

Botzer Avraham

Born 1929 in Poland

Came to Palestine in 1936

Volunteered for the Palmach in 1946, in Tel Aviv

Nickname in the Palyam, "Chita"

Commander of the Navy 1968 – 1972

This is the Way it Was

I was born in Poland in 1929, came to Palestine in 1936, and lived in Tel Aviv. I first studied at the "Achad Haam" school and then at the "Tichon Chadash" High School. In 1943 when I was 14 years old, I became active in the Sea Scouts in Tel Aviv. I started my career at sea on the Yarkon River. By the time that I joined the Palyam in 1946 at the age of 17, I was already a veteran seaman as compared to the farmers who joined the Palyam from the kibbutzim and moshavim. I joined Course 7 which was conducted at Neve Yam. Due to my previous experience I was appointed an instructor for Course 8, which took place at Caesarea.

I also trained at Kibbutz Maabarot and in March 1947 took part in assisting immigrants disembark from the "Shabtai Luzinski" which had come into shore at Nitzanim. I was caught by the British and expelled to Cyprus, but two weeks later I was identified by British detectives as a minor and sent home. During the second half of 1947 I participated in the course for non-com officers at Kibbutz Maanit, and participated in the battle to defend the kibbutz. After that I was an instructor in short courses of the Palmach at Caesarea.

At the end of 1947 I joined the 5th officers training course of the Palyam, which took place at the technical high school near the Technion, in Haifa. During the first part of 1948 I became a part of the "Chulia Unit"(Naval Commando) and after that commanded the vessel "Posa", which had two "Sharks" mounted on it. The Shark was a pipe that resembled a torpedo and had an explosive in its front end. It had an electric motor on its side and worked by battery. (It was invented by Uzi Sharoni and his assistant, Chaim Shachal). The "Posa" was supposed to attack Egyptian vessels. In an attack on Tel Aviv we tried to make contact with the Egyptians, but were unsuccessful..

In May 1948 I participated in the capture of the port of Jaffa. I was a leader of a squad with the assignment to capture the northern entrance to the port, and we did.

When the Navy was formed I went over to the bigger ships and served on the "South Africa", the "Eilat", and later on the frigates. At first I served as a deck officer but after completion of a course for gunnery officers, served as gunnery officer and second-in-command of a frigate. I also served as captain of the Corvette, "Hagana". During the period of 1949-1954, I participated in a course for battalion commanders because the Navy had no comparable course for

officer training. In 1954-1955 I served as operations officer of the Navy and toward the end of 1955, was sent to England as second-in-command of the "Eilat", on a mission to purchase destroyers.

I participated in the Sinai Campaign, and in the battle in which we captured the "Ibrahim el Awal". This ship later became a part of our Navy as the "Haifa". Between the Sinai Campaign (1956) and the Six Day War (1967) I served in various positions both on land and sea. I was operations officer and commander of the "Yafo". At this time I also participated in a course for commanding officers of the British Navy.

In the years 1964-1966 I served as personnel officer of the Navy. During this period we improved training for deck officers and engine room officers. This helped in absorption of the coastal vessels into the Navy following the Six Day War. During the Six Day War, while studying in Jerusalem I was appointed commander of the Red Sea front. In that capacity, we assisted the IDF in the capture of Sharm-a-Sheikh. We carried out our assignment satisfactorily.

Following the Six Day War I was appointed chief operations officer and in September of 1968 was appointed commander of the Navy. I received this appointment at a difficult period for the Navy, following the loss of the submarine "Dakar", and after the destroyer "Eilat" had been sunk by missiles near Port Said. The achievements of the Navy during the Six Day War were secondary as compared to those of the Air Force and the Army.

During my tenure the Navy participated in the War of Attrition, (1969-70) the Navy carried out many attacks against enemy territory. The Navy was strengthened in its morale and became a stronger attack force in carrying out its objectives. During this period the five "missile boats" were smuggled out of Cherbourg, France, in a well-coordinated operation carried out completely, as planned. These vessels were armed despite the embargo, and the crews were highly trained. By the time that the Yom Kippur War broke out, the Navy was ready for any action demanded of it.

Following my naval career, I was general manager of the Eilat – Ashkelon pipeline for many years, and studied law and worked as an attorney for a period.