

Yaffe, Avraham

Born 16th September 1923 in Yavniel

Joined the Palmach from Kadoorie Agricultural High School in 1941

In 1943 enlisted in the British Army and joined Ha'Chavura ("the Gang") in 1945

Died at Tzahala on 8th April 1969

Reported by: Shulamit Yaffe (Mitka)

This is the Way it Was

Avraham was born at Yavniel on the 16th September 1923. He was the eldest son of his parents Dov and Esther Yaffe. In 1932 the family moved to the Tel Mond area with the founding nucleus of Bet Herut. Even as a young boy he was active in the Hagana in defense of the Moshava, and could signal from the water tower to the neighboring settlements. From the age of 16-18 he studied at the Kadoorie High School. When he finished his studies, he joined "A" Company of the Palmach and served until 1943.

Avraham enlisted in the British Army and served with his father in the 178th Transport Company, in Egypt. Later, this unit moved to Europe and worked at moving the survivors of the Holocaust from Central Europe to the shores of Italy. While working in Italy he also managed to learn the language and to know the country. This was followed by a period of working with survivors of the Holocaust in Western Europe and moving them to various ports on the Mediterranean. In 1946 he was discharged from the army and came back to his family farm in Moshav Herut.

In 1947 he was again called upon to go to work for Aliya Bet in Italy. This time it was to be illegal work and done under an assumed identity. Uri Yaffe, his cousin, came to visit him and suggested that he return to Italy to work with the immigrants and to purchase weapons which would have to be smuggled into Palestine. These weapons would be of utmost importance in defending the new state that was soon to come into existence. Avraham immediately accepted this job.

Avraham joined a group of nine others and the entire group was smuggled out of the country on a ship which had a solid reputation for that sort of thing. They were hidden in a hold that usually held water until they pulled out of the port. When they were at sea, one of the fellows opened the hatch and wandered about on deck but was caught by sailors, hidden again in the hold, and some sacks were put on the hatch to prevent him from opening it again. However, after a day or two they were forgotten and someone started to fill the hold with water, having forgotten about the stowaways. These poor fellows started banging on the hatch and the hold until a sailor heard them and closed the stream of water.

Once, while driving along the Autostrada in Italy he had some trouble with the truck and halted at the side of the road. Two men stopped their cars, approached him with iron bars in their hands, and demanded to see his papers.

Avraham said that he would only show his papers to the Police so they each went back to their vehicles and drove to the nearest police station. His papers listed him as a Polish refugee so one of the policemen who happened to be Polish, asked him to speak Polish. Avraham started cursing and angrily replied that after what the Poles did to him and his family, he would never speak Polish again. They let him continue on his way in peace.

On another occasion some fellow came up to him and accused him of driving a stolen car. Avraham had no choice but to knock him out with one blow and beat a hasty retreat. He was also involved in bringing explosives to the port of Bari when the ship, "Lino", had been hired by the Syrians to carry weapons to Syria. This ship was subsequently blown up.

Avraham started to learn to fly in Italy and later continued in Czechoslovakia. When he returned to Israel in 1948 he was immediately inducted into the Air Force, where he completed his training and received his wings. He was a member of the first squadron of the Air Force (the 101st) which was stationed at Ramat David. In 1952 he was sent to a course for command and headquarter officers in Alabama, USA. He also participated in the Sinai Campaign. In 1958 Avraham was appointed commander of the Air Force base at Tel Nof. In 1963 he participated in the first course of the College for National Security, in Jerusalem, and in 1964 was air attaché in Paris, where he resided with his family for two years. While in Paris he was active in the Mosad, when it was under the command of Meir Amit. In 1966 the family returned to Israel and Avraham was discharged from the army.

In 1967 Avraham set up an aviation company that specialized in seeding clouds so that they could give more rain. The company, Avirom, had two twin-motor planes and he hired several young flyers to work with him. In 1967, during the Six Day War, Avraham was advisor to the Southern Command.

Avraham died suddenly of a heart attack in 1969 at his home at Tzahala and was buried in the family plot in Tel Mond. He was survived by his wife, Mitka, eldest son Dubi aged 18, and twins, Rami and Yael, aged 17.