

**Tzafrir, Yedidya**

Nickname: Eden

Born 1924 in Palestine

Joined the Palmach in 1942

Joined the Palyam in 1945

**This is the Way it Was****Personal memories:**

Elementary school: Tachkimoni, Jerusalem, 1930-1938

High School: Rehavia Gymnasium, Jerusalem, 1939-1942

Joining the Palmach: "F" Company, 16 June 1942

Signaling course: 1943 in Bitanya (Bitan Aharon?)

Course for small boat commanders: 1945

1943-1945: Signalman in the Tamar network of the Palmach, course for squad leaders of the Palmach, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1945, Gideoni in Aliya Bet

**The Period of the Ha'apala**

On October 1<sup>st</sup> 1945 after we finished unloading Ma'apilim on the coast of Shefayim from the "Natan-B" I returned with it to Italy to join in aliya operations as a Gideoni (radio operator). I even brought my own transmitter. At the end of October I went from Italy to Greece. I set up a radio station in a camp of Ma'apilim near Athens, from which I had contact with Palestine and other countries of aliya activity. On 16 November 1945 I sailed as Gideoni on the "Berl Katznelson". The other Palyamnicks on the vessel were Moshe Rabinowitz and Arie Kaplan (Kippy). The vessel set out from a small fishing port, Lavrio, near Cape Sounion. There were 211 Ma'apilim on board, mostly from Greece, plus several from Romania, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia. There was also a group of young boys and girls from Aliyat HaNoar.

On the night of 22 November 1945 we arrived at the Shefayim coast and managed to unload almost all our passengers. Suddenly, two British destroyers appeared and caught us. I had been in contact with the shore until I heard noise and commands being shouted in English. I quickly tore away the antenna attached to the mast, tied up all papers and codes, and threw them and the transmitter into the water. The English arrested about 10 of the Ma'apilim, including Moshe Rabinowitz and me. We were all taken to the Atlit detention camp, and after about a month of questioning were all given certificates and freed.

In January 1946, after a short homevisit in Palestine, we (Moshe Rabinowitz, Abba Kovner, Chanan Avriel and I) were added to a group of soldiers of the Jewish Brigade who were returning from leave, to rejoin units now in Belgium. We were given the ID's and the uniforms of British soldiers and sailed on a troop-carrier, "Champolion", from Alexandria to Toulon, France. The only one who knew our identity was the officer in charge of the Brigade soldiers on the ship, an Israeli member of the Hagana. While we were entering the harbor of Toulon a launch came out to the ship carrying British MP's and arrested the four

of us. I managed to give the Israeli officer my transmitter and a valise, the false bottom of which contained gold coins meant to reach the chief of the Aliya Bet office in Paris, and instructions how to contact him.

We were removed from the ship, bound tightly and under a heavy guard. We were to be returned to Alexandria the following day. It rained heavily that night and Moshe had to urinate. He told the guard and the guard let him out of the tent. When Moshe returned he saw that the guard had fallen asleep and ran away. We later learned that he had gotten to our contact in Toulon and was sent on to his next job. We were awakened the following day with beatings and curses but had nothing to say about the missing man. We were returned to Alexandria on the ship, "Tour de France", and from Alexandria were sent to a camp in the Western Desert, which was a special prison for important prisoners-of-war.

We were questioned there for three months. Each of us held to the story we had prepared between ourselves; of how we had gotten the soldiers' ID's and uniforms, and how we wanted to go to Europe to search for relatives whose fate was unknown but might have survived the war. When the questioning was over we were moved to Jerusalem, at first to the "Kishle" ("lock-up") and then to the prison in the Russian Compound. Finally we were all set free. To this day, I still don't know how they caught on to us or why we were set free.

In May 1946 I was sent by the Mosad for Aliya Bet for further activity. I sailed as a stowaway on the passenger liner, "Transylvania" from Haifa to Marseilles, and then made my way to Paris. The head office of the Mosad for Aliya Bet was located there and the man in charge was Shaul (Meirov) Avigur. Ehud Avriel and Yoel Palgi also worked out of the same office at that time. (This was after Yoel had returned from his parachute drop into Eastern Europe.) I set up a radio signaling station in a suburb of Paris called St. Germain des Pres but after several months had to move it, for security reasons, to La Voisine. It was located in a house that cared for orphans, all survivors of the Holocaust.

One night, after I had finished communicating with Palestine, there were loud knocks on the door and a group of civilian men armed with revolvers broke into the room. They woke me up, and my friends, Alex Shur and Azriel Einav. They arrested us and dragged us to the center of National Security in Paris. It seemed that they had been listening to our broadcasts but were not able to decipher them. They were certain that we were German agents who had remained in the city after the war, and that we were in contact with Germany. When they found out that we were connected with the Mosad for Aliya Bet they softened up and after three weeks we were released, on two conditions: One – That we translate messages that they had copies of, and Two – That we only deal with Aliya and do nothing of detriment to the government of France. As a gesture of reconciliation they even gave us a new and more modern transmitter which would make our work easier. After this incident, a person arrived to relieve me of my duties and I was transferred to a refugee camp near Marseilles. There I organized and taught a course in communications for some

of the Ma'apilim who were added to the number of Gideonim. Among them was Yaakov Netzer who later served with me in the Navy as a radioman. In October 1946 I returned for good to Palestine and began studies at the Technion. While studying, I also operated a radio station for the Hagana, when the War of Independence began

#### **The Navy Period – The end of 1947**

I was attached to the headquarters of the Carmeli Brigade, but when the Navy was created I went over to the Navy. I served as radioman on the "K-18" (formerly the "Wedgwood") and after completing the first course for naval officers became communications officer on the "K-28" (the "Mivtach"). I was active in the Navy until the end of the War of Independence.

The end of 1951 – I completed my studies in the Technion in electrical and electronic engineering and returned to the Navy, where I continued to serve until 1969. I was discharged with the rank of Commander. From 1969 to 1990 I served as an electronics engineer at "Rafael", a Government R & D Company, after which I retired.