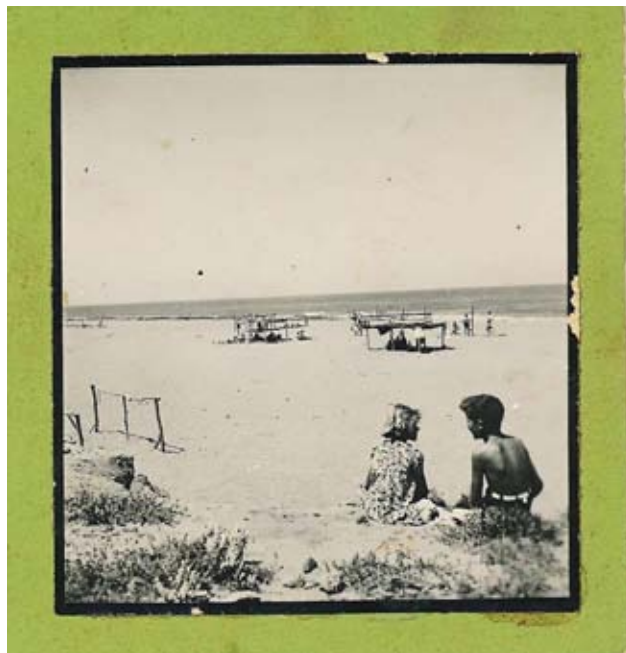


The Sea

From the Shavei Tzion Archives

Judith Temime March 2016

Even their occasional early visits to the Tower and Stockade camp raised here in 1938 taught the first settlers' children--while they were still boarding and studying in Kiryat Bialik--that the shore and the sea offered freedom and countless pleasures, utterly different from the persecutions of their last few years in Nazi Germany. **Elkana Fröhlich** was eleven years old when he arrived with his family in **Shavei Tzion** in January 1939. The memoirs he recorded as an adult preserve an eager child's excited impressions of an entire world of new sights and sounds in Palestine. But here in the moshav, wrote **Elkana**, "the sea, in the beginning, was the main thing..."



Shoshana Pressburger and **Reuven Alsberg** on the beach. **Shavei Tzion**, 1946.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**. (1435)

In his journal entry for the Sabbath, May 7, 1938, **Dr. Manfred Scheuer**, the British Mandate-appointed mukhtar of the little settlement, wrote: "*(after morning prayers)* we all went to swim *(in the sea)*, guarded by **Sally Lemberger** with his hunting rifle. The sea, because of the waves *(breaking against)* the rocky shore...makes swimming difficult for us all." He noted as well that Rassco, the Rural and Suburban Settlement Company, which oversaw the development of the village here, had set aside 100 dunams of shore (one dunam equals 1,000 square meters) on which to establish "a bathing beach". A breakwater would eventually facilitate swimming and successive improvements to that first breakwater would ultimately create a sandy beach to the south of the structure. In 1945, the artificial pool north of the breakwater that we call "The Little Sea", was engineered for the benefit of **Shavei Tzion's** small children by **Reuven Cohen**, a construction contractor, the owner of a weekend and vacation home here. The safety of his seven-year-old daughter **Dina** (later **Dina Ron**), and of all the children worried "**Mr. Cohen**" and so, with the consent of the local authorities, his workers blasted the boulders at the water's edge with dynamite and pneumatic drills, removed the shattered rock, and excavated a large, placid shallow basin.



Toddlers in "The Little Sea", **Shavei Tzion**, mid 20th century. Photo by **Fritz Schlesinger**.
From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

Of course, it's always best actually to know how to swim, but the first settlers' children, born in land-locked German villages and towns, would have had no experience of open-water swimming before they arrived in **Shavei Tzion**. In 1993, **Yehudit (Marx) Yardeni** wrote that, as a schoolgirl in the very early days of the settlement, she "learned to swim in a single day. We went to the sea and (*our teacher*) **Zev (Berlinger)** threw me over a wave...I had no choice but to swim back to the beach." Presumably, the newcomer children eventually all learned to swim, but in its minutes of June 1940, the moshav's Management Committee noted its thanks to 14-year-old **Naomi Fröhlich** who had saved young **Pinchas Erlanger** from drowning in the sea.

