

**Vinkler, Chaim** (Vinkie)

Born 1928 at Magdiel

Joined the Coastal Patrol in 1943

Joined the Palyam in 1944

**This is the Way it Was**

I was born in Moshava Magdiel, in the Sharon Valley in 1928 to Zehava and David Vinkler, who were among its first settlers. I attended elementary school there and continued at Kfar Malal. In 1934 we moved to Moshav Ganei Am, adjacent to Magdiel. At age 13, I joined the youth group at Kibbutz Tel Yosef. I was mobilized in 1943 and went to Yagur where I was sworn in and sent to the Coastal Patrol. I was assigned to guard a section of the shore between Acre and the IPC (Iraq Petroleum Company).

Within the framework of this unit, we also trained in boats of Hapoel Haifa. I was sent to a short course in Caesarea so that I could teach rowing. After several months I was discharged and joined a group of people at Sdot Yam, near Kiryat Motzkin. We worked at Neshet (the cement company) and in the port.

I was a participant in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Course at Caesarea. When it ended, we joined the ship "Amos", and after the "Amos" I served on the "Amal". It was there, in 1945, that I met Yair Braker.

All during the year of 1945 the "Amal" transported old munitions that had been stored in Alexandria. We would sail into the Red Sea via the Suez Canal and there dump our cargo into the sea.

In December of 1945 I received a message informing me that my father had died. We were in Port Said at the time. I left the ship and returned to Palestine via Qantara. When the mourning period was over I reported to Maabarot. I took part in training exercises there and participated in a course for squad leaders at Ein Hashofet. I ended up back at Maabarot. On "Black Saturday" in 1946, I was arrested and spent two months in detention at Latrun. When I was released I returned to Maabarot and received command of a platoon from Gershon Karlinsky. Several times we went to help in disembarkations, but the vessels were unsuccessful in attempting to reach shore. Only when the "Shabtai Luzinski" came in did we actually see action. The day before it arrived, Yankale Tzesis (of blessed memory) came to take part and we added him to our team. During this operation we were surrounded by the British and everyone was taken to Cyprus. Yankale and I managed to escape and Yusuf ordered us back to Maabarot.

From Maabarot we boarded the "Enzo Sereni" which was anchored in Haifa. The "we" included Cushi, Benny Kravitz, Pinny Ashuach, Gabi Weiss, Moshe Dafni (Moshe the sailor), Yosh, Chaim Senesh and I. We sailed to Alexandria where we loaded diesel fuel and left for Italy. Once we reached Genoa we separated, and each one went to where he had been assigned. I got to

Magenta and went to work with Yoske Rivkind (Yariv). Our job was to pack weapons which were to be shipped to Palestine. Some time later, Avraham Yaffe arrived in a British Army jeep. I joined him and we visited camps built to house survivors of the Holocaust who were to arrive later. Sometimes we brought food to the camps and sometimes radio equipment. Every time a policeman stopped us to search our vehicle, he would step up onto the fender and I would offer him a cigarette. That was the end of the search. We were stopped many times, but the vehicle was never searched.

For a time we traveled between Milan, Rome, Florence and several other cities of Italy, but ultimately settled in Bari. The inhabitants of the town kept away from us and we didn't understand why. If we stood in line for anything, they always let us go first. Then we heard that Pinko, from Kfar Yehoshua, had spread a rumor that we were a bit "soft in the head" as a result of the War. We were sent from Bari to Venice, and there boarded the "Pan Crescent". While all of us were in the radio room, we heard a loud explosion which caused the whole ship to tremble. Paul Shulman ran into the room and told us that a bomb had exploded. A hole was blown in the bow and a few hours later the ship began to sink. We left the ship and returned to our hotel.

Once again we scattered to various places, and Cushi, Asi, and I went to Formia. From there, we sent off the "Af Al Pi Chen". We then returned to Venice and I was assigned to the "Kadima" together with Zeevka Paz, Zeevik Rotem and Nira Harari. We sailed with 794 Maapilim from the Palestrina pier near Venice. We noticed that evening, that we were carrying several people active in Aliya Bet, including Ada Sereni, who had to remain in Italy ***[editorial note: as a matter of fact Ada Sereni left Kadima on a tug; only her staff members were left behind on the vessel, and they were later arrested by the Italians after returning to Italy on one of Kadima's lifeboats]***. They were let off in a lifeboat to get back to shore, and we were left without a lifeboat for our ship. When we checked our food stores the following day, we found that all the canned milk saved for the children, had been stolen. The cans had been emptied earlier and filled with stones so that we wouldn't notice that they were empty.

As we neared Cyprus after 10 days sailing, we ditched the big water tank and other objects that might identify us as a ship of olim, to fool the British. They discovered us, however, as we neared the shore of Palestine. They towed us into Haifa, and transferred us to a deportation ship which took all of us to Cyprus. The first week that we were there I took charge of dividing clothing fairly among all the olim of the "Kadima". After that I took part in digging the tunnel.

I heard about the creation of the State while I was in a camp in Cyprus. I spent two or three months in Cyprus and was freed when I was appointed to accompany a group of children back to Palestine. Cushi, Yonatan (of blessed memory), Yossi Stern and I formed a platoon of the Palmach at Michmoret. After that I took part in the fighting on the road to Jerusalem. When the cease-fire was over I was formally drafted into the IDF, joined the Navy and served

with the 13<sup>th</sup> Flotilla. When the war was over I became a driver, and in my spare time worked with imprisoned juvenile delinquents .

In 1949 I married Shosh and we had three girls. Today we are grandparents to ten grandchildren. In 1965 I set up a company that did earth moving, T.V.R. Ltd. In 1988 I sold my share of the company and then worked voluntarily for two years with the sea scouts in Jaffa. I now work part-time with the sea scouts in Tel Aviv.

---