

ראיון עם ג'רי רוזנברג
פרויקט תיעוד תולדות חיל הים
מראיון : אריק קרמן

שירת במלחמת העולם השנייה על קורבטות קנדיות בליווי שיירות באוקינוס האטלנטי. הגיע במסגרת המתנדבים והיה אתת על ה"וודג'ווד" במלחמת השחרור.

- q. Tell me please how was it that you came to Israel to participate in the 48 war?
- a. It is a bit of personal history. I got married in the second world war in 1944, while I was home on leave, and they gave me a 4 months break, so I had my wife on the east coast of Canada, a place called Malgrave Nova Scotia. After the war things did not work out, we divorced and separated, so I was on my own. When the UN partition plan was approved I went to the Zionist Organization in Toronto and told them my experience. Fortunately I had a passport I had obtained before that, so I had no ... and I had the experience, so they made arrangements for me to go to Montreal, where I was examined by medical and given 6 shots and sent to New York, and they gave me 3 phone numbers in New York, in case one of them was tapped, they told me how to spot a tap on a phone. The first two numbers I called were tapped and the third one was clear, so they made arrangements for me to stay in a hotel for a day or two and then they were 15 of us, I guess, that gathered up - 14 Canadians and one American. We were sailed on the Marine Tiger, I think, I can't remember exactly, they were several marine ships.
- q. Marine Carp.
- a. Yes, The Marine Carp, that's the one. We got they give us a purse, and by train down to a place called ... where they had a Hachshara camp, where they were training the people for the kibbutz. There we did a little bit of Sten Gun training and tried to get back into physical shape, and they had us doing 5 miles runs, up and down the foothills of the Alps. Then they took our passport office in Lahav and told us that we will get them back when the war will be over. Then we were put on a ship called The Kedma. There were more than 2,000 people on the ship and maybe 4 people had the right papers.
- q. What was the date?
- a. It must have been the end of February 1948, because the partition plan was November 1947.

q. In 1946 there were 4 young Canadians that joined the Wedgewood as she was... did't you hear about it, because they were searching for seamen?

a. I never heard a word. No one contacted me and I never got any information about עליה ב' at all. At that time I was single so I would have gone, had I have known.

q. You are coming with The Kedma to Palestine, no, to Israel.

a. No. It was Palestine, the British were still there. This was in March. the first week in March, I don't remember exactly. There was a lot of shooting going on in Haifat at the time, so they would not let us off the ship that night. We had to wait until next morning. In the lounge they set a long table with Majors and Colonels from the British Army sitting behind them and we all went through. I had a Dutch Passport from and I was an accountant just returning, I was a resident of Palestine that time, so I was just returning. We went to all these Majors and Colonels. At the end there was a little man from the Jewish Agency and he looked and asked: ווס איז דיין ריכטיקע נאמן? (מה) (שמך האמיתי?) we were told not to give our real name to anybody, so we did not give it. We were taken off the ship and put on trucks and brought to the head ... and we went up to the army that very morning, and then they shipped us to a little camp outside Tel Aviv, when at that time Ben Dulkeman, a Canadian who was a Colonel, wanted us to join his outfit, and none of us wanted to go with him. We wanted to be with a Sabre unit. So there was a representative there from Givati (גבעתי) from the 52 and we all went up to go with him. So we went to כפר בילו.

q. You did not say that you had experience on ships? It did not bother them?

a. No. In addition they needed the manpower. We fired 4 bullets and threw a handgranate, but it was a dummy handgranate, and that was our training. We were ready for action after that. In the navy you do get military training. We had some military training. I understood battles. I found out one thing that those people who did not serve in the II World War, were the ones who were getting wounded and killed. The ones who had military experience usually were able to survive.

We spent March-April-May, after the first truce, we have been in a few actions. We were getting wounded and there was a fear that too many of us may get killed in one action and it would not look good for the people back home, so Ben-Gurion ordered that we will be broken up and split amongst other groups.

q. What was the action that you participated?

a. There was in Bershit (ברשית), New Yavne and Latrun (לטרון).

q. You were in Latrun?

a. Yes, three times. and a place called Abu-Shushu (אבו-שושו). There were a couple of others. I can't remember the names, places where we had to make sure that they won't go a car to attack. We were successful. The first two times we were in Latrun, that was before the Jordanian army moved in. We captured both the police station and the monastery, we could taken over both, but we did have the manpower to hold it, so we captured some people there.

