

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum oral history interview with Martin Silver on October 16, 2015. Rebecca Dillmeier is taking the oral history. Dear Mr. Silver, can you tell us your name and where you were born?

My name is Martin Silver. I was born in the Bronx, New York City.

All right. Can you tell me a little bit about your upbringing? What your schooling was like, were you religious? Were you religious or not? The politics of your family, that sort of stuff.

I was brought up in Brooklyn. Shared a home-- an apartment, actually. It was a three-flight walk-up tenement in a working class neighborhood. In the apartment was my brother, 15 months older, and my mother. My mother was divorced when I was at two years old or perhaps younger, so my mother was one of the original single mothers. But it never affected my brother or I in any way. My mother was a wonderful parent.

My mother had her parents, my grandparents, living in the Bronx. And they were Orthodox. And many Fridays from Brooklyn after school, we went on the subway with our mother to the Bronx and spend Shabbat with my grandparents and my mother's younger siblings, as she was the youngest-- excuse me-- she was the oldest of seven children.

And many of the younger ones were not yet married, and they were still in the home. So we had-- as the first and only grandchildren for some time, we were very well treated and loved and hugged by our grandparents and our aunts and uncles in the warmth of this wonderful extended family in the Bronx.

In Brooklyn, my brother and I were just regular kids. We played in the street, games like stickball or boxball. We played in the local schoolyard. We went to a public school in walking distance.

It was the '30s, because I was born in 1927. It was the height of the Depression, but we did not know we were poor because we ate, we had clothes, we had wonderful weekends with our grandparents, and everyone else in the neighborhood was in the same condition, more or less. So we didn't have any of the social negative effects of being a child during the Depression.

And when it came time to high school, I went to Brooklyn Technical High School, one of the three or four elite high schools in New York City, admission by competitive examination. And I liked being a student there. I had to travel to high school by subway, which cost a nickel then. And took a brown bag lunch prepared by my mom.

And she was working then as a clerk in Macy's department store. Rebecca, I'm going to stop now, because I don't know how much detail or how much time I should take. So you guide me.

Definitely. You were doing an excellent job. This is great. We want to establish some of your background and how-- what were your motivations for becoming involved in Aliyah Bet. But before we get to that, can you tell me a little bit about-- so you were in high school when the war broke out, yes? Can you tell me about what that was like for you? How aware were you and your family of what was going on in the European theater in general and with the Jewish community in particular?

Well, I was very aware of World War II, but I was not particularly concerned. The awareness came from in school. We had drives to collect metal, drives to collect newspapers. Everything-- bond drives by war bonds. So there was a lot of input from the school to be aware that our country was at war and to do what we can to help.

From my family's side, my mother had a number of first cousins living in Europe, and my grandparents had brothers and sisters living in Europe. And they were very concerned about their safety and ultimately about their survival.

Many did not survive, and this was a discussion and a worry and an area of great concern in our family. And even though I was 13, 14, and 15 at the time, I was aware of that and had a sympathetic reaction to the death and destruction that Jews, including relatives I had never met, were suffering in war-torn Europe.

Where was your-- do you know where your family lived in Europe?

[SIGH] My mother was born in Vilna.

OK.

Beyond that, I don't know very much, because my mother came to this country when she was about 12 years old. And what other areas in Europe beyond Vilna, I don't know.

OK. So your mother and your grandparents were immigrants to New York City from Vilna.

Yes.

OK.

As in many Jewish families at that time, my grandfather came first without his wife and three or four children that were born in Europe, and he worked and saved money to pay for their passage. And then when he was reunited with my grandmother, they had three or four more children in the United-- born in the United States.

All right. You were quite young, so I don't know if you would remember this, but do you know how your family knew about what was happening to their relatives in Europe? Was it letters or what they were reading in the newspaper?

