

Golan, Yitzchak RIP

Born in 1926 in Kalish, Poland

Joined the Palyam operatives in France

Came to Palestine as a Gideoni (radio operator) on Aliya Bet ship 'Latrun' in November 1946

This is the Way it Was

From the age of 5, I grew up in a provincial city in Central France, called Rouen. The children of the Jewish community, among them Yisrael Avidor and I, were educated in the spirit of love of our nation and of Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). Eretz Israel was our shining hope and goal. We were Zionists and pioneers. When we were free of the Nazi yoke and we heard of the tragedy of the Holocaust and of its huge dimensions, we mobilized to save the Remnant of the Holocaust.

At the beginning of June, 1945, after participating in a pre-army training course of the 'Hagana', Yisrael and I traveled to Marseilles. As soon as we got off the train and stepped into the open air, I was instantly impressed by those two tremendous forces of nature, the sea and the sun. I was born in Poland and from there had gone to Rouen, both with a cold and cloudy climate, and snow in the winter. They were altogether different from the climate of the Mediterranean. I had never seen the sea before and when the Germans occupied France, we did not travel at all. Since then, we attended movement meetings in the beautiful city of Paris and I saw the wonder of the Alps Mountains. Now I saw the sea and the Mediterranean sun in all of their splendor.

We reported to the office of 'Hechalutz' not far from the train station. The person in charge, Chanan Raichman, told us to report immediately for naval training, to prepare us for the job of accompanying Olim on the ships to Palestine. For this purpose we were sent to the 'La Madreg' camp. Every morning Yisrael and I would go down to the shore where we met a fisherman with a boat. He would arrange his nets and then take us out into the open water. Once we reached a spot that satisfied the fisherman, known to us as 'patron', boss, we pulled the net from the bottom of the boat and tossed it into the sea. Even today, after all these years I can close my eyes and feel the gentle rocking of the boat on the water. On other days the waves were high and strong enough to rattle our intestines. However, we were also able to practice keeping our balance and walking and running even though the sea was rough. Our boss always stood straight and strong in any weather and we tried our best to emulate him.

We would return to our base when it was evening, have a quick shower in the camp and a meal, get some sleep, and before dawn were back at the jetty to find our boss waiting for us, and out we went to sea. The light of dawn painted the morning sky in pale colors, the air was very cold and the sea calm and quiet. Once again the boss would choose the exact spot where we would lay out our net, and then painstakingly gather it in. The boss stood at the gunwale clearing the fish from the net at a terrific speed. The fish jumped about in the big

basin and my nostrils were filled with the fresh salty air. (When Yisrael and I recall those days now, it is always with a big smile as we recall that scene with our boss at the prow seeking the direction of the wind with his finger in the air). Two or three weeks went by in this manner and then one day we had to take a new turn. It seemed impossible to turn us into experienced seamen ready to accompany ships of Olim in record time, so one of the Palyamniks in charge of the camp told us that we would be given a special and secret assignment. For several days a special instructor taught us the Morse Code in Latin and Hebrew characters, and also the "Q" Code. This was a special, widely used international code consisting of three letters in Morse, of which the first one was "Q".

In June 1945 our daily meetings with the young Sabras, the volunteers of the Palmach and Palyam, began. To us, they were a special brand of humans. Among them were many members, or sons of members, of kibbutzim. From the very beginning we found their direct approach, without airs or snobbery, to our liking. It did not take long before we were accepted and treated as equals, and their leaders were also our leaders. We could not understand how it was that they knew their Bible so well, although they were not religious. They were able to quote passages appropriate to a situation, from the sources. We learned of the devotion to work and to the social group that was at the base of their outlook on life, and of the tradition of the 'brotherhood of the fighters'. We learned that every kibbutz has its own school and in all the schools the history of the Jews and the stories of our wise and holy men were taught, not in the formal traditional manner but with modern interpretation and wider understanding.

