



Reverend John Stanley Grauel

Whatever your faith or beliefs, you cannot help but be deeply moved by John Grauel's story of his dramatic life, a Christian minister who became a founding father of Israel, a pacifist who fought in what he came to feel was a more noble cause.

● David Schoenbaum, author broadcaster



Reverend John Stanley Grauel was a Methodist Minister who served as a secret Haganah operative on the famed Jewish Holocaust Refugee ship, *Exodus '47*.¹ Later in his life, when his health and finances were particularly bad, he wrote his autobiography in which he explains how he became involved with the Haganah.

“Perhaps it was my discontent that made me notice the activists of others, but when I returned to Philadelphia, I began to be aware of the stream of young men going in and out of the next office. I have always exercised more than my share of curiosity, nurtured through the years by the fact that people hesitate to punch a clergyman in the nose. I went into the office and asked the man there, who introduced himself as Bucky Karmatz,

*what business he was in. He said he was interviewing counselors for camp. “If those tough looking guys were counselors, I’d like to meet the campers,” was my response. Bucky invited me for lunch, which I this case meant sandwiches at his desk, and we talked. I found he had been informed about my work next door, even if I had not been told about his. He was running a recruiting office for the Haganah here in the States.*²

...Talking to Bucky, I knew I had found my niche. I would join the Haganah, the underground,

*to become a part of that organization to rescue those who could be helped to leave Europe.*³

¹ John_the_Priest

http://www.palyam.org/Hahapala/Teur_haflagot/

² Grauel, by Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House Press, New Jersey, 1982 pg. 39.

³ Grauel pg. 44

...I discovered that with discretion, I could continue to function as executive director of the American-Christian Palestine Committee in public, while in private, I was moving around and meeting people on Zionist Business as discreetly as possible. I was helping raise funds to buy the guns, bullets, and ships needed for the creation of a new state. Bucky called me in one day and told me they had rounded up a great liner called the President Garfield. This was the ship that Haganah would take to Europe to pick up refugees for Palestine. With the understanding that every step of this operation from loading of the refugees to the landing in Palestine would be opposed by the British and would have to be accomplished with as much secrecy as possible.

I made my decision to join the crew. It would be a matter of some months before I would discover the ship was not the Garfield but the Warfield, a ship named after the owner of the Baltimore Bay Line and the uncle of Wallace Warfield Simpson, wife of the Duke of Windsor.”

World renowned journalist, Ruth Gruber, renamed the *Exodus*, *The Ship that Launched a Nation*. Author Leon Uris and filmmaker Otto Preminger popularized the heroic story of the *Exodus*' crew and refugees to the world in novel and movie forms, both named *Exodus*.

Bucky Karmatz did not randomly call in Reverend Grauel for an exciting opportunity to sail on the



President Warfield. Grauel's work as the public face of the American-Christian Palestine Committee and his secret double life as a fund raising agent and Christian voice of the Haganah was very important.

The Haganah had a special need for him. It was vital that he, a Christian and a minister, be on the *Exodus*.

Grauel continued in his autobiography.

"It was the Mosad's intention to mount a huge illegal immigration operation that would draw the attention of the international media and influence the members of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

(UNSCOP), who would then be visiting Palestine on a fact-finding mission."

"UNSCOP had refused to meet with refugees in the camps in Europe. The structure and membership of the committee was already unsympathetically packed against the Jews. Their fact finding trip to Palestine would bring back a crucial recommendation that would weigh heavily on the upcoming Partition Resolution that would determine the fate of Palestine and the Jews."