I know that there was a lot of correspondence as long as correspondence was possible. And they wrote to each other in Yiddish. My mother wrote a beautiful Yiddish. I couldn't read it, but I could admire the handwriting. And there came a time when letters were returned or letters were not answered, and that was an indication that it was a terrible time for the European family.

Mm-hmm. You mentioned that you couldn't read Yiddish. Did you speak it at all? My mother and grandparents-- my mother in particular-- I'll have to separate them. My mother spoke Yiddish when she wanted what she was saying to be a secret from her children.

[LAUGHS]

My grandparents spoke Yiddish as their first natural language, and their English was with a very heavy accent. But they encouraged their children, the ones born in Europe and the ones born in the United States, to learn and study English. They wanted everyone to speak English, even they themselves, because they were brought up and didn't come to America until they were in their middle 20s. They wanted their family to speak English.

But the little Yiddish I heard and that I still know today was the Yiddish of love and instruction that children received from parents and grandparents like [SPEAKING YIDDISH]. And till today to a friend when we're leaving, I might say zay gezunt. You've heard my Yiddish.

[LAUGHS] Well, thank you for sharing. So your family was aware of what was going on because they were in touch-- or attempted to be in touch with their family back in Europe.

Yes. Rebecca, you have to talk louder or put your mouth closer to the mouthpiece of the phone.

OK. Can you hear me now?

That's better.

All right. So your family was in contact and then attempted to be in contact with their family in Europe, and this was at the beginning of the war. What happened through the rest of the war years with your family? And then what was your knowledge of the end of the war? How did that feel for your family?

Well, as I said before, letters first started being returned and then the letters were not answered. And that was the indication that something was wrong with the European family.

Mm-hmm.

At the end of the war, we were all happy the war was over. But I don't have any particular recollection about at the end of the war-- well, there was-- yes. There was one thing I had-- my mother's younger brother, my uncle, was a soldier in the United States Army, and he fought in Europe.

And as the war was ending, his parents, my grandparents, and others like my mother asked him to try to find information about family members, where they were, how they're doing, if we could help them in any way. So there was that effort by my uncle, an American soldier of World War II, trying to make family contact.

Mm-hmm. So in the-- as the war is ending, your family is trying to find out what happened to their family in Europe. Were they aware-- were they becoming aware of the mass killing and the concentration camps in Europe?

I'm sure they were.

OK. Do you remember reading about it in the paper or hearing your family talk about it?

I remember my family talking about it, but they usually didn't talk about it in front of children. But children often hear more than their adult family would like them to hear.

Right.

So yes, I did hear about it.

OK. I want to talk a little bit about your motivations-- how you became involved in Aliyah Bet, when this happened, what your motivations were.

When I graduated high school in January 1946, I entered by competitive examination the New York State Maritime Academy to study to be an officer in the Merchant Marine and to graduate with an ensign commission in the United States Navy. And I completed that education.

During the education, I would say maybe late 1946 or early 1947-- I can't remember exactly when-- a fellow cadet, a cadet who was a friend of mine because we both were from Brooklyn, we both went to Brooklyn Technical High School, he was of Italian extraction. His parents were immigrants. His father worked as a stonemason and a sidewalk maker.

And his name-- and he's still alive, and we're still in touch, although he lives in a nursing home now. His name is Angelo Mille. And Angelo was a very proud Italian. Loved his heritage, the music, the culture, the Renaissance. And even though he was born in the United States, he spoke Italian. Probably was the first language at home.

And we had a very short conversation as cadets. It went something like this. He said, hey, Marty, what are you going to do when you graduate? And I said, I'm going to work as an officer in the American Merchant Marine and make that big money.

[LAUGHS]

And he said, how can you think of that when the blood of your people are staining the sands of Palestine? And I looked at him like he was some sort of a nutcase. I'm not going to-- what's that got to do with me? I'm trained to be an officer. And officers got paid big salaries in the American Merchant Marine. We worked seven days a week, 16 hours a week of overtime. It was big money.

