

Hazkani Boaz

Born in the Borochoy Quarter, Givataim in 1927

Joined the Palyam in 1945

This is the Way it Was**Training at Caesarea – Shefayim**

I joined (the Palyam) within the framework of a group formed from two training groups that united. (Each group gave a percentage of its members to serve in the Palmach-Palyam – A.M.) One group was Alumot-Revivim from the Borochoy Quarter and the other was Hazorea from Tel Aviv, which was actually a group of members from the nautical section of the Yarkon River of Hapoel Tel Aviv. These members already had some experience in several areas of seamanship. Some of them joined the Palyam when it first began in August 1945.

Our group absorbed members from all over the country. Those who were already experienced seamen worked on two vessels which belonged to Kibbutz Sdot Yam, “Aliza” and “Neeman”. These vessels did coastal and deep water fishing. The experience of these men was a great aid to the commanders of the Palyam, especially to that group of men who worked with Yochai ben Nun. They and their vessels permitted easier access for him and his men when they wanted to bring explosives or detonators into the port area with which they blew up deportation ships or British coastal patrol boats.

To my good luck, by the time I reached the Palyam I already had a Mandatory driver’s license for commercial vehicles, and after a short time I became a driver for Yankale Salomon, the Battalion commander, for Avraham Zakai, the commander of the Palyam, Samek, and Benny Marshak who passed through all the platoons of the 4th Battalion and would raise morale with his speeches: from Naan in the south to Caesarea, Maabarot, Sarid and Ayelet Hashachar. Before every landing of Ma’apilim he was the biggest worrier as to how the operation would fare.

For every company and battalion there was a secret meeting place; in Maabarot, Hadera, Givat Hashlosha, Givat Chen and Raanana. I worked for several months with Yoske Rivkind, who was commander of the Palyam for a time, and of the 6th course for small boat commanders in Caesarea. I remember that we once drove toward Nahariya when we suddenly ran into a truck and pick-up trucks loaded with British paratroopers on the main highway, between Raanana and Maabarot. My pick-up truck had a leak in the radiator and they came to our rescue and gave us an extra jerrycan of water to make sure that we would get to where we were going.

When I was driving for Nachum Sarig and Chaim Zinger I had the honor to be of assistance for Yochai’s special unit. Yochai, Lipson, Izzie and Reuven Hirsh were making preparations for blowing up the deportation ship, “Empire Rival” in August

1946. From Kibbutz Maoz Chaim I brought various pieces that Chaim Zinger put together from vehicle headlights, and resembled a big open cone that would create the effect of a hollow warhead. There were also magnets to hold an explosive against the ship, once the chosen spot on the hull was cleaned.

In my little pick-up truck there were a number of hiding places that were made of parts of carbide utensils and oxygen tanks that were hermetically sealed. There were also several articles of camouflage and fire extinguishers. The upper part of the tank could be opened by a hidden screw. Between 50 and 100 sticks of gelignite could be stored in one tank, as if they were frankfurters. I would pick up the explosives at the Solel Boneh quarries at Benyamina or Neshet. I would bring them in special containers to Kibbutz Shaar Haamakim and pass them to Rafi the Rooster or to Alex who was the demolition expert of the 1st Battalion. On the way we would pass many check-posts and although my heart was in my mouth, this became a routine event.

I also happened to take Chaim Zinger to Kibbutz Naan and the aviators for training to Juara. I arrived with my pick-up truck at Kibbutz Naan and filled the hiding place with Bren guns and Sten guns. I took Shmuel Vedels, the pilot in charge, and the assistant of Black, so that he could lead me on a roundabout road to Juara. I recall trips of the platoon with Moshe Lipson to bring weapons and explosives from Givat Chaim – an all-night back and forth trek – where we went past the revolving projector at Givat Olga. At dawn we would arrive at Caesarea, the home base of the Palyam. This was very good training for our group and we remained there until June 1946. We then moved to Kibbutz Shefayim.