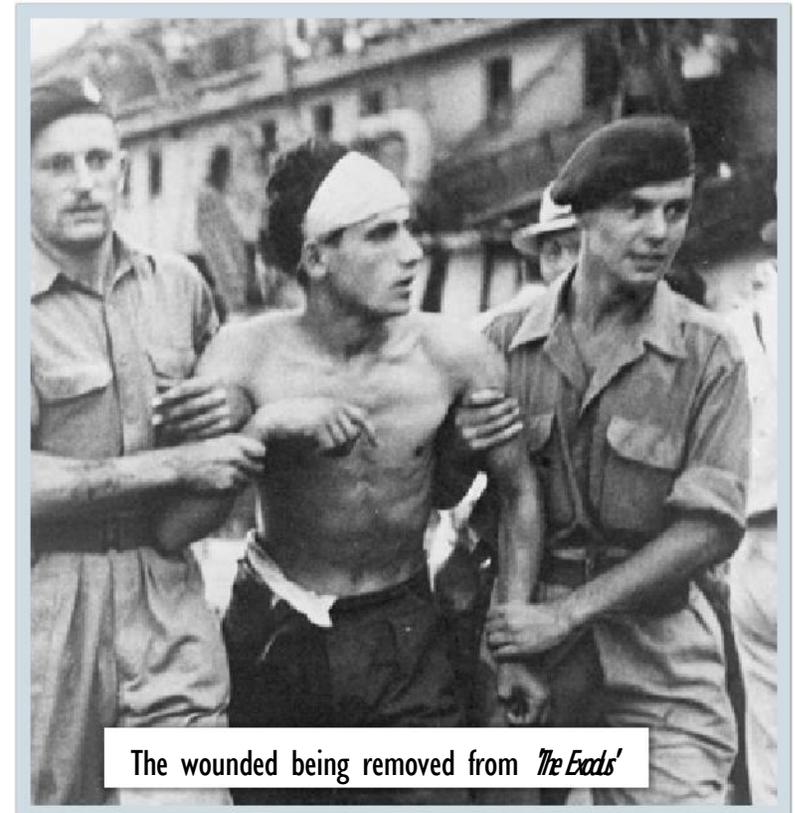
The *Exodus* was refitted in Baltimore, Maryland by the Aliyah Bet, the illegal Jewish refugee immigration effort of the Haganah. She sailed from Port Du Bouc in France for Palestine after picking up over 4,500 Holocaust survivors. The ship was designed to hold 600. The refugees were unwanted by everyone except by their fellow Jews in Palestine. They had nowhere to go.

The mission of the *Exodus*, and her purpose, were well known to the British. A clandestine operation by British Secret Intelligence to sink, sabotage or simply disable the *Exodus* while she lay in harbor was never carried out for unknown reasons.⁴ From the moment she left port with her anxious, eager, and desperate human cargo, the British shadowed the unarmed old Chesapeake Bay steamer, proudly renamed the *Exodus*, with a battle fleet of three destroyers and the light

4 The Jewish Chronicle, Sept. 24, 2010, pg. 3

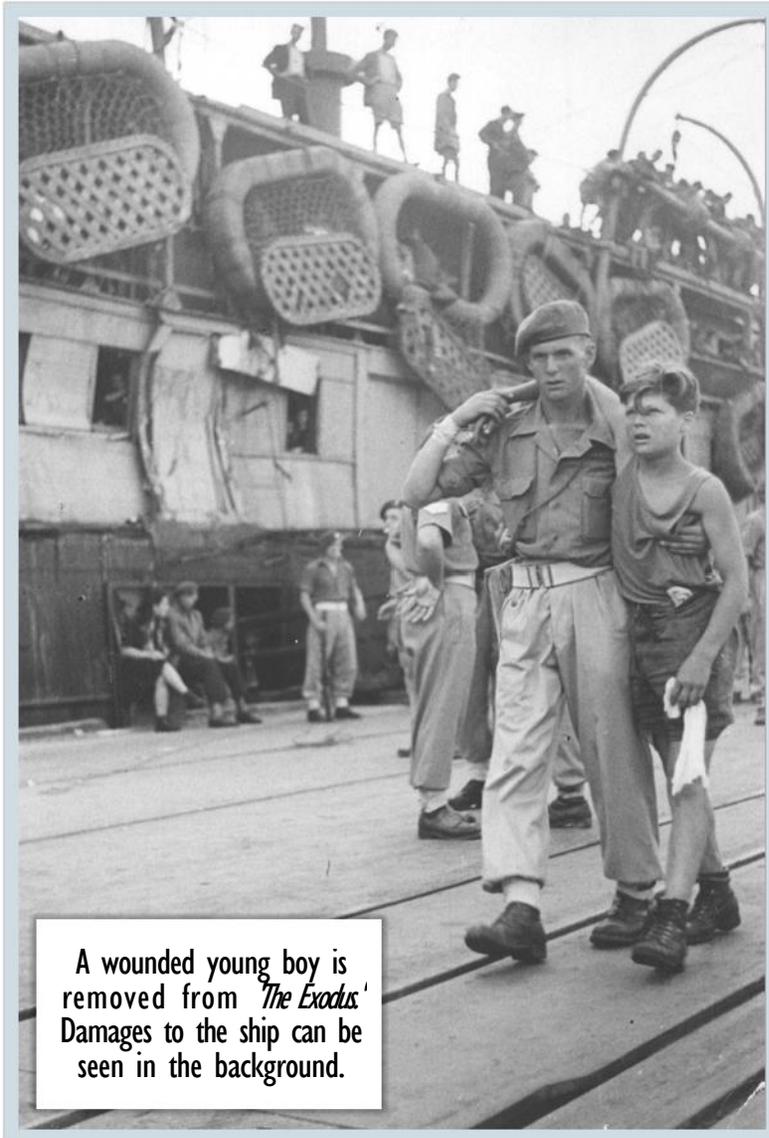
Cruiser *Ajax* and air surveillance. During the war, the *Ajax* helped sink the German Battleship the *Graf Spree*, The British were intent on stopping the *Exodus*. Appeasing the Arabs the British were not going to permit more refugee Jews into Palestine.