And that was the end of that. It probably stayed in my mind, but I didn't realize it at the time. About six months later-- so it was definitely during 1947-- there was a professor of physics at the New York State Maritime Academy whose name was Professor Degani. D-E-G-A-N-I. With a name like that, I thought he was Italian. I didn't pay attention to his first name. We never used first names.

But his first name was Meir, M-E-I-R. And I found out later that he was a Jewish Palestinian who came to work in the United States because he was an academic, and there were too many Jewish academics and not enough universities in Palestine or the emerging state of Israel to employ him, so he came to work in the United States.

He took me aside in a place where no one can hear us talk. It was on a bench in an open area where there were no other benches. And he did this with each Jewish cadet. And in my class, there were very few because it was a Maritime Academy, and most Jewish parents were sending their children for educations to be doctors, lawyers, accountants, businessmen, whatever. Not to be an officer in the Merchant Marine. So there were very few Jewish cadets.

And he said to me what he said to the other few Jewish cadets. There are Holocaust survivors now living in camps in Europe called displaced persons camps. There are groups of Jews from the Jewish community in Israel, the Yishuv-- he probably didn't use the word Yishuv then but I, of course, have learned it since.

And they're in the United States to buy ships, raise money to buy the ships, and to buy guns and ammunition, and to find crews to sail these ships from the United States to southern ports in Europe to take DPs, Displaced Persons, Holocaust survivors from these displaced person camps in southern Europe to the emerging state of Israel. And I want you to join this operation, to be part of this. We need you. Your people need you. That's how Dr. Degani spoke.

And I said, let me think it over. What I really meant was, I have to talk to my mother, because I was very close to my mother and I didn't want to do anything of that nature without her understanding, and hopefully with her permission.

So on my next leave at home with my mother, I told her about my conversation with Dr. Degani. And she said, don't go. You might get hurt. And I said, so who should go? Shlomo or Moishe, Yitzhak? Who should go? And she just blinked and hugged me and said, well, if you go, be careful.

So when I was back at the Academy, I saw Dr. Degani privately and I said, yes. I will do what I can to help. And that was my beginning of my association with Aliyah Bet.

While I was still a cadet on weekends in 1947 and had time off, I went to the ship that eventually I would sail on. In Hebrew, it was called Mala, but originally it was the SS Mayflower, a presidential yacht of American presidents, including Teddy Roosevelt, President Wilson. So it went back a long time.

And I learned later that it was built as a yacht or a luxury yacht for probably some great millionaire who eventually sold it to the American government. And it was built in about 1895 in some Scottish shipyard.

Anyway, in weekends in 1947, I went aboard the Mala in a Brooklyn shipyard and was part of the team who was fixing up the ship to make it seaworthy. An example of one of the jobs I did was re-bricking the firebox in the boilers. It's a little technical. It might be self-explanatory. But it was hard, hot work, and I was able to do it.

And sometimes on the way to the ship-- not every time, but sometimes-- or when I was leaving the Academy on Friday and I went home to sleep on Friday and didn't go to the shipyard till Saturday morning, on Friday I would stop at an office in downtown Manhattan that was a cover for the Haganah people in the United States who were doing the three operations I mentioned before.

And they would have a name to make them appear like a ship chandler. The ship chandler was in office to supply food, materials, tools, et cetera to ships that are in port. And I would be given a sea bag to take aboard with me to the Mala the next day and give it to the Israeli, the shaliyah, which is a word, of course, I learned later. Of course, there always was an Israeli on board to supervise what we were doing and where we were working.

The flag at that time flew-- the ship at that time flew a flag that was either from Honduras-- somewhere down in the Caribbean. I forget which country. And they had-- they told stories to the owners of the shipyard what the ship was doing there. You know, it pretended to be an ordinary ship being converted for cargo. Well, in reality it was being first to be made ship worthy and the second to carry displaced persons to the emerging state of Israel.

Can I ask you a quick question?

Yes.

