

Hazkani (Simchoni) Yemima

Born in 1927

Joined the Palyam in 1946

This is the Way it Was**Training at Caesarea – Sdot Yam**

I grew up in Raanana until I was 14 years old. This was a small moshava with a high social and cultural level. When World War II broke out we moved to Ramat Gan. I belonged to the Borochof branch of No'ar Ha'Oved movement, and with them went to Caesarea for nautical training. I arrived there in March 1946. There were a number of tents, some round and some square. The beds were sunk into the sand, below the bed was a suitcase, and everything was covered with sand; clothes, blankets and my hair.

Each tent had a small kerosene lantern hanging in the middle, usually with a glass cover to block the wind, most of which were partially broken. As a result, there were occasions when there was only one good working lantern in the whole of our tent area. Near the group of tents was a communal shower made of corrugated iron and the door usually stood open. Between the boys' side of the shower and the girls' side there was a corrugated iron sheet that had several holes in it. Some of them were for the purpose of peeping and others were to pass the soap back and forth. None of the above spoiled the general atmosphere of pleasant camaraderie, good spirits, and the fun of being together.

We did not have too much to eat in Caesarea as it was a rather poor kibbutz. The tents were not always able to withstand the strong winds that blew occasionally and would collapse upon the inhabitants. Life went on and was not unduly disrupted by these small inconveniences. We looked ahead to the big job that loomed before us; unloading Ma'apilim. A good deal of our training was in the sea, since we were specifically a sea-training group. We went to sea on the coldest days and learned how to hold an oar, to cross over the high waves with a rowboat, and how to hold a sail or helm in a stormy sea when the boats were drawing water. There was much to fear as we had no lifebelts and no means of communication. It was lucky that we never overturned. Sometimes we would go to sea for a whole day in a calm sea or a rough one. I, personally loved the training at sea despite the fear, and my memories are pleasant ones.

The 13th of every month was the day for a toast and a little celebration. We would get together in the large shed used for the Palyam courses. We had plenty of 'star performers'; we had Dan Ben Amotz and Shaikhe Ophir, Yosh and some others who slip my memory. Gad Asher would play the accordion and we danced to his melodies.

We waited impatiently for that great moment; unloading Ma'apilim. To our sorrow, more than once we went out to be ready for their arrival and then would hear that they had been caught. Only twice did some of our members have good fortune in unloading Ma'apilim; this was in the case of the "Chana Senesh" near Nahariya and the "Shabtai Luzinski" at Nitzanim. Some of our members, together with the olim who did not

succeed in getting away, went to Cyprus with them and helped there in organizing defense courses and teaching Hebrew. This was our first encounter with the survivors of the Holocaust.