The 'Q' Code was difficult for us to master but, in any case, we found ourselves traveling eastward toward the port of Toulon, along a coastal road that paralleled the sea. We were sitting in the cabin of a truck, next to the driver. He was a young fellow who spoke only Hebrew and was humming "The Nights of Canaan" as he drove. The truck was laden with posts, ropes, metal boxes with tools and other equipment. About an hour later we passed through the town of Bandol, crossed a railroad track and continued on for another several hundred meters. We stopped before a small house with blue shutters and there unloaded our cargo. Our first job was to set up an antenna on two high poles that ran through the garden behind the house. We spread the rest of our cargo throughout the various rooms of the house. Our Palmachnik took charge of the two most important items in our load, the receiver and transmitter, and placed them where he thought they would work best. Yisrael told me that only two days earlier he had gone to Toulouse and brought these things back with him. During the era of Nazi occupation these items had been in the service of the Jewish Maquis.

That same day, our driver established radio contact with the network of Gideonim in Europe and headquarters in Tel Aviv. It was an exciting moment when among all the squeaks and groans of interference, we were able to discern our first message from Palestine and talk to them directly. It was a very emotional experience for us. We even contacted several of the ships with Olim that were at sea on the way to Palestine, and our station in Bari, Italy. We were

proud that we could send coded messages and decipher those that we received. These were things that one read about in mystery novels, etc. but here we were sending a message in Hebrew, using Latin letters and a five letter code, and the key to the code was a passage from the Bible.

For several hours each night we would contact other stations in the network according to a prearranged schedule. One of us would take the telegrams that had been unscrambled during the night, to Marseilles by train at 7am. At the Hechalutz offices the telegrams would go to Chanoch who would hand them to Rudy. Rudy was then about 40 years old. He would sit down, read them, and decide how to respond. We were impressed by his seemingly strong character hidden by a pleasant and musical voice. In the course of time, Rudy the commander also became Rudy the comrade. Many years later we found him at his kibbutz, Beit Hashita. His real name was Shmarya Tzameret. He was working on a forklift in their olive canning factory. His death in a work accident greatly upset us.

We will also always remember Bella and Asher (Ado) Michaeli (ל"ר). They were a young couple who arrived in Marseilles from Belgium at the time of the invasion of the Germans and became active in the Mossad for Aliya Bet. They had taken us two boys into their home, and offered us their warmest hospitality. We got to know many of those who were active in Aliya Bet in Marseilles; Avinoam, Fernand, Willie, and many others who just passed through. We had visitors almost daily at our Bandol estate. They were active personnel of the Palmach or Palyam who fulfilled various jobs connected with Aliya Bet. The radio contact worked very well and we were proud of our technical professionalism. During this period we also made the acquaintance of Uri Goren (Moshe) who later joined Kibbutz Kfar Hanassi with his wife, Marga. Yisrael Auerbach (Uzi) married Ruth Pick, who was a member of a youth group; Yisrael Rosenblum (Yitzchak), and Ephraim Tauman, the recorder playing wizard who for some reason did not have a nickname. There was also the American sergeant, Sy, whom we later found at Kfar Gileadi. There was Matty 'the playboy,' who became a fighter pilot when the war broke out. It was only much later that we found out that this "playboy" from Bandol was Chatto Zidon, a member of the Knesset. Yes, there were many others, and each one whom we met and got to know, was another peg that tied us to Eretz Israel. It took us a long time before we could say that as the Sabras pronounced it.

In the month of June, a storage room of weapons of the Hagana was discovered in the vicinity of Toulouse. As a result, French police started to take a greater interest in the activities of the Mosad, and it was decided to shut down the transmitting station. We therefore packed up everything at our station and moved it all to the camp at St. Jerome, which became our new base. At that same time, a group of Habonim members from England arrived at the camp. This group later founded Kibbutz Kfar Hanassi and was waiting to get to Palestine via an Aliya Bet vessel. After several months of activity at St Jerome, Yisrael was posted as the Gideoni on the "Yagur" and his future wife also went aboard that ship. I was assigned to be the Gideoni on the "Latrun", which I

boarded together with my newly married wife. Following that, Batya and Meir Reines of the English group were assigned as Gideonim to the "Aliya".

This group consolidated itself and received training at Kfar Blum, soon after our arrival from the camps in Cyprus. We then spent a short time in Hadera while waiting to settle on our own land. In July of 1948 we settled in the Galilee opposite the Syrian forces. In the course of time the Kibbutz took the name of Kfar Hanassi in honor of the first President of the State of Israel. Today we are still four Gideonim living with our families at Kfar Hanassi.