Years ago, the annual "Nahariya-Shavei Tzion Swim" was an athletic challenge in which swimmers made their way from Nahariya to the beach here (or, from here to there). Small boats accompanied the intrepid swimmers on their long course and additional observers, armed with binoculars and walky-talkies, were stationed overlooking the shore, along the dirt patrol road (now the Nahariya promenade).



Nahariya-Shavei Tzion Swim, October 1968. The old breakwater, **Shavei Tzion**.
From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

The very first "Palestine Coastal Swim" had been held as a competitive event in August 1941, with the attraction of "useful prizes" offered to the winners.

AQUATICS

PALESTINE COASTAL SWIM FROM SHAVEI ZION TO NAHARIAH

The Swimming Section of the Nahariah Sport Club is arranging for the first Palestine coastal Swimming Race which will be held on Saturday, August 30, the course being from Shavei Zion to Nahariah. The distance is approximately two miles, the start being from Shavei Zion Beach and the finish at the flag-staff on Nahariah Beach.

Some 20 swimmers have already entered for the contest, most of them from Nahariah and the adjacent villages, while a number of well-known swimmers from Haifa are expected to take part.

The competition will start at 9.15 sharp on Saturday morning and the first swimmers are expected to arrive in Nahariah between 11 o'clock and noon. A number of useful prizes have been donated, and will be distributed to the winners at the Lido Cafe in Nahariah.

The last stage of the competition will certainly be the most interesting and a hard fight is expected shortly before the finish.

Entries should be sent to the Swimming Department, Nahariah, or to the Haifa office of *The Palestine Post*.

From *The Palestine Post*, August 26, 1941.

The first "Shavei Tzion Swim" held entirely within our local waters, took place in September 1999 with the participation of 46 swimmers. But in the years of the old Nahariya-Shavei Tzion Swim, there was interest from around the country and **Chava Berkowitz** tells us: "One Friday evening, we encountered a soldier walking through the moshav. We were curious to know who he was and he, in turn, was glad to see us. He asked where he could find the meeting place (*for swimmers*) and we explained to him that (*the evening before the event*) there was no central meeting place. After a little chat ...we suggested that he sleep at our home. It took a bit of convincing, but eventually **Eitan** agreed. The following morning, Shabbat, we drove him to Nahariya and later we waited for him on the breakwater here in **Shavei Tzion**. Every year, for years, **Eitan** (*whose home was then and remains today Moshv Ein Vered*) happily returned to do the 'Swim'. We've stayed in touch all these years and that young soldier is now a grandfather."

The sea has functioned, as well, as a conduit for immigrants and goods. In his memoirs, **Amos Fröhlich** writes: "During 12 years (*as part of the "Aliyah Bet" clandestine immigration by sea, between 1934 and 1948*), ships bringing illegal immigrants to the shores of Western Galilee were able to evade and thwart the British patrols at sea. They were old ships, not very large as a rule, on which the refugees were terribly crowded, and on which provisions for food and shelter were inadequate. The ships had been purchased or drafted by the (*pre-state*) institutions (*in the Yishuv, the Jewish settlement*) and the crew and the sailors who accompanied them were all, or in part, (*Jewish Palestinians*). The ships that reached the Western Galilee were the 'Aliyah', the 'Hannah Szenes' and the 'United Nations'. Once the ships had neared the coast, residents of all the settlements in the area gathered to help the immigrants reach the shore and to quickly disperse them among the settlements and hide them (*there*). No one, neither the newly-arrived nor those who welcomed them, carried identity papers, so that, should the English appear in order to apprehend the immigrants, they could all (*claim*) to be Jews of the Land of Israel."



