessel that was there. We then received an order to build landing craft for the British Navy, and I worked long hours to help fill the order. We then received an order to build two minesweepers of 300 tons each. The war was almost over by the time we finished building them. The shipyard continued to work in building small launches which were also used to unload Ma'apilim and later one was put up as a monument at a junction near Herzlia.

We also received an order from the Jewish Agency to build 3 sailboats. These were the "Dov", the "Rivka" and the "Tirza". I participated with Nachum in planning these boats and worked on building them. I also helped Berchik in fixing the "Nein Nein". In March, 1948 I was sent to the 4th Battalion of the Palmach at Caesarea with my good friend, Chaim Beigel. While there we kept the boats of the Palyam in good condition. We also went on ambushes in the vicinity of the village of Tira.

From Caesarea I was sent to the Shemen area of Haifa bay to prepare a crew that was to man the "Jewish State" under the command of Yosef Almog. This became the first vessel of the Ma'apilim fleet that was put into active service in the Israeli Navy, the "A-16". It participated in battles against Egyptian warships and aircraft, and ended the War with one dead and ten wounded.

After this I was sent to the 13th Flotilla, as maintenance officer and head of its shipyard until 1957.

After my discharge, I returned to the port as an employee of the Port Authority until my retirement in 1987.