

Rahav, Yitzchak (Izzy)

Born 1926 in Jerusalem

Joined the Palmach in 1944

Joined the Palyam in 1946

This is the Way it Was

My father was an officer in the Mandatory Police Force. Because of the work that he did we moved about the country a great deal. From Jerusalem we moved to Bat Galim and from there to Nazareth. Ours was one of the two Jewish families in Nazareth, so my formal studies began in an Arab school. I have pleasant memories of this school but my parents thought otherwise. When I was chosen to play the role of the angel who gives Miriam the news of her Holy Conception in the Christmas play, my mother lay down the law: "Not for this did I come to Palestine". So my brother and I were sent first to Ginegar and then to Nahalal to study. The family moved from Nazareth to Zichron Yaakov, and from there to Haifa. The last stop was Jerusalem. In Jerusalem I began and ended my studies at the religious secondary school, Ma'aleh. This was my own choice, and this brings us to 1944.

Having completed my studies I joined the Palmach and was assigned to "F" Company at Ein Harod. In this framework I took part in a course for sports instruction, a course for non-coms and a course for scouting. In March of 1946 I volunteered for the Naval Company and was sent to the 6th course for small boat commanders. When this course was over I was called to meet Yochai ben Nun in Haifa. He told me that we planned to react to the capture of the ships of Olim by "His Majesty's Navy", and the deportations to Cyprus. We were to attack the British Navy, and his "Special Unit" was to do the job. On the 21st August 1946 Moshe Lipson (Nachshon), a boyhood friend from Bat Galim, and I went to carry out this first attempt and we caused damage to the deportation ship "Empire Rival" while it was anchored in the harbor of Haifa. After that I was put in command of a platoon of the Naval Company In Shefayim and at Givat Hashlosha. At the end of 1946 I was sent to a course for platoon commanders in Kfar Hachosh.

During this course, Moshe Lipson and I were called upon once more to damage British patrol boats and landing craft that were in Haifa harbor. We carried out this assignment on 13th February 1947. Later in 1947 I participated in Course No. 5 for naval officers, which was completed by the spring of that year. From the end of that course and until the War of Independence broke out, I took part in trials of various weapons, etc. as a member of the "special unit" for naval sabotage at Kibbutz Sdot Yam.

When the War of Independence started I happened to be in Jerusalem. I was appointed commander of the Old City for a short time, and during this period I united the three underground movements and organized the defense of the Jewish Quarter. I was also in command of a platoon of students, and with this platoon I carried out several operations in the vicinity of Jerusalem. This

continued until I was told to report once again to the Palyam. Because of the slaughter that took place at the refineries, the Port Company was organized by Yochai. This company was to protect the Jewish workers of the port, and I was assigned to it. We also did some procurement work on the side. In March 1948 I went to Jerusalem with Yochai to help protect the city. We joined the 4th Battalion of the Harel Brigade and took part in several operations.

During the first cease-fire, because of Yochai's wound I was called to the headquarters of the Navy. I was assigned to rebuild the "special unit for naval sabotage" in Jaffa. In September, after Yochai had recovered from his wound, I was sent to Italy to join the group of saboteurs there. Toward the end of the year I returned to Israel on one of the procurement ships and joined the unit that Yochai commanded. In the beginning of 1950 I took Yochai's job as commander of the 13th squadron and continued until the second half of 1957. I then received command of the "Eilat". My next command was of the fleet of destroyers, the 1st Fleet. And this is where I remained until 1962.

During the years 1962 – 1964 I studied for my first degree in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: economics and political science. From the middle of 1964 until July 1967 I was head of the Operations Department of the Navy. After that I left the service.

From 1968 until 1977 I managed the Port of Haifa and, within the framework of this job, studied for one year at the University of California at Berkeley. From 1977 until 1982 I was the Director of the Port Authority. From 1982 – 1985 I was CEO of the Citrus Fruit Board. From 1985 – 1992 I was manager of the Bank of Israel and after that I retired. Since then I serve as a director of a number of companies and volunteer for work in a fund for the protection of children.

How did I get into the Palyam? It all started at Kibbutz Ein Harod in 1945. Yankale Salomon appeared before our platoon and in very emotional terms he described the state of the survivors of the Holocaust. "Our most important duty is to bring them to the Land of Israel", he said, and for that we need volunteers. I volunteered immediately and saw myself in my mind's eye carrying them on my back through the raging waters. It soon became clear that my commander in F Company had other plans for me, and it took me another year before I reached the Naval Company. In the Palyam I had various duties but never managed to fulfill my dream of bringing at least one refugee to Israel.