"The United Nations". This Aliyah Bet ship ran the British blockade and offloaded 537 immigrants on the Nahariya beach on January 1, 1948. Note the persons clambering down the ship's anchor chain, persons swimming to the beach and three boats loaded with immigrants making their way to the shore. From the collection of **Andreas Meyer**. Courtesy of Beit Lieberman, the Museum of the History of Nahariya.

Amos' cousin **Jacob Fröhlich** was one of **Shavei Tzion's** young people who helped the immigrants aboard "The United Nations" reach the Nahariya shore early on the morning of the new year, 1948 . "The immigrants," remembered **Jacob**, "worn out by the hardships of their journey, carrying their few possessions, jumped into the boats or (*they leapt*) directly into the shallow water and walked onto the beach. There, they fell on their knees and kissed the ground of the homeland".

And **Amos** quotes from the memoirs of his elder brother **Elkana**--by the time he composed his memoirs, **Elkana** had long since taken the last name **Ron**--about the arrival of 182 such immigrants who had sailed from France. "I was at home on Saturday evening one weekend," wrote **Elkana**, "when we were called to the center (*of the moshav*) and

we set off on foot for Kibbutz Evron. We didn't know what for. (*Today*), in the middle of the kibbutz, next to the 'Bermad Factory', there are still traces of a pit that had been a sandstone quarry. In that pit (*on that Saturday evening*), there were hundreds or, perhaps, even more people from the district. There was a bonfire in the middle, and next to it one of the officers...announced that a ship of illegal immigrants would reach the Nahariya coast that night. I introduced myself as a member of the 'Palyam' (*the Palmach's naval company*), and I was ordered to join the sailors. We arrived at the coast to take command of one of the 'HaPoel' boats (*and there*) we found a group of Palyamnikim.

There was a long wait until 4 o'clock in the morning (*November 15, 1947*), in the freezing cold and without appropriate clothing. Suddenly--it was an absolutely still winter evening and the sea was calm--we heard an anchor chain dropping, sounding like thunder. We ran to the boat assigned to me and into the sea! We reached the ship and parcels were lowered to us, (*or rather*) people wrapped in coats and holding genuine parcels. From the ship to the beach and over again. The boat filled with water. We were all thoroughly soaked. At the shore, people stood in the water to receive the boat and to escort or drag (*the immigrants*) onto the beach. We turned the boat around and headed out again. It was really a mad dance! But it went wonderfully well. The security detail, the group charged with making 'the human material disappear', was responsible for removing the immigrants from the beach and hiding them in the (*Jewish*) settlements (*of the vicinity*). When the sun rose, the mad dance ended. I remember the dawn on the silent beach. I stayed on to help take the boats out of the water and I finally made my way home on foot. The English didn't come--(*the operation*) was a complete success. Nu, of course, the ship, the 'Aliyah', was abandoned."

The same people, enamored of the sea, who founded the "Nahariya-Shavei Tzion Swim", organized public dances and popular sports of different kinds in the town as well. And, in the 1940s, the water sports division of "HaPoel" attracted young people to its activities and, together with the Nahariya "flotilla", ("HaYamiya", founded in 1943 by **Mendel Fuerst**), it trained youth to help in the disembarkation of illegal immigrants. From a 1994

interview with **Fuerst** and **Shimon Bober** in the local weekly *Naharton* newspaper, we learn that "residents (*of Nahariya*)...acted to distract (*the attention of the British*) and the boldest of those actions was when (**Max**) **Feibelman**, the owner of a café in the center of town, got the British soldiers drunk and thus prevented them from interfering with the disembarkation." **Shavei Zion**'s youth, too, as we've read, helped the immigrants reach shore. Once they were ashore, the newcomers were scattered among the nearest settlements and some of them were secretly brought to **Shavei Zion**. Veteran residents here tell us that, as children, they were more than once roused from their beds at night and put to sleep on the floor, so that immigrants could take their places and thus "disappear", at least for one night, among the local population. The immigrants' knapsacks were hidden in groves of trees in the moshav and in the trenches that ran between the guard posts.