So it sounds like you became aware of the situation through your friend and your professor. Were you not very politically active prior to that?

I was not politically active. But what I have to tell you is that in that sea bag were-- and it was closed. I never opened any of them. Never could-- what I was told later were guns and ammunition, which when given to the shaliah on board the Mala were hidden in places aboard the ship, not to be seen again until if ever the ship ever got to the emerging state of Israel.

Right.

OK. So that's--

Did you become-- were you-- were you aware of the politics behind-- you know, you're working on outfitting this boat, and you know that you're going to be-- it's going to be taking displaced persons to the emerging state of Israel. Were you aware of all of the politics at that time?

Politics is a very broad term, and I'll begin the answer by this way. I was aware of the American politics.

OK.

President Harry Truman made an embargo on all men and material to go to the emerging state of Israel, whether it was Palestine before May 15, '48 already Israel an embargo-- actually, the embargo was lifted after May 15. The embargo was about when the British mandate was still there. And the embargo was on Palestinians as well. Actually, they were Arabs. They weren't called Palestinians then. The Jews were the Palestinians, but that's a whole other story.

And I was told by Doctor Degani not to tell anybody, because we could be arrested and put on trial for breaking the embargo. So the only one who knew was my mother and brother, and they didn't tell anybody in the family. That's what I knew about-- or their friends. That's what I knew about American politics.

OK.

About European or British or Israeli politics, I knew nothing.

OK. All right. Sounds good.

Then in early 1948 when the ship left Brooklyn, I was on board as a third engineer. And most of the crew were Jews, but not all. The captain was a paid American Italian with good experience as a captain in the American Merchant Marine. His name was Captain Maltese. M-A-L-T-E-S-E, I think.

And it took us 31 days to cross from Brooklyn to the port of Marseilles. That's a very long time for an ocean voyage. We had breakdowns at sea. It was a difficult crossing.

We had on board a group of young, idealistic Zionists from Hashomer Hatzair, and they called themselves [NON-ENGLISH]. And they became the people who established kibbutz Sasa in the north of Israel. And that was the trip

across the Atlantic and into the port of Marseilles in France.

And then in Marseilles-- I forget how long we stayed. A week or two. But there were [NON-ENGLISH] there also from-- could have been close to May 15 by then.

Can you tell me a little bit about what the atmosphere on the boat was like during the crossing to Europe, and the relationships among the Jews from Palestine, the young Zionists, the Americans, the Jews and the non-Jews? How did that all work?

Well, I can tell you very little, because I worked shifts in the engine room. And when I was off duty, it was time to eat or sleep. And I personally had very little interaction with the other people on the ship except the men on my watch who worked for me, because I was the officer on watch, and my fellow engineering officers. I had very little contact. So I really can't say anything about interpersonal relationships on board the Mala.

All right. So-- I'm sorry. You were-- you had arrived in Marseilles, and then you were going someplace else.

Yeah. So then a shaliah from Israel employed a lot of French carpenters, and they built the bunks to be able to make the Mala capable of carrying about 1,400 survivors. And then after a couple of weeks-- I don't remember how long-- we sailed the ship from Marseilles to La Ciotat, a small town on the Mediterranean. Now it's a luxury riviera town, but at that time it was a shipyard working town. And there was a shipyard there, and we went there for further work and repairs on the Mala.

And it was in La Ciotat that the ship in one night was loaded with about 1,400 Holocaust survivors for the trip to Israel. And at that time-- it was after May 15 and the state has been declared. And we did not have to run a British blockade, but we could sail freely into the port of Haifa, which we did.

And on the dock in the port of Haifa, there were people from the-- the war was going on full force, the war of independence. There were soldiers from the Israeli army. There were people from the [NON-ENGLISH], the Jewish agency, kibbutzniks. And the survivors were very well received, and the young were-- the young men were recruited into the army right on the dock.

