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This is the Way it Was**We and the Sea**

I, Yuval, was born in January, 1928 in Ein Harod and am the second child of my parents, Sara and Aaron Zisling. Ein Harod was then a center of ideology, particularly concerning settlement and security. We children of the kibbutz absorbed and lived in the midst of this atmosphere. There were meetings where secret information was disseminated to the members, and young men and women were mobilized for the Palmach as soon as that organization came into existence. This was the general atmosphere of the era. Besides that, we saw the work that our father was doing outside the kibbutz, in which a great deal of time was devoted to matters of defense and immigration. We, the older children, assimilated all of this and when we became older, turned, what had been assimilated, into action. During World War II we went to Atlit with our father and met the men of the Coast Guard, all of whom were Hagana men. We went to Caesarea and observed the short Palyam course being held at the time for "C" Company under the command of Uri Yaffe. This was the first time that I made the acquaintance of the three sailboats: "Dov", "Rivka" and "Tirza".

After completing our studies most of the boys in my class joined the Palmach, but I was not allowed to do so. I was a dairy hand needed for work with the cows so the kibbutz secretariat did not permit me to volunteer. Only after a great deal of pressure was I finally allowed to go. In mid 1947 I appeared before Aharon Shtaltz (of blessed memory) and asked that I be accepted into the Palyam. I was told that there was no direct mobilization to the Palyam; people were chosen from the Palmach to go into the Palyam. I was therefore sent to a platoon of "G" Company stationed at Ein Hashofet. Yosefle Tabenkin (of blessed memory) was Battalion commander and he did not want to allow me to leave the Battalion. In the end, his second-in-command, Yochanan Zariz was the one who gave me permission.

I was finally accepted into Course No. 9 at the beginning of the War of Independence. There was a great deal of tension in the country, while we battled the waves and difficulties of the course. At its end, most of the participants were sent to the Harel Brigade, near Jerusalem. When the Navy was being organized I was sent to a camp being set up near Shemen Beach (on the northern edge of Haifa.) I was responsible for training a group, and we tended former Aliyah Bet vessels anchored in a corner of the harbor. A lot of work was put into them to make them suitable for active duty in the Navy. I then joined the crew of the "Mishmar Haemek".

This was the second voyage of this vessel. The first was when it brought Ma'apilim to Israel, and arrived in Haifa when the State was established but the British still controlled the port. We went to sea with an all Jewish crew but none of us, except the officers, had had any experience. The ship was of wood, old

and decrepit, of 600 tons and completely empty. As soon as we hit the open sea we began to feel terrible, vomited all over, but continued to do our job. By evening the storm grew worse and we took haven in the bay at Limassol.

When we arrived in Italy the crew scattered to various places. I was sent to "The Hill" at Formia-Latina which was the base for supplies and equipment of the organization. I was again assigned to the "Mishmar Haemek" together with Pinny Ashuach who was in charge, and Shoshana Bentwich, in later days Keny, and once she was called Keny she became a relative. This was my first encounter with "the people of Israel" and at the same time I had the feeling of great satisfaction, of fulfilling a duty that I had wanted to do for a long time. We knew that by the time we reached Israel there would not be a problem with the British, but the conditions on this vessel were the same as those that had been on earlier vessels of the Ma'apilim. The great majority of those on board were survivors of the Holocaust, but there was also a contingent from North Africa and even a fair amount of volunteers, mostly from the USA. I was impressed by the excellent relations that developed between them and the North Africans. The people who came with us were spiritually exhausted, frightened, and longed for a home, a safe haven. The voyage passed without incident, and when we passed Crete tension mounted; they had heard that there were numerous storms in this region. After passing this area without incident, there was no shortage in prayers of "safe passage"

Once again we left Haifa and returned to Italy, to Rome. There I was supplied with a refugee pass. Once, when I was at Betsy's Pension the manageress came over to me and said; "Sir, it does not really matter to me, but this is a bit too farfetched. Your ID is that of a woman".

From Rome I went to Naples. We prepared a vessel there that was to transport weapons and I, who did not know a word of Italian, oversaw the work of the Italian workers. In the hotel I also had to get along without knowing the language, and no intermediary to help me.

The "Arsia" was an Italian vessel, for a change, made of metal. When it went to sea it moved forward as if it were very tired. The crew was Italian and the Gideoni, Shimshon and I. accompanied them. Izzie Rahav (Rabinowitz) also came along, as his way to get home. In the vicinity of Greece the engine died so despite the danger involved, we pulled into a bay to fix it. There was a great deal of internal tension in Greece at the time and it was not long before a Greek warship arrived. We Israelis hid in a hold containing weapons covered by a thick layer of onions. The visit came to a pleasant conclusion and we proceeded on our way at a very fast snail's pace. We finally reached Israel on 10 November 1948.

After the "Arsia," came the "Theodore Herzl". This was the start of a mass Aliya (immigration). The gates were now open and we used anything that would float to bring in other Olim. The "Theodore Herzl", a former Aliya Bet vessel was

repaired and all sleeping boards were left in place, but thinned out a bit. The vessel made trips back and forth and we came into close contact with our people who had gone through the war and the concentration camps. They were left with so many problems and not everything went smoothly. Sometimes there was anger and sometimes confrontation.

As a change, I went over to the "Atzmaut" which had been the Pan Crescent. This vessel was pressed into service, at first to bring Ma'apilim from Cyprus to Israel and then to bring Olim from Europe. On this ship I met the woman who later became my wife. Hannah had been in the Palmach since 1946, after mobilization through Maccabi HaTzair. She went with them to Ra'anana and when the War of Independence began, went to Palmach Headquarters. When the Palmach was disbanded she realized an old dream and went to sea. She was on the "Atzmaut" under the command of Ike, on its first trips to Cyprus when the camps were emptying their inhabitants. We then continued to bring Olim from Marseilles and Bari.

Hannah was in charge of the galley and I dealt with the Olim. The contact with the survivors of the Holocaust demanded a great reserve of emotional control, but aside from the Zionist mission which was its own reward, only someone who loved the infinite expanses of the sea, the change in colors, the atmosphere, beaches, sunsets and storms, could understand the satisfaction received from this work. And when the range of the Carmel was seen in the distance and the lights of Haifa blinked beneath, all the Olim came up on deck and the tension of expectation arose. At that moment Hatikvah spontaneously broke out from every voice. That was probably the most joyous moment in the lives of the Olim since World War II. That scene has remained with us all of our lives.

A time came when we both decided that we should return to Ein Harod. We kept in contact with the sea but Ein Harod was our home. We left in 1974 and moved to Beit Yanai. Again, the contact with the sea was strengthened. Our house was on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean. We could breathe and smell the sea and we could swim to our heart's content. We lived there for 26 years and then again it was time for a change. Today both of us are retired and live in a house in Hofit. We use the time we have to the best of our ability and still enjoy swimming, but our special joy is our grandchildren. We have 14 of them. So what do people of our age tell each other at greeting and at parting? "So most importantly, stay healthy!"