"After the disembarkation of immigrants from the ship 'Hannah Szenes' ", continues the interview in *Naharton*, "the ship was (*later*) used to provide a sea link from Nahariya to Haifa during the time that Nahariya was cut off from the rest of the country." When the Arabs blockaded the whole of Western Galilee between March 17 and May 14, 1948, provisions, equipment and visitors reached **Shavei Zion**, too, only by sea.

"The Nahariya Company" had early on bought a boat for "research and fishing" for the little neighboring colony and, in **Shavei Zion** as well, it was hoped that open-water fishing--eine Fischerei--could become an important moshav enterprise though none of the early settlers were experienced fishermen. A wooden rowboat of some six meters in length was purchased here for 300 Palestine pounds in fall 1940: that is, 50 pounds more than the cost of building a house for a family of four persons in the moshav in 1939. **Elkana Ron**'s memoirs tell us, "...the boat and fishing gear were bought because someone in the Jewish Agency wanted to make us into a village of fishermen. So, they sent **Abbas**, an old fisherman from Acre, to teach us at the beginning...(Then) **Old Abbas** was replaced by his son **Ibrahim**. Fishing was a joint enterprise with Kibbutz Evron. Their representative was **Mendel (Feurst)**. (*Our own*) first fishermen were **Jacob (Fröhlich)**, **Elhanan**

Schweitzer, Lothar Stern, and me (*Elkana* was then 13), an amateur who tagged along. We went out (*on the water*) very often at night (*and*) a fantastic new world opened up, a world of only men. That's the way we learned how the Arabs fished using dynamite, and we dived with them to collect the bounty." We read in the minutes of the moshav's Management Committee for a date in June 1941 that "because of the war with Syria, on the sea and in the skies, the fishing branch will be minimized." And yet, in spite of that decision, only weeks later, in July, the Committee was already weighing the possibility "...of renewing fishing activities in the near future, possibly by **Lothar Stern** if he's not drafted to the British army."



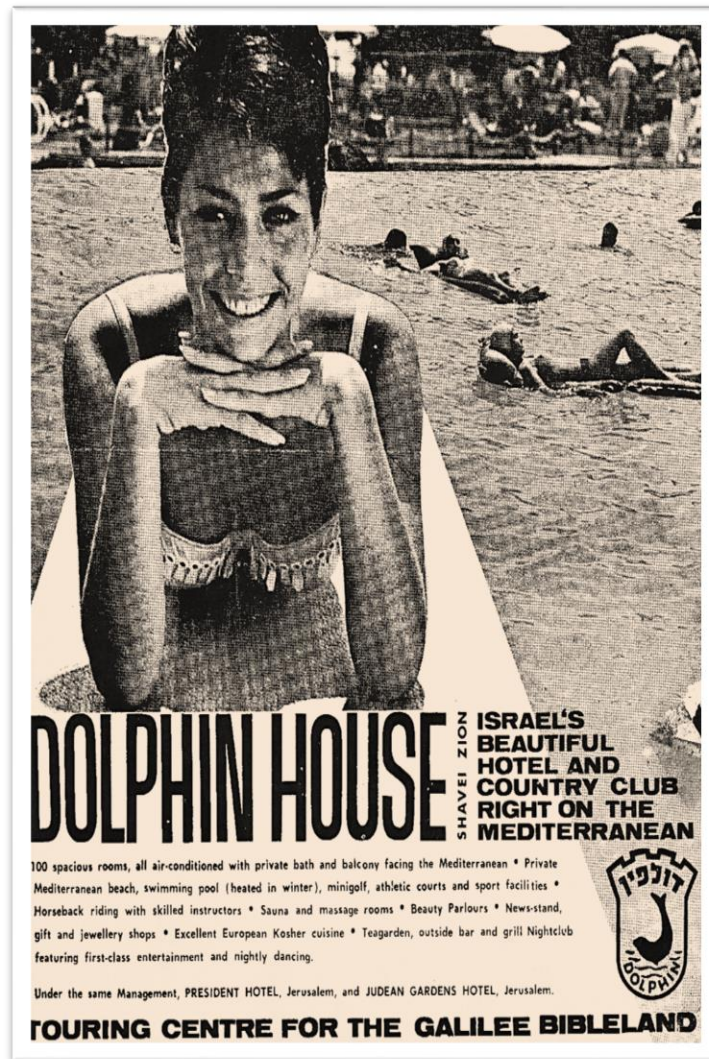
Hauling the moshav's fishing boat to the water for the first time. **Shavei Tzion**, 1941.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**. (20 'κ)

