

**Mordy Shell** (Manfred Shlezniisky)  
 Born January 1927 in Germany  
 Volunteer from the USA on the "Jewish State"



### **This is the Way it Was**

In March 1947, when I was at the Hechalutz Farm in Hightstown, NJ people from the Aliya Bet came around to round up volunteers to work on the illegal ships to bring Jews from Europe to Palestine. I was told to be in Baltimore in a few days. I flew home to Detroit, Michigan, where I lived to bid my mother and sister Shalom. I was going on Aliya. In two days I flew to Baltimore and joined my shipmates, I had never met before. The ship was an old icebreaker, many years in mothballs somewhere in Florida. The ship didn't look like an ocean-going vessel, we called it "our Banana Boat". She was rusty and in bad shape. She was called the "Northland".

We left the east coast on a cold windy day. That same night, sitting in our little dining room, somebody told us half of our engines went dead. Here we were in the middle of the ocean and half power. The end of the next day the other diesel went kaput, the gaskets were blown on both. The person in charge was told not to call SOS. The engine mechanics and ship crew worked many hours to repair the damage. Everybody was seasick, after all, we were not sailors. From then on we had a smooth ride to Port de Bouc. There they brought diesel mechanics to work on the engines. Also our old generator went kaput and had to be replaced. We always lived on the ship. We left to sail to Bayonne in France on the Spanish border. It was a pretty place, we were there until August.

The ship was outfitted for the Ma'apilim. The carpenters were brought in to fit wood boards for the people to sleep on. The ship "Geula" came a bit later and parked next to us. They left before us. They wouldn't let us go until a leftover bill which the "Exodus" left in France was paid. So, we finally left for Burgas, Bulgaria. After a bit out, the British Navy followed us to Turkey and then let us go to Burgas. They knew we had to come back the same way to reach Palestine. In Burgas at 10 p.m. we started boarding 2700 people into our little ship. When we did leave a young girl sang Hatikva. It was the most romantic moment of my Aliya.

When we left Turkey the British Navy was there to follow us all the way to Palestine. Before Haifa they started to throw gas bombs into the ship. On Succoth we finally entered the Bay of Haifa. From there I went to Cyprus for ten weeks, and finally came to Atlit and Benyamina camps. At first I went to visit my brother in his kibbutz, he left Germany before I did, in 1939, I left in 1940. I then went to Mishmar Ha'emek, etc. I enjoyed every bit of it.



Towards the deportation from Haifa