



## Marks, Bernard

מרקס ברני

מתנדב מארה"ב באוניית ההעפלה  
"הגנה" ואח"כ "יציאת אירופה תש"ז"

ה ע ש נ ה ג י ש ' 0

In December 1945, when I arrived home after World War II, I was determined to normalize my life and so I enrolled at the University of Cincinnati. It was there that I met an electrical engineering student by the name of Hugo Schwartz. Hugo, a Zionist, was connected to Aliyah Bet in New York. So when he was called up he informed them about my war experience. It was just 4 weeks after I arrived home that I received a call from Arie Leshner (radio operator of S.S. Haganah) inviting me to participate in the rescue of our people. The next day I was on a train to New York.

I presented myself to Captain Arie Friedman (an Israeli) on board S.S. Norsyd, which was moored alongside the S.S. Beuharnois in Brewers Drydock on Staten Island. These sister ships were Canadian corvettes and the first ships from America to enter the Aliyah Bet "trade". In fact, this situation was so new that we actually picked up bunker oil in British Gibraltar.

We departed State Island in the afternoon on an early February (1946) day - Beuharnois (Wedgewood) bound for Italy and Norsyd (Haganah) bound for Marseilles, France. It was here that our Scandinavian captain debarked and we all moved up a notch. Arie became captain, Larry Silverstein became first mate, and I became second mate.

I will spare you the "blood, sweat, toil and tears" we went through preparing our vessel to carry passengers. Needless to say, we picked up 1,200 survivors in Port du Bouc and set sail East, followed by a small Turkish "tub" called Akbel and renamed Beria. The ruse was that we were

to pretend that we were disabled and signal our distress to Akbel, and when she came to our rescue, take her by force. We would then install our "cargo" on her and the "shoo-shoo" would compel her to sail to Haifa, while we returned to Europe for another load. (It was to protect the Turkish crew from prosecution, but I don't think the "Limeys" bought it).

At first we tried to bring our vessels alongside each other (board and board) and even though it was a beautiful Mediterranean summer day, the sea swells would have caused our two ships to batter each other, so we decided to use our life-boats.

We had two well made power life-boats that could carry about 30+ people at a time. Larry Silverstein worked one while I worked the other and our engineers (Dave Baum 1st engineer and Sammy Applebaum 2nd engineer) kept the two ships close together. It took many hours to complete the ferrying job, but we did it without mishap (ours was the only vessel that I know of that made a transfer at sea).

Just as we got all the people over to Akbel and started to transfer their belongings (rucksacks), a heavy cruiser appeared on the horizon. At first we thought she was British - but thankfully she turned out to be French. Larry and I wanted to retrieve our power life-boats but the "shoo-shoo" wanted to skedaddle - so we departed at top speed, leaving our life-boats adrift and at least half the rucksacks still on our ship.

Our next destination was the Greek island of Milos where we rendezvoused with some Greek sailing vessels (Mediterranean dhows) bearing

Kibbutz Ein Hashofet, and during the summer, many of us were sent to Kibbutz Shaar Hagolan in the Jordan Valley, where we trained until January, 1949, when we went up to the Lebanese border and founded Kibbutz Sasa.

I left the kibbutz early in 1952, did public relations work for the Palestine Economic Corporation in Haifa, moved to Jerusalem and spent a year at the Hebrew University, majoring in economics.

Married by this time (to a girl from Philadelphia), we returned to the U.S. in the fall of 1953, finished a B.S. degree at New York University, and did graduate work at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Twenty years later, received a B.A. in art from Trenton State College. For many years was an executive with a company of builder-owners of office buildings and hotels in New York. The last three years, before returning to Israel in 1977, worked at the State House in Trenton, New Jersey. Was responsible for the insurance matters of State government. Back in Israel, am a member of a kibbutz, a volunteer guide at the Diaspora Museum (Beth Hatfutzot), and audit course in art history and archeology at Tel-Aviv University. We also have a busy family life with three of our four children living in Israel. I am also able to point to grandchildren and say that for the first time in 2,000 years we have members of our family who have been born in Jerusalem.

Although I was of the first generation of our family born in America, both of my parents came to the U.S. as small children at the beginning of the 20th century. My father's family came from Minsk and Bobruisk, in Bylorussia, and my mother's family came from Truchenbrod in the Ukraine. My mother's family came led by my great-grandmother, and settled into

a small town in Connecticut called Collinsville. They were the only Jewish family in town and ran a general store. Later the family separated and some members moved to Boston and the rest to New York.

I was born in the Jewish maternity Hospital in Manhattan (an institution which no longer exists). Childhood memories in Brooklyn are of Jewish neighborhoods (my great-grandmother lived across the street), Jewish friends, and schools where most of the pupils were Jewish, even if most of the teachers were not. Although school was open during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, most of the classrooms were empty on those days. At 7 years of age I was snatched into Hashomer Hadati, at 12 I was a Boy Scout, and at 15 I discovered Hashomer Hatzair.

I have truly had a most fortunate life, and my first meeting with maapilim was not a meeting with strangers, but rather with family. I have said on more than one occasion that I thank all those who gave me the opportunity to serve in the Aliyah Beth. We could have done no less. As a postscript, about 15 years ago my youngest child, then a brand-new 2nd lieutenant in the I.D.F. came to me and said, "Dad, I was born 40 years too late!"

Today, she is a mother and kibbutznik in the Jordan Valley.



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לחיי  
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