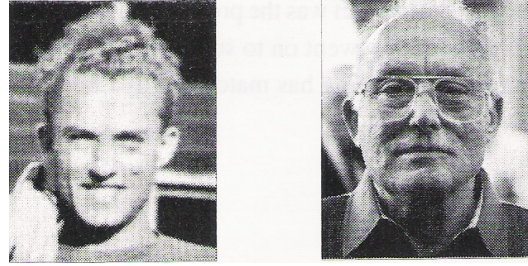


David Brownstein

Volunteer from the USA on the "Geulah"



This is the Way it Was

My name is Albert David Brownstein, born in Chicago on March 30, 1925 to Rose and Nathan Brownstein. I was drafted as I was finishing high school and entered the US Army on July 13, 1943. I saw service in the South Pacific as a combat medic. I was discharged from the army on January 19, 1946 and a short time later I entered Roosevelt College. I learned of the immensity of the Holocaust in 1946 and sought a way to assist the surviving Jews to get into Palestine. I viewed the survivors as a remnant. I felt that the attempt at genocide was endangering the existence of the Jews as a people.

As I recall, my feelings at the time were not specifically Zionist. I did not think that I was participating in an action that would be a factor in the British pulling out of Palestine or affecting world opinion. My principal concern was to assist the refugees to reach a refuge. I made some contacts and so did my friend Leonard Rotter, to whom I conveyed my intentions. He was successful and made the appropriate contact. To this day I do not know who our contact was. Our efforts led us to New York City and then to Miami where we boarded the "Paducah". This ship was later renamed the "Geulah" (Redemption). Your files and various writers detail the voyage of this ship. I was an Ordinary Seaman and did what I was told to do. I had no previous experience as a sailor or any experience which would qualify me to be an OS.

The "Geulah" was boarded by the British and most of the crew were transported to Cyprus with the refugees we were carrying. I assumed the name of Avraham Geller. I could speak Yiddish. While on Cyprus a man asked me to help teach his daughter English. She could speak a little English and I spent an hour or so a day enlarging her vocabulary for a couple of weeks. While in Cyprus I recall the barbed wire and the watch towers with armed British soldiers. Later, when I left Cyprus with an allotment of refugees allowed to enter Palestine, I was assigned and used the name of Yitzchak Garomek. I presume that a refugee of that name was eligible to leave Cyprus at that time and perhaps had given up his place so that the "American sailor" could leave to perhaps help to transport others. Incidentally, the ID I later received when I left Atlit had the name of Yitzchak Gromek. I wondered if the change in spelling was accidental or on purpose.

While in Palestine I spent some time on a kibbutz named Maayan Baruch. I left Palestine on January 28 1948 to return to my waiting mother. I had promised her I would return. She had lost me to WW II and then to my participation in illegal immigration. Before I left Palestine I was asked by a shu-shu whether I was willing to do something more. He wouldn't tell me what it was, but I said, "Yes". He told me to stop in at the American Seaman's Club in Marseilles,

France. There I was told by another shu-shu to wait for about a week. I did not receive further explanations. After about ten days I was told that the time was now, but still no explanation. I was ushered to a truck with a canvas cover over the back – a military vehicle. I joined a group of men in the back of the truck. We drove for about an hour or two and exited on a beach at night. A short time later a small wooden ship appeared off shore. Lights flashed from the shore and from the ship. Some truckloads of refugees appeared and discharged their cargo on the beach. Two hawsers were strung from ship to shore and two large inflatable rubber rafts were filled with refugees. I and others assisted the refugees into the rafts and pulled them out to the ship using the lines from ship to shore. At the ship we helped the refugees up the netting on the side to the deck. After this task was completed I returned to the American Seaman's Club.

I was given a ticket to fly to New York from Paris. I returned to Chicago. I never learned on what beach the above event occurred or the name of the ship that I helped load.

I was back in the USA on February 17, 1948. I returned to school and earned a BA in Psychology from the University of Illinois and obtained employment with the U S Department of Health and Education and worked for the Social Security Administration for the next 31 years. I retired in January 1986. I am married and have three children and four grandchildren.



Lippy Lipshitz (on left) & Albert d. Brownstein
(on right) in Atlit, Palestine at the time about early
November or December 1947