And other people went to kibbutzim and they were well received. And all of them passed through a big warehouse that was set up to spray for bugs and disease, because everyone was living in such close quarters and there was a lot of lice in the hair and clothing and skin of the survivors, and that was cleaned off in this warehouse before they went on buses to be taken to various locations in Israel.

Can we go back a minute, back to Europe when the refugees, the survivors are arriving at the boat? Do you know where they were from, what country they were living in displaced persons camps in?

I don't know.

OK. And you said that they were loaded onto the boat in a very short amount of time. Were you a part of that process? What was that process like?

I was not part of that process, but I witnessed the process. I took a couple of photographs of the process. The displaced persons camp had been within an hour or two drive time from the port of La Ciotat. So it was in the South of France.

And on the dock in the shipyard was a table with four or five people around the table. Around that table was the shaliah from Israel, the manager of the shipyard where the ship was, and the mayor of the town of La Ciotat.

And I understand-- but I didn't see it as such-- but I understand-- I was told at the time that money passed hands from the Israeli side to the French side to facilitate the loading of the ship with undocumented people, no passports, no visas, many with the numbers on their arms to get them on board the ship. And they had very little baggage, no luggage.

But there was a very interesting incident, and that was about baby carriages. The Israeli shaliah did not want to put the baby carriages on the ship, because they took up a lot of room. And the mothers said, without the baby carriages, we're not going. And so the mothers won, and the baby carriages-- a place was found to store them on deck.

Were the survivors a mixed group of people? Children, elderly, families?

Yes. Yes. Many children. Many elderly families. A cross-section of society, yes.

Mm-hmm. And once you have 1,400 people on this boat, what was it like? I imagine it was very crowded. But how did it feel to be on the boat at that time?

Well, I had my job in the engine room, and I spent many hours there, way beyond the standard hours because the equipment needed repairs and adjustments all the time. And the crew-- we had crew quarters. I think I was in a room with the three other engineers. And we had regular meals and access to a shower, and so I had very little contact with the refugees on board the ship. I did my work. I went to my room. I had my meals.

And I had-- and another factor was I did not have a common language with the refugees. The language with the refugees was mostly Yiddish, so I can't really comment on interpersonal association with refugees.

OK. Do you know anything about the administration of the boat? How-- where-- how the refugees were fed while on the boat, any of that?

Yes, I know a little. I believe there was flour on the boat to bake bread, and there were ingredients to make soup. And the soup was in big buckets, the kind of buckets that you use for mopping the floor.

And [NON-ENGLISH] would go into the holes where the refugees were. Many of the young ones were on deck and slept on deck, but the majority of the 1,400 were below deck. And they would go down there with these buckets of soup and ladle it out into the cups that each refugee had. And that was their food, soup and bread.

OK. How long was the journey from France to Palestine?

I don't remember exactly, but between seven and nine days.

OK. And can you tell me a little bit more about the arrival in Haifa? I guess, again, you said they were received well. So was there excitement or-- what was the atmosphere like?

Yes, there was excitement. In fact, from the day before when the refugees were told that you'll soon be inside of Palestine, many came up on deck in large numbers, and the deck was crowded with people along the railing, trying to get a glimpse of Israel. And so the excitement was already on the ship before we got there. And when we did get there, there was a lot of smiling and happiness and tears of joy, yes.

Mm-hmm. What date did you arrive-- do you remember? Because if Israel was declared a state on May 15--

I don't remember the date, but it was-- could have been in June, the summer of 1948.

OK. When you set sail from the United States, the state of Israel had not been declared yet. Were there preparations done by the crew on the boat to deal with running a British blockade?

A little louder. Was there what on the boat?

Did you-- did the crew prepare for having to run a British blockade? Were their practices and--

We were prepared to-- and this is-- we were prepared. We were prepared to run a Jewish blockade. This may not be the week we left, but I was on that ship weekends when I was still a cadet in late 1947. And then, of course, the blockade

was very strong.

