

**Borovsky, Atara**

Born in 1924 in Gerardov, Poland

Came to Palestine on the "Wedgwood" in 1946

Joined "The Gang" in Italy in June 1945

**This is the Way it Was**

I was born in Poland in 1924, in the industrial city of Gerardov, not far from Warsaw. There were five children in our family and I was the middle one, Economically our situation was not bad; both my mother and father worked in a store close to our house, and we had a woman helper who took care of the house and the children. We grew up in a carefree environment, and from the age of nine I was a member of the Dror youth movement. In 1939 the Germans entered Poland and we could feel the change immediately; schools were closed and our earnings dwindled. Mother remained at home and saw to it that we studied and kept ourselves busy. We still met in the movement, but secretly, and in someone else's house each time.

In February of 1941 an edict was published that all Jews in the town were to leave, and each one could carry only 25 kg of belongings. All were to go to the Warsaw ghetto. Life became very difficult and our father said that from that moment each of us would have to fend for himself. My older sister contacted the central offices of our movement in Warsaw and they suggested that she go to a training farm that was about 150 km from the city. The Germans had not as yet reached that area. I joined her and there we worked very hard and also did exercises with weapons and prepared for life in Palestine. We prepared to go on aliya by way of Czechoslovakia. When war broke out with the Soviet Union these plans went down the drain.

We stayed where we were and worked at farming until the fall of 1941. My sister's group was then transferred to Czerstochov. I stayed where I was because I became ill with typhus, and the plan was that I would come by myself at some time in the future. The Poles on the farm helped me very much and I recovered. I was now 16 and for some unknown reason I decided not to join the others but wandered around for a year and a half as a homeless person. This was a terribly lonely period but I was not afraid and had a tremendous will to live.

In January of 1943, the year of the "Ghetto Uprising", I was arrested as a Pole, with other Poles, and we were sent to the Paviac Prison. From there I was sent to Maidanek, the large extermination camp. The Poles among the prisoners were freed, including me, so once again I began my wanderings. I met two Polish girls who were working with the Polish underground and we decided to go to Germany as volunteer workers. The next day we were in a train and on our way. I worked as a volunteer in a hospital there for two years (until the end of the war). The war ended for me personally in March, 1945.

I searched for a way to reach Italy so that I might get to Palestine from there. However, on Victory Night, May 9<sup>th</sup> 1945, my foot was injured in an accident. I was laid up in a hospital and that delayed my plans. When I recovered from the injury, I traveled to Stuttgart to visit a girlfriend. While there I had several possibilities of how to get to Italy, and by sheer luck chose to go with two young Jewish fellows who also wanted to get to Palestine. After arranging some things we needed to acquire the proper false papers. We joined some others and a group of 5 or 6 of us made for Austria. From there we continued to Milan and arrived after a week's trip. We had the address in Milan of a house in a small street that was filled with other Jews. I spent the first night sleeping in a crowded room on the floor.

In the morning I went to another room to gather my things, which had been left with the two fellows I had come with, and while in their company we were approached by a soldier from the Jewish Brigade. This happened to be Reuven Lasker-Biger. His presence made a great impression on us and we regarded him as a saving angel. He told us where to go so that we could be in a group that was preparing to go to Palestine. I went to the office to which I had been sent, but they refused to accept me, perhaps because I looked like a gentile. At that moment I became very despondent and did not know what I could do to prove that I was a Jew. I felt rebuffed and I had neither money nor food. I hooked up with another girl and somehow we got to the offices of Solel Boneh in Milan. My friend went inside to arrange something and I waited outside.

It was a very hot day. I had not eaten properly for some time and felt dizzy and on the verge of collapse. I saw a command car nearby, opened the door and lay down inside until help came. Among those who appeared were three sergeants, Meir Davidson, Yisrael Libertovsky and Yehuda Rabinowitz. They took care of me, called a doctor and I think actually saved my life! From that moment, life took an upturn and four days later I was in Magenta and from there on the rest of my story is known...

After remaining with them for a year I decided that it was time for me to make Aliya. I boarded the "Wedgwood" in June, 1946 and while on the ship, helped care for sick people and distribute food to the immigrants. The British caught the ship and we were taken to Atlit where I spent a month, after which I reached Kibbutz Alonim. At Alonim I met Yechiel and we were married after an acquaintance of three months. We made our home there and had three children and eight grandchildren. In August I celebrated 50 years at Alonim and am still enjoying my stay there.