Though **Shavei Tzion** has never possessed a boat dedicated to "research", even today divers may discover sunken treasure in our waters. Finds registered to the "Underwater Site at **Shavei Tzion**" examined, catalogued and held by the Marine Archaeology Division of the Israel Antiquities Authority include "remains of cargo vessels, anchors, and pottery

vessels from the Neolithic, Late Bronze and Iron Ages, and the Persian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine epochs".

Another sort of relic altogether, now an abandoned ruin, "Dolphin House"--the second incarnation of a small hotel of the same name in that location--was once a pearl on the **Shavei Tzion** shore and was considered one of the finest luxury hotels in the country.



Advertisement for the Dolphin House Country Club, mid-20th century.
From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

In 1958, the monthly magazine of the "Hadassah" organization in the United States named the top eleven deluxe hotels in Israel, counting the "Dolphin House Country Club" among them, along with the "King David" in Jerusalem. This revamped Dolphin House in "Shavei-Zion on sea", offered its guests fancy, modern rooms and facilities, as envisioned by its dynamic owner, the South African **Norman Lurie**. The schedule of activities at the resort--"Where sun, sea and fashion meet"--was full and varied, with daily water games, swimming, miniature golf and spear fishing.



The "Haifa Underwater Fishing Club" setting up camp near the Dolphin. **Shavei Tzion**, mid-20th century. The club organized the spear fishing competitions for the annual "Dolphiniad" festival.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**. (1399)

Evenings at the Dolphin were gay and sophisticated, with live music and dancing at the edge of the swimming pool. The hotel was a favorite of **President Zalman Shazar** who vacationed there every year, and it was frequented, too, by foreign diplomats and personalities from the entertainment industry abroad. Among the "famous people" (in

Shavei Tzion parlance) who stayed at the Dolphin, our veteran residents remember **Danny Kaye, Kirk Douglas, Yul Brynner, Sophia Loren, Paul Newman** and **Peter Finch**. There's even a photo of **Eddie Fisher** good-naturedly taking part in a hora, though he confessed to not knowing the dance. **Norman Lurie** had connections in the cinema world and when a foreign film was being made in Acre or the vicinity, it was understood that the actors would stay at the Dolphin.

As a means of interesting domestic tourists in a vacation here, the hotel posted advertisements in the Hebrew, English and German newspapers, and the weekly "Dolphin Journal" was published every year in *HaAretz* and *The Jerusalem Post* months before the summer season opened. The ads announced a "Festival of Music, Dance and Sport" that would include activities from "sunrise to sunset," among them an underwater fishing competition and "a dancing competition to the music of Jossy and his Dolphin Rhythm Band". The festival would climax in the crowning of the "Queen of the Dolphiniad" in a much talked-about beauty contest. In summer 1959, print ads placed by Arkia suggested that tourists "fly to the Western Galilee" and the airline promoted "comfortable and fast flights" at "popular prices" from Tel Aviv to several destinations: Nahariya, Hanita, Acre, and **Shavei Tzion**. There were a number of hotels and guest houses here at that time but, in Arkia's ad, only the Dolphin was mentioned explicitly.