The ship that we were told a lot about was Exodus 47, which had about 4,500 refugees on it, and was sent back to Germany. That made a lot of headlines around the world. And of course, we knew about it and were told about it to prepare for running a blockade. But fortunately, it was after May 15 and there was no blockade.

So you were quite young at this time, right? Late teen--

I was 19 when I started and 20 when I finished.

20 when you finished. Did you have a sense of the danger when you began this project, what sort of danger you would be taking on?

I didn't hear you completely, but I had no sense of danger. For me, it was-- for me, it was a job. I was a volunteer. I wasn't getting paid.

[LAUGHS]

But it was a job meaning something to do. And because of my training at the Maritime Academy, I knew how to do it.

Mm-hmm. All right. Great. Let's go back to your arrival-- the boat's arrival in Haifa. What happens to the DPs and what happens to the crew?

Well, as I said before, the DPs, the young men were recruited into the army right on the dock. There were representatives from kibbutzim who took people who wanted to go to live in the kibbutzim. And other people could have had friends or family. I really was not involved in how the refugees would begin their life in Israel. But the Israelis, [NON-ENGLISH], and others were very organized about how to do it.

And I personally had family in Haifa. I told you about my uncle before who in Israel was in Europe at the end of World War II and during World War II. He found some family members, and they had gone after World War II to Israel, and they lived in Haifa. And I contacted them. They were very glad to hear from an American relative. And they invited me to stay in their home, and I did. And I'll tell you their family name, Pergament.

Can you spell that?

P-E-R-G-A-M-E-N-T.

Thank you.

And I think Mr. Pergament was an official in the municipality of Haifa, but I'm not sure.

How were you able to communicate with this family?

They must have known some English.

OK.

Because I didn't know any Hebrew and I didn't know any Yiddish. They must have known some English. Yes, now I remember. Their children knew English.

OK.

Now I'll tell you a funny story about staying with the Pergaments in a high rise apartment, as I remember, in the Hadar. The Hadar was the middle level of Haifa. The Carmel at the top really hadn't been built up much then.



Anyway, it was wartime, and I'm exhausted from working on-- even though I was staying with them at night, I went back to the ship to work on the ship during the day, and it's nighttime, and alarms go off that there's an air raid. And they come to me where I'm sleeping and wake me up and say, we're all going down to the shelter down below. And I said, I'm staying right here. I'm not going anywhere, because I was just too tired to get up and walk down. So that's just a funny sideline of life in Israel during the war of independence.

Yeah, so how long were you in Israel?

I don't remember exactly, but maybe a month. And we were fixing up the ship to bring it back to La Ciotat and take a second load of 1,400 survivors, which we did later that summer. Or by then, perhaps it was September.

Mm-hmm. Was that a similar experience for you the second time?

Very similar. I mean, the crowding-- meaning it was just as crowded. But of course, I'm sure among the refugees, there was a different sense of-- the British had been out a few months already. Israel was an established state recognized by the United States, Russia, and other major countries. So that kind of attitude-- we among the crew had that kind of attitude. I'm sure the refugees had that attitude too, that it was a safer journey.

Mm-hmm. Do you know if on the second journey-- or I guess even the first-- if the state of Israel had been established, would they have required papers to get into Israel? Or were they still considered sort of illegal immigrants?

Nobody required papers.

OK.

Not in the first journey or the second journey. You only had to say you were a Jew.

OK. And so you did two trips? Is that-- were there more?

Only two trips. After that, I think the Mala was-- it may have served some small work in the Israeli maritime economy, but not for very long. I think it was soon junked after its two trips in 1948.

What did you do when the boat was junked?

Well, I wasn't there. When I left the Mala, I went back to the United States and did what I told Angelo Mille a few years-- two years before in 1947. I went to work on American merchant ships and earned a lot of money which I have brought home to my mother.

How did you get back to the United States?

[SIGH] I flew back.

OK.

I'll tell you why it took me so long to answer.

