

**Shadmi, Reuven (Shmedra)**

Born 1928 in Lodz, Poland

Came to Palestine in 1945

Joined the Palyam in 1947

**This is the Way it Was**

I was born in Lodz, Poland and spent my youth there until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Throughout the war years I was in the Lodz ghetto and in extermination camps, beginning with Birkenau and continuing with several others. Enough has been told and written on this subject so I will not dwell on it here.

I was liberated by the American Army in northern Germany in May 1945, and after a short stay for recuperation, decided to go back to visit my old home. My father had instructed the family that when we were liberated, that should be the first thing that each of us should do, so that is what I did. After remaining in the city for several days and seeing that no one else had returned or was left alive, I decided to go back to Germany. In the American controlled area the border was sealed and one had to smuggle across. This was dangerous, but I managed to steal across the border between the Russians and Allies by myself. A series of adventures then followed, but in the end I found myself in Belgium where I met up with other refugees whom I had known in the camps. Through them I met soldiers of the Jewish Brigade.

They placed me and other refugees in a large castle and cared for all our needs. After about a month they dressed us as English soldiers and took us by truck to Marseilles in southern France. We were twenty young kids and were destined to be placed on a ship and taken to Palestine. We were put aboard a naval vessel anchored at Toulon, which was to take British soldiers to Egypt. There were also several dozen Jews who were to be brought to Palestine legally. We boarded the ship with false papers which were taken from us while we were at sea, and when we arrived in Haifa, were taken by train to Atlit. While going from the train to the Atlit camp, someone grabbed me and put me on a bus. I do not, to this day, know who he was. I was taken to Maayan Tzvi and was considered a unique individual there, because I was one of the first children from the camps to reach Palestine.

Several adults spoke to me about my future, and I agreed to their suggestion that I go to the agricultural high school at Magdiel. I spent two years studying and working there and at the end, was mobilized into the Palmach in 1947 for a year of service. I asked to be sent to the Palyam and was sent to Kibbutz Maabarot where I received training in various fields. When hostilities intensified, my company was sent to the Negev where we guarded the pipeline and brought supplies to kibbutzim in the area.

Some of us, including me, were sent back to Caesarea to take part in the 9<sup>th</sup> course for small boat commanders. When the course ended, I was sent to another Palmach course for physical education Instructors at Sharona. After that I served as an instructor until sent to join the naval sabotage unit (which later became the 13<sup>th</sup> Squadron) and I stayed with that unit for several years.

In 1953, I left the Squadron and attended the 4<sup>th</sup> (D) course for naval officers. Once it ended I was assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> fleet as commander of a torpedo boat. I continued to serve in the Navy for 24 years in various positions of command and in 1972 was retired from the IDF with the rank of lieutenant commander.

In 1956 I married Betty and we have two girls, both of whom are now married with families of their own.

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