From June 1944, the "rest home" or "vacation camp" in **Shavei Tzion** owned and operated by "the Sick Fund of the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel", offered a homely brand of activities to guests: mass calisthenics on the beach every morning and folk dancing on the lawns. Workers on holiday here were placed on a strict regimen meant to help them convalesce after an illness or surgery, or recover the strength they had expended working over the year. An article published in *Davar* on June 6, 1945, under the rubric "Problems of Human Economy", noted the expansion of the rest home here and improvements at other Sick Fund rest homes around the country. The article observed that an annual vacation of a week or ten days would help reduce sick days taken during the work year and would allow workers to feel refreshed when they returned to

their jobs. Economic and national goals, wrote the journalist "**Ephraim**", would demonstrate the clear value of developing options for recuperation "in order to maintain the human (*worker*), the foundation of the national economy".

Members of the Sick Fund on a rest cure in **Shavei Tzion** had earlier been lodged in private homes here but, in 1944, the Fund opened a free standing "camp" with space for 35 persons in its six guest rooms. Accommodations were reckoned by the number of beds: husbands and wives would attend Sick Fund camps separately, according to their needs and their rights, and "recuperating persons" shared rooms with five or six strangers. But the **Shavei Tzion** Rest Home itself, reported *Davar* on July 24, 1944, was very attractive and was appropriate to the village setting. The rooms were "shaded" and "charmingly furnished", said the article, and the Sick Fund had donated periodicals and 130 Hebrew books to the library there. In 1945, the Sick Fund would purchase four dunams of land and the buildings that had belonged to the modest "Rona House" whose bar and restaurant had been particularly popular with the British military.

According to an original pre-state schedule of activities held in our archives, the **Shavei Tzion** Rest Home dictated rising in the morning at 7 and making one's own bed. Breakfast followed, at 7:30. Guests were not allowed to leave the premises without explicit permission and the summer season's daily walk to and from the beach--mere meters from their lodgings--was itself an organized activity, accompanied and supervised by the sports instructor (for years, the same **Mendel Feurst** who had founded the "Yamiya" sailing club in Nahariya and who had been a member of the fishing crew in **Shavei Tzion**). Mornings, guests went to the beach for swimming and games at 8:45 and returned at 10:45. The day included a "light meal" at 11 and lunch at 12:30. From 1:45 to 3:30, guests were expected to rest in their beds. There were games after another light meal at 4 o'clock, with dinner at 7 p.m. and a last light meal at 8:45. At 10:30, a bell was rung to remind guests to prepare for bed and at 10:45 it was "lights out" in the entire rest home compound.



Guests from the rest home doing morning calisthenics on the beach. **Shavei Zion**, 1951.
Photo by **Zoltan Kluger**, courtesy of the Pinhas Lavon Institute for Labour Movement Research.

Measured physical activity and the six daily meals would certainly have contributed to the health of guests, but the printed (and presumably posted) schedule explained that even the mandated discipline at the rest home was meant to have a beneficial "influence on the physical condition and morale of recuperating persons and to speed their recovery. Cleanliness, quiet and order help one to recuperate. Do not," advised the notice, "speak overmuch about illnesses!"

As early as 1941, the original 12-room Dolphin House, managed by **Rose Fish-Pulvermacher** and **Lotte Eisenberg** before it was bought and reimagined by **Norman Lurie**, advertised the merits of a vacation here. "**Shave-Zion...**" read the brochure, "*(is)* situated right on the sea-shore, away from the noise of the great arterial road...*(where)* there is always a refreshing breeze blowing from the sea". The "great arterial road", the Haifa-Beirut road, was indeed about a kilometer's distance from the bare sands surrounding the first little Dolphin.

Proximity to the water--both to the long untouched shore and to the broad bathing beach which has been consistently improved over the years--has always figured in the promotion of tourism in the village. The moshav's own Beit Hava hotel and the other guest facilities advertised this asset, as did the moshav's early children's sleep-away summer camp which had so much appeal for urban parents in the 1940s and '50s.