Mm-hmm.

When I went on board the Mala in Brooklyn, I did not have an American passport or any papers identifying me as anything. When I wanted to go back to the United States, I knew that wasn't good enough. So I went in Marseilles to the American Council and I told him that I'm a citizen of the United States. I don't have a passport, and I want to go home.

And he knew exactly what I was doing there. He told me I didn't have to tell him. And he said, you're lucky the embargo

was lifted. You're not going to be harassed in any way.

But I'm not giving you a passport. I'm giving you a letter. And the letter says in 30 days, you must go back to the United States. It's good for no travel anywhere else. Good luck. And that's how I came back to the United States, with a letter from the consulate in Marseilles.

How did you get from Palestine back to Marseilles? On a boat?

Yes.

OK.

I did that on the second trip, before we-- gee, you ask a very good question.

[LAUGHS]

I remember that discussion in Marseilles very clearly. Yes. I went as-- I went as a passenger from Israel on one of the Aliyah Bet ships, one of the other Aliyah Bet ships that was still operating. I went as a passenger back to the South of France.

OK. And once you got back to the United States, you joined the Merchant Marines and had a career. Did you continue to stay involved in Israeli-- interested in Israeli politics?

Well, I was interested in Israel as a country, as a place I felt connected with, and never the politics. I don't know what you mean by politics. You mean the Likud? You mean the Labor Party?

I mean, I guess I mean, did you stay involved in keeping interest in it, right? So follow it in the newspaper or--

Yes, I read the news about Israel. I maintained an interest in Israel to such an extent that in 1972, I became an *ole hadash* and moved to Israel with my wife and two children at the time.

Oh, wow. How long did you live there?

Four years.

And what did you do while in Israel?

[SPEAKING HEBREW], which means, would you like to continue in Hebrew?

[LAUGHTER]

I wish, but I can't.

OK.

[LAUGHS]

I told you we lived in Israel four years.

Yeah.

And I was an economic success in Israel. But I took my children when they were too late. They were too Americanized. And the three of them all wanted to go back. So to preserve the family in 1976, we came back to the United States.

All right.

Now I'll tell you something else, because it answers your earlier question about my interest in Israel. After living there for four years and working in marketing, in Israel in 1972 when I was there, it is not the Israel of today. Then they were weak in international marketing, and I had had a short career at International Telephone and Telegraph where my work was in international marketing, so I knew something about it. And therefore, I had good work at a high level when I was in Israel.

And when I came back to the United States, I continued for 30 years to be an American representative of Israeli manufacturers in the American market. So I went back and forth to Israel every year that I was working to talk to the factories I was representing. And so I stayed connected with Israel in a very-- in a career way and being there once a year for 30 years besides after living there four years.

Right. Did you maintain contact--

So I'll give you another sentence in Hebrew. [SPEAKING HEBREW], which means I have a lot of friends in Israel. And I'm going in about 10 days' time as a volunteer, which I've been doing the last 10 years. And I don't go to help Israel anymore. I go to see my friends, to have fun, to enjoy a visit to a country I know pretty well.

Mm-hmm. Did you also maintain contact with your mother's family in Israel?

No.

OK.

To my regret. I have other family in Israel that were [NON-ENGLISH] from the United States, and they're religious Jews. They live in Har Nof in Yerushalayim, which is very English-speaking neighborhood in Jerusalem. And when I visit, I usually see them for Shabbat.

All right. Good.

When I'm in Israel, I usually spend one Shabbat with them.

Can I ask you, does the name Mala mean anything, the name of the boat?

Yes, I think it means going up.

OK. Is there anything else about this experience that you feel we haven't touched on yet that you'd like to share?

No, your interview has been very good. But I want to-- now I have a couple of questions for you.

Sure.

What is the purpose of this interview? What are you going to do with all this information?

Let me wrap this up and then we'll have that conversation. Is that OK?

Yes.

All right. This is the end of our interview.