This is the time to mention those men who took care of the weapons in their hiding "slinks": Moshe App, Yerachmiel the Redhead, Zivi Tzafiriri, Uri Shilo, Simcha Falk, and Matty Shani. They worked in the hideaways at Sdot Yam and dug others in the cow barn of Givat Hashlosha, Mishmar Hasharon, Sarid and another one for the Palyam at Kibbutz Maabarot that has not been found to this day.

A few words about the life of our training group at Caesarea; we had 10 Indian-type tents, and only the platoon leader and the squad leader had round tents. When I arrived, I presented myself before the platoon leader Bill and the squad commanders Poza, Levi and Ezra. Most of the time we worked quite hard in extensive field crops or in filling sacks with sand and putting them on the backs of camels which were brought there from the mouth of the Hadera streambed. This was heavy work. Some of the fellows worked on the vessels that belonged to Caesarea and others worked in field crops at Kiryat Benjamin.

Training was on shore and at sea. We used the boats "Dov", "Tirza" and "Rivka" and our instructors were from our own group or our squad leader. Cultural activities of our group and the Palyam centered around the Palyam shed, where

courses were held, and the main cultural event was on the night of the 13th of the month. There would be a toast and a drink with Shaiké, Dan, Yosh and Eskimo.

We went to Shefayim just before “Black Saturday”; Shefayim was an older kibbutz than Sdot Yam, and a better established one. It had 8 to 10 different tractors and there was a good deal of satisfaction in working in the extensive field crops. We worked in their fields and in the fields of their Arab neighbors. Our platoon commanders were Yossi Lieberman and Idel and the squad leaders were Aryeh Shwartzman, Dov and Baruch. Our training was mostly on treks and we went as far as Kfar Vitkin and Michmoret; the climax was a trek to the Negev in the footsteps of companies of the Palmach.

Yehuda “Pereh” (Ben-tzur) was commander of the trek and “the Goat” was lead man. The whole march took 10 days, from Ras Zuera by way of Sodom, Masada and Wadi Fukra, the ‘small crater’, Tel Rachmeh, and Nachal Zin Ovdad and Shivta. We had no sleeping bags and carried all our food and water on our backs.

The climax of unloading a Palyam ship was the “Shabtai Luzinski”. It was a great privilege to bring the thick rope of 150 meters length with which the ship was tied to the shore. I brought it hidden in my pick-up truck, and Dr Yosef from Kibbutz Ein Dor, was with me. As is well known, the ship ran aground and the Ma’apilim jumped into the water. Some of them were smuggled into surrounding settlements together with some of the Palyamniks and members of my group. Others went with the Ma’apilim to Cyprus. I received an order from the company commander, Yusuf, to take the pick-up truck and get away from the scene fast, and to take Davidka Nameri with me to Tel Aviv.

At the end of 1947 we were discharged from the Palmach and became a work unit in Kiryat Chaim. Some of the men went to work in the port of Haifa and others worked in the machine shop of Kibbutz Ein Harod. When the War of Independence began I joined the 4th Battalion in the Kiryah at Tel Aviv before the “Nachshon Operation” and before the fighting on the road to Jerusalem. In May 1948 I was assigned to the 7th Battalion as officer in charge of the motor pool. Yochanan was the Battalion Commander and Yoske Rivkind was his second-in-command. Beginning the 17th of May, 1948 saw a very difficult period of fighting. We were stationed at Ruchama and Dorot, and took part in the fighting for Ashdod and the Givati Junction. The Battalion suffered heavy losses. After that I was back in the 4th Battalion, “Harel” Brigade, and was the motor pool officer during the “Dani Operation”. Three months later I was moved again to the 10th Battalion under the command of Shlomo Schlauch, Gavrush, Avraham ben Dror and Raful.

We took part in "Operation Yoav" and "Operation Horev" in the Negev. When the "Harel" Brigade was disbanded I became an Intelligence Officer in Kadash, in the Six Day War, and in the Yom Kippur War (I was then in the reserves). When that was over I married Yemima. We have 2 children and 6 grandchildren. I was a member of Dan (bus cooperative A. M.). and a tourist guide, and at present am an insurance salesman.