Ben-Gurion broke up the unit and some of the guys went to the 72nd and the 79th, I had 4 people from the unit besides me that I brought to the Navy with me - Merry Ginsburg, Karting, El Brown and Ervin Kaplansky. Merry and Ben became gunners on the Wedgewood and El Brown was the ship's carpenter on the Wedgewood. Ervin Kaplansky was helping one of the gunners.

q. Do you remember coming to the Wedgewood?

a. I remember. It was in a pretty bad shape when we got on board. We were sitting on the breakwater, on the other upside of the harbour.

q. What was the date?

a. I can't remember, but it had to be May or June. It was just shortly after the British left, and there was a huge lock on the chain that held it to the breakwater, so nobody could steel it. The ship was stripped of armament. We sailed on to Tel Aviv and they put a 75 mm French Artillery piece on the deck.

q. I wanted to ask you about your experience.

a. I was in the signals, communications.

q. When you came to the Wedgewood - who spoke with you?

a. There was somebody at the Naval headquarters, they had a little office near Hayarkon. Before they sent me to this office, because they asked if anybody had Naval experience. So I went there and after they sent me from Tel Aviv to the Wedgewood, They put me on the back of a motorcycle and whisked me down to Haifa. They guy took me right to the dock and I was rolled over to the ship, which was sitting close to the breakwater.

q. Who spoke with you there on the deck on the Wedgewood?

a. There was an Indian Captain from the Royal Indian Navy.

q. hee was an officer, he was not a Captain.

a. He was a Captaon.

q. No. the Captain was Yerechovsky (ירחובסקי).

- a. I remember him as he was in charge of all the ship's operations. Kipi came on after that. I was there before Kipi was. Everybody was taking orders from that Indian Navy officer. He was not a Captain?
- q. He was not a Captain. Do you remember Captain Yerechovsky?
- a. I don't, because he was not on the ship when I came. How long was he on the ship?
- q. A month or something like this. After him cam Milla Brenner (מילא ברנר).
- a. Brenner I remember.
- q. Did you participate in the Altelena case?
- a. Yes. I remember when Kipi came aboard after that there was a lot of friction between them. Kipi was not a naval man. He knew nothing of the navy and the Indian fellow was a Leuitennat in the Royal Indian Navy, so he was an experienced sailor. I can't remember the first that we had I think we went up to ... the first night, but after we got the gun on board, it was a disaster with that.
- q. You worked with Tzafirir (צפרייר) from the start?
- a. I was on the bridge. My station was on the bridge all the time. The communication lights were on the bridge, that what I was concerned was singling of the ships.
- q. Who gave you the telegrams?
- a. The Indian Captain before Kipi came on and then after Kipi came on he started to command of the ship, and as I said that created a lot of friction.
- q. He could give you in English the commands?
- a. Yes, Kipi spoke English.
- q. Because you spoke only English.
- a. That's right and all I sent in the messeges was all in English.
- q. There was a command in English in the Wedgewood?
- a. On the bridge it was mostly English. Below decks was mostly Hebrew. For the gunners it was all English.
- q. Do you remember a Hebrew teacher on the Wedgewood?
- a. What was his name?
- q. Talitman.
- a. It sounds familier. I remember him vaguely.
- q. So the command was usually in English on the bridge and on the guns.
- a. Yes.
- q. Do you remember the Altelena case?

- a. Yes, I remember it very clearly.
- q. Where were you?
- a. I was on the bridge through the whole affair. By the time we got to Kfar Vitkin.
- q. You don't remember a civilian Captain named Jordan or Yerechovsky? Don't you remember him?
- a. I don't.
- q. He was with Kipi on the bridge.
- a. I don't remember.
- q. He was a revisionist, he was more for the Etzel (אצ"ל). There were troubles with that. don't you remember this?
- a. I don't. First of all, if there were any arguments going on it would have been going on in Hebrew and I would not be involved in it, because I would know what was going on. They told me what they wanted me to do, and that what I did.
- q. How was Kipi as an commandor?
- a. Kipi and I always got along well together. I had no problems with Kipi.
- q. You did not have, but there were problems?
- a. Only the Indian captain. I could see a lot of friction between the two of them and he complained to me quite a few times about order that Kipi gave and the fact that he ammend orders that he had given. Kipi can't ammend orders that he had given.
- q. Why?
- a. I don't know. I never went into details with him, because I figured that it is a political situation and it is better for me to stay out of it, because you can't take sides in a situation like that.
- q. There was dicipline on the ship?
- a. No. There was not much dicipline. The only time that I packed just a little bit of dicipline when we were sitting in Haifa and we had a few people from the Misrach (מזרח), who were religious, and they were bringing on pork on the ship. We had two kitckens, the kitcken was divided in two, so all the religious guys decided to get off, they started to walk down the and I was at the bar of the gang pike and I had a qualt 45 on me and I said: I you step off the ship I shot you! because they were gone to desert the ship and I said: You don't have to eat what's coming on board, it's not meant for you, if you don't want to eat it - don't eat it. It's only meant for those people who want to eat it.

At that time I was responsible to make sure who went on and who came off the ship. I told them: Go back or I'll shoot you, and they went back.

q. You had a rank or something?

a. I had a rank of some sort, who knows?

q. How did you work with Tzafir, with the radio?

a. The radio man worked the radio, that was all done in Hebrew, but on the signals, when I was communicating with the other people that I was communicating with, it was all in English.

q. You worked with him or seperately?

a. The radio room was behind or underneath, below the bridge.

q. Who was you personally commondor? You worked with Kipi?

a. Nobody was over me. I just took my orders from the Indin Captain or from Kipi.

q. You did shifts?

a. I had other duties. I was also the official cameraman on board. I had a 16 mm camera and I was doing filming of all the actions, although I never so a foot of it, I don't know what happened to all the ... I took, somebody must have it somewhere.

