

Yitzchak Calic

Volunteer from the USA on the "Calanit"

**This is the Way it Was**

I lived in Naharia from 1949 – 1954 and from 1954 to this day I live in Hadera where my wife's family lives since they came to Palestine in 1921 from Russia. I was born in Uvgheni, Rumania on July 4 1922. My father left for the US in 1930 and worked 12 hours a day, and earned \$5.00 per week. He lived on \$2.00 and sent my mother and their six children \$3.00 per week until we got our visas in June 1932 and went to San Francisco where my father had a sister. All my family live in San Francisco to this day. I am the only one of two brothers and three sisters who made Aliya.

About 1936 the Hashomer Hatzair Movement opened a branch in San Francisco whose leader was Yehoshua Zamir from Kibbutz Ein Dor (his son was killed on the Beaufort Mountain during the first Lebanese War in 1982). Two of my sisters and I joined almost immediately. I was drafted in December 1942 during WW II and was stationed in India and Burma. I was discharged in January 1946. After my discharge I went to the training farm run by the Hashomer movement in Hightstown, New Jersey, and was there until I volunteered to go to Palestine on a Hagana ship. The Hagana had bought the SS Mala, later renamed the "Calanit". I worked as a sailor although I had no previous experience. We sailed from New York about March 1948 with 50 American volunteers and continued to Marseilles. There, we installed 800 bunks to absorb passengers from the Holocaust. We picked up the passengers in a small secret port in the middle of the night to avoid being seen – near Marseilles and sailed on a zig-zag course to Haifa to avoid being attacked by Egyptian submarines. We arrived in Haifa around May 13, several days after the creation of the State of Israel *[editorial note: May 13 was several days before the creation of the State of Israel and not after. Additionally, according to official Mossad's documents, the vessel arrived at Haifa only in July due to technical problems]*. This made the "Calanit" the last illegal vessel to have left Europe in the saga of Aliya Bet.

The passengers were weak, tense and worried; some had young babies; the only food they received during the eight day voyage was warm soup that we distributed in a bucket. The sanitary conditions were horrible because the ship was so overcrowded (it was built to carry about 100 passengers). The ship made a few more trips. I left the ship and went to Kibbutz Ein Hashofet and joined other Americans there. In January 1949 we established Kibbutz Sasa – 120 people, all Americans. I married a girl from Hadera in December 1950. My

wife did not like kibbutz life, so I left, bought a share in Egged Bus Co-op and worked for 35 years as a bus driver and retired in 1984. I forgot to mention that when I got off the ship and entered Haifa, I suddenly felt that "I came home" and immediately felt that I would never leave Israel, which I never did but for a few short trips to San Francisco to visit family. That's all except that I also forgot to mention that I was the first bus driver to travel from Sasa to Haifa and it was the only bus that traveled from Sasa to Naharia. Today there is a bus every 30 minutes. I wish you luck and success in the project you have undertaken.

