

Shin'ar, Ze'ev (of blessed memory)

Born 1922 in Krakov, Poland
 Came to Palestine on the Wedgwood in 1946
 Joined the Palyam in 1947
 Died 20th February 1983
 Written by Leah Shin'ar

This is the Way it Was

Zeev, Shin'ar (formerly Willek Shutzreich), was born in Krakov to parents Yisrael and Pnina (Buchner). Their home was a typically warm Jewish home where the door was open and visitors were welcome. They worked hard to scratch out a living but helped others who were even poorer than themselves.

Zeev was born in 1922, was 17 years old when WW II broke out and had just graduated from a trade school. He was conscripted for forced labor by the Gestapo. He stayed alive through good fortune and presence of mind. I will dwell on this point a bit: Zeev was imprisoned together with a large group of forced laborers who were skilled in various trades: electricians, mechanics, plumbers, etc. At work they were at their jobs and at night were kept in a thick-walled cellar. The mechanics would fix the vehicles of the Wehrmacht and managed to steal parts of a radio. They built themselves a radio in the cellar. At night they would listen to the BBC broadcast in the Polish language so were aware that the Germans were in serious difficulty on the Russian front, and that the Red Army was approaching Kharkov. They were certain that the Germans would kill them before the Red Army got to them, so they planned an escape and were lucky enough to succeed.

One morning when they were in a lineup, there was an alarm and the German guards ran to the shelter. They utilized the opportunity to separate and run away. Zeev ran toward his house in a suburb of Kharkov, where there were extensive hothouses and vegetables were being grown. He hid there and hid from the neighbors who would have surely informed on him to the Germans. He hid there for three days and when he came out, the Red Army had already entered the city. This was in February of 1945.

For him, the war was over and he had lost all of his family. He joined Abba Kovner's group of partisans. He participated in this group's attacks on the German forces until the entire group was brought to Palestine. Until he himself came to Palestine, Zeev was active in the Bricha movement (bringing survivors of the Holocaust from inland Europe to the vicinity of ports along the coast of the Mediterranean). He moved between Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Rumania and Italy until he himself came to Palestine on the "Wedgwood" in 1946. He went to Kibbutz Ein Hachosh together with other members of Abba Kovner's partisan group, and later went to Neve Eitan in the Bet Shaan Valley

where there were others from Kharkov. He formed a very close friendship with a fellow Kharkovite there, Yaakov (Yanek) Nord.

For many young people life in the kibbutz, during those critical years in the history of Israel, was too peaceful and did not lend a sufficient feeling of doing something important. They joined the Palmach, and some then went to the Palyam. Zeev joined the 4th Battalion of the Palmach and then joined the Palyam. He went to a Palyam course in Caesarea in 1947. The course taught him a great deal and the group spirit and camaraderie substituted, to a certain extent, for the lack of family. The 'brotherhood of arms' was very important to him and in this course he also came into close contact with native Israeli youth whose background was so different from his. This first meeting did not go too well because the Israelis closed ranks against the 'foreigners', and did not accept them easily.

The following small incident illustrates this point: They were training off the coast of Tel Aviv when a storm suddenly arose. The boats entered a whirlpool, capsized, and they were all thrown into the water. Cold, wet, and tired they finally swam to shore. The commander announced: "Okay chevra, you have two days leave to rest and get back into shape. See you then." Then he added: "Also take care of these two Polaks."

All the other fellows were from Tel Aviv, except for Zeev and Yanek. They all made for their homes and left Zeev and Yanek standing there. This was disappointing and insulting. "Brothers in arms," said Yanek, "We matter to them like last year's snow." They made an inventory of how much money they had between them and figured they could buy one big bagel and a bottle of soda. They sat in a public park and ate their 'supper' and noticed that there was a sports club across the street. They managed to get in, found mattresses and blankets and made themselves comfortable, but the hurt feelings remained.

Yanek spoke his thoughts aloud; "There was a custom among Jews that if a stranger was seen in the synagogue, he would be approached and asked his name and if he had a place to eat and to sleep that night. If he said that he did not have a place, then it was an honor to invite him to your home." Zeev added that not always were these 'guests' very polite and well-behaved, but nevertheless his father would never refuse to have someone.

When the course was over Zeev went to work on the "Pan Crescent".

A ship this size could take 7500 olim. She sailed with her human cargo between ports of Europe, Haifa and Famagusta, Cyprus. Zeev worked in the engine room where it was very hot and very difficult. The fact that he was helping to do his

share for the creation of the State and bringing survivors of the Holocaust to Israel was incentive enough for him and filled him with pride. In 1948 he participated in freeing Haifa. He was taken from the "Pan Crescent" and added to the Port Company of the Palyam. Zeev felt a special connection to the port because when he was in Ein Hachoresht, Abba Hushi, the Mayor of Haifa, came to the kibbutz and tried to get young fellows to work in the port because the Arab workers had declared a strike. Zeev was one of the men who volunteered. Now he was one of the men who distributed flyers to the Arab population of Haifa, urging them to stay in their homes and not run away.

Once the fighting was over Zeev went back to his ship. Once the State of Israel was established there were other needs, and the ship had to be refitted. Olim coming to Israel now would not have to be crammed in like sardines but would travel in a bit more comfort. This refitting job was to be done in Venice.

In 1948 I also came to Palestine, via Sweden and Cyprus and went for training in Kibbutz Givat Chaim. From time to time I would get regards from one, Willek, whom I did not have the good fortune to meet because I did not happen to be in the kibbutz when he came. I did not know who this Willek was until I happened to be walking along Independence Street one day and a soldier with a moustache came over and greeted me warmly like an old friend. "I am Willek from Kharkov, the cousin of Hella who was in your class", he told me. We started recalling mutual friends, classmates and relatives.

We would have wanted to talk longer, but Willek the soldier had to be somewhere, so our conversation was cut short. Zeev was soon on his way to Italy so our romance continued for a time by correspondence. Zeev described his work and the beauty of Venice and how he liked the friendly nature of most Italians. He wrote to me that the workers decided to strike against the owners of the drydock they were at, but when told that the strike would hurt the new State of Israel, they decided to delay the strike until work on this ship was finished. What a nice gesture that was! Sometimes I would have greetings from olim who met him in Venice.

It took about a year after our meeting in Haifa, that Zeev came back home and we were married. Zeev wanted to have our wedding party on the ship, but when I recalled how sick I had been on the "Chaim Arlosoroff", I put my foot down. Zeev was disappointed but took it well. He loved the sea and wanted to be near the sea, if not on it, so we settled in Kibbutz Nachsholim. Zeev returned to the sea, this time as a fisherman on Italian vessels. He loved this type of work.

When we left the kibbutz we chose to live in Michmoret, which is also on the sea, and he continued to work at fishing, but was active in the life of the moshav. When the fishing branch of work closed down, he worked in sanitation and was responsible for that activity for the entire Hefer Valley area. Quality of life was important to him and his energy and organizational skills ensured that the 60 settlements that he was responsible for, were well taken care of. He was first and

foremost a worker, but he loved to read and loved music and art. He did art work and enamel and ceramics, and his works decorate our house. He was a devoted family man and father, modest and completely honest. On his 60th birthday his family arranged a surprise party for him and all his partisan friends were there as well as friends from other periods in his life. The Palyam period was represented by his bosom friend Yanek. No one thought at the time that this would also be a farewell party, and he passed away in February 1983.