q. Tell me about Altelena.

a. We pulled to Kfar Vitkin at dusk and we stayed there late at night. Kipi told me that he went aboard of Altelena, I don't remember that incident because he must have done it during the night and I was busy doing something else. The next morning, just around down I guess it was, we saw bullets coming out from the Altelena and we turned fire so the ... was shot at bias and ... at the time we saw the bullets we did not know they were coming from the army. I don't know who gave the order to them to back off the beache but I kept ... If there were any wounded and they were pretty ... with me at their replies, and whatever the signals was I never did find out.

q. They replied something?

a. Yes. Everytime I sent a signal they would have answer, except when we were going along the coast of Tel Aviv I kept telling them to move out to sea one mile to get on the sea... side and they would not even answer me. I asked if they had any wounded, if they need any help, and they sent back sarcastic messegas, like "We don't need any help, but I am sure you do", that sort of things. They were not cooperative. When we got near Tel-Aviv, I ordered them and I said: You are ordered to anchor one mile of the coast! they would not answer me. That's when they turned in and went right up into the beach. Kipi says that we were shooting at each other, but I don't remember that particular part of the

shooting, but I was in visual contact with them the whole time. But as 50 years go by, some details seem to disappear.

q. Do you remember the Phausia (פאוזיה), the Egyptian ship that you met in the Hafuga (הפוגה)?

a. Yes. We had Samek (סמק) on board at that time, he was under Shulman (שולמן), he was the next in command in the navy. We did not have anything in ar.... but I think that the ship came up to shell Tel-Aviv, we were after that just firing a Lewis machin-gun and some and they turned round awya. I thought that if the operation had been properly they could have caputed that ship very easily. ... 6 inch gun on the board and lots of anti-air craft and lots of arnoment and he on tail.

q. How long were you on the Wedgewood?

a. I must have been part of May, June, July, August, up until the end of the last truce, when they had the final truce.

q. Do you remember a ship with the Etzel (אצ"ל) prisoners from Arithrea (אריתריאה) coming to Israel from Egypt, with a dystroyer?

a. No, I don't remember.

q. Do you the remember the battle near Ashkelon (אשקלון) with an Egyptian Korvet?

a. I do remember something. We were involved in a few actions. If you remind me of that then it comes back to me.

q. Do you remember the Canadians sailors on the Wedgewood, not only those you told me about that you came with them,. Do you remember other Canadians there?

a. There was one other Canadian and his name was Alvin Rosenberg. He came on board on July or August. I never did find out what his job was, because he was very secret, he came on board, he spent maybe 2-3 weeks and left and I never did find out what he did. I don't know what aspect he was involved with. I know he was a technician and he would not speak to anybody of what he was doing. I met him back again some years after that and even then he would not tell me what he was doing on the ship.

q. Do you remember interesting signals that yout sent?

a. I remember some of them. Most of the signaling was doen with the Altelena. The other signals between the Hagana and the other ships were very minimal, beacuse most of the contact was done in port, and they knew that they were going to do one in one out. My job was realy redundant when we were... that why I spent most of my time doing filming.

- q. You used in contact also the code flags.
- a. They did not have the fleet signal book, which tells you what the codes mean, so I just raised flags, and each flag has a meaning and has a letter and you can actually send signals with the flags, but that takes time, because you have to have a whole set of flags which we did not have and you have to put them together. We did this in the Canadian Navy but not on the Wedgewood. They did not have the flags and they did not have the books to interpret the flags.
- q. You have written down every signal that you sent? You had a log book or something like this?
- a. No. I never had a log book. As a matter of fact there was no discipline on board and there was no routine. I imagine that the Captain had to keep a log. I imagine he did, but I don't know if he did or he did not. I never saw him writing, so it's hard to say whether he was doing it when he was by himself in his cabin, I don't know.
- q. Do you remember if you had a uniform?
- a. We got British uniform, that the British left, that was what we wore, but we only wore it when the weather got cold, because it was mostly hot and we walked in shorts.
- q. Do you remember Ben-Gurion coming to visit?
- a. Yes. I remember he came up on the bridge. I was introduced to him with the other Canadians. He was very nice to us and thanked us for being there and appreciated the efforts we have been putting in it. He came on board twice. He was probably the only member of the government that came aboard, that I can remember.
- q. When did you signed off the Wedgewood?
- a. After the first truce, and then I went to Stela Mars (סטלה מאריס), and I was teaching Officers Kadets communication skills.
- q. For how long?
- a. Few months.
- q. In English?
- a. Sure. It was until 1949.
- q. All the English?
- a. I did know Hebrew, but they understood that what they learned could be translated into Hebrew, even the Morse Code was not difficult to be translated.
- q. What can you tell about all the period of time that you were here?
- a. It was an experience. The whole thing meant more to me than my experience from the II World War, because it was more personal, I was more involved with being with

Jewish people and fighting a war that meant the destruction of the survival of the Jewish people. It had more personal and stronger feelings, and the thing that I really was impressed with was the sense of oneness that prevailed in the country at the time, that feeling never left me and I am sorry to say that I don't see it anymore.