Summer camp promotional brochure: "Relaxation and Recuperation by the Sea".
Shavei Tzion, mid 20th century. From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**. (10041)

Later, youngsters who lived here, in the framework of **Shavei Tzion's** legendary sailing club, learned not only the art of sailing but also the collateral virtues of patience, exactitude, thoroughness and perseverance in performing tasks, co-operation and adherence to goals, and team loyalty. In the 1960s and 70s, the sailing club taught youngsters skills that would certainly help make some of them capable sailors in the military, but the first purposes of the club were recreation and competitive achievement.

Boys and girls in the club sailed for pleasure and they participated as well, with notable success, in national and world competitions.

Avi Klapfer and **Erez Vardi** were two of the outstanding competitive sailors of that period representing HaPoel **Shavei Tzion**. **Avi** and his partner **Shimshon Brockman**, from Haifa, won local and regional competitions sailing the 420 class dinghy and, in 1970, they became the Israeli national youth champions. The pair took part in the world competition in Travemünde, Germany in 1971 and, in 1972, 17 year-old **Avi** went to the Munich Summer Olympic Games as a member of the Israeli youth contingent. After the massacre in Munich of eleven Israeli athletes and officials by the Palestinian Black September group, the entire Israeli contingent returned home in the same airplane that carried the coffins of their murdered compatriots.

Avi eventually served as a lieutenant in the Israeli Navy, captaining a "Dabur" class patrol boat and teaching the handling of rubber boats. Both he and **Erez Vardi** have taken the sea as their inspiration and made it their livelihood: **Avi** is a highly-regarded underwater photographer and videographer and he co-owns and operates a charter dive company based in Costa Rica, served by three yachts and a tiny, deep-diving submersible; **Erez** operates a sailing school in Acre, training adults to qualify for their skipper's licenses, teaching workshops for youth and conducting charter cruises to foreign destinations.



The Sailing Club. **Shavei Tzion** beachfront, 1969.
From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**. (1039)

The seamanship learned in our local waters has often made service in the Israeli Navy a natural choice for draftees from **Shavei Tzion** and numbers of our young people have distinguished themselves as sailors and officers. Among those were **Elkana Ron** and **Yitzhak Ofer** who immigrated to Palestine as young boys in 1938 and grew up in **Shavei Tzion**, learning here to know and love the sea. **Elkana** and **Yitzhak** would become two of the very first Israeli naval commandos, early "frogmen" of the elite Shayetet 13 (Flotilla 13) unit founded in 1949.

Besides the recreational opportunities the seafront naturally affords residents and visitors, the shore here also marks the mouth of the Beit HaEmek Creek (Wadi Majnuna, in Arabic), and the point at which fresh and saltwater meet. That meeting point and the surrounding wild vegetation create an abundant environment for resident and migratory birds, soft-shelled turtles and smaller and larger mammals, including mongooses and jackals. As well, the juncture of the sea and the "Beth ha-Emeq river," we read in **Moshe**

Prausnitz' authoritative 1967 book *Excavations at Shavei Zion*, "form(s) a natural anchorage which in Arabic is called El-Mina (the port)...Nea Come, the new village, was apparently a fishing village the foundation of which was still remembered as new in Roman times." **Prausnitz** discusses the evidence and concludes that Nea Come, the ancient fishing village with its natural harbor, "should be located at Shavei Zion".

Living along the sea is a privilege that has always been valued by the residents of **Shavei Tzion**, even in those early days when swimmers were accompanied by an armed guard, and before successive engineering projects did much to reconfigure the rocky shore and mitigate the waves. The sea is, after all, elemental to **Shavei Tzion's** sense of itself as "place". **Elkana Ron** said it simply: "...the sea", he wrote, "more than anything..."



The original breakwater and, at left, an anchored and tethered raft.

Shavei Tzion seafront, mid-20th century.

Photo by **Fritz Schlesinger**. Photo source: the Central Zionist Archives.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**. (603)