The *Exodus*' crew and the planners were very aware of the British blockade. They were equally determined to bring the Holocaust survivors to Palestine for the whole world to see. They knew that the British did not want to the world to see what they were doing.



The wounded being removed from *The Exodus*

The Aliyah Bet organizers knew that every Jew would be arrested, detained, interred or even jailed by the British. They knew from past experience that the British would say the Jews trying to tell their story



A wounded young boy is removed from *'The Exodus'*. Damages to the ship can be seen in the background.

were liars and untrustworthy. The Jews needed someone on board who could not be arrested. They needed someone who would be believed because they were not Jewish. They needed a Christian eye witness. They needed Rev. John Grauel.

The *Exodus* was stopped in international waters off of the coast of the Sinai by the British shadowing fleet. She was repeatedly rammed by two destroyers. The *Exodus* was violently boarded by British, battle hardened, soldiers with clubs swinging and guns firing at the defenseless Jewish refugees and crew. Yossi Harel, the Haganah commander of the *Exodus*, realized the British were willing to sink the ship. They were willing to drown 4,500 refugees, if the *Exodus* did not surrender.

The *Exodus* surrendered. But not before she broadcast to the world what was happening by radio. The *Exodus* limped into Haifa harbor. The refugees stood on the deck of the badly damaged ship and sang the Hatikvah as the land drew into sight. British prison ships awaited them. The refugees were cruelly returned to Germany and reinterred in Displaced Persons camps under British military guards. Behind barbed wire once again, Nazi guards were replaced by British soldiers.

The arrival of the *Exodus* was known. The first radio broadcast of the attack on the ship was carried to the world by Reverend Grauel with his American accent.

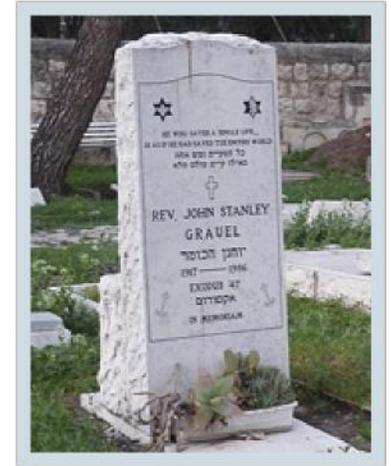
Grauel was detained in Haifa by British military police. His cover as a journalist for the Churchman Magazine held. A vital Haganah operation led by Teddy Kolleck, the later Mayor of Jerusalem, smuggled Grauel to Jerusalem. The British panicked. They put out a country wide search for Grauel. He had the story of how the British had brutally attacked defenseless refugees trying to reach Palestine. Grauel had to be captured. Rev. Grauel had to be stopped.

In Jerusalem the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine was wrapping up their investigations. They would be preparing their recommendations to the United Nations shortly if Palestine should be partitioned into two states, one Jewish one Arab, or not. UNSCOP had refused to hear testimony from the Jewish refugees in the DP Camps or from the illegal refugees trying to run the British blockade to Palestine. The vote of the committee was definitely not favorable for the creation of Israel.

In a harrowing ride of road block running, Kolleck smuggled Grauel to Jerusalem.

"I was taken immediately to Kadimah House to the apartment of the Ambassador from Guatemala, Jorge Garcia-Granados. I was introduced as a Haganah volunteer from the Exodus and while I sat down to catch my breath, Sr. Garcia-Granados called Dr. Victor Hoo, assistant Secre-

*tary General of the United Nations who was also in Kadimah House, and an appointment was made for me to tell my story the next morning.... I told the Guatemalan Ambassador about the voyage rather briefly I had been without sleep for sixty hours."*⁵



UNSCOP Ambassador Jorge Garcia-Granados described that first meeting with Grauel in his book, *The Birth of Israel, the Drama as I saw it*.

"I was at home when the doorbell rang. Two American journalists stood at the entrance, accompanied by a stranger, tall and blond, in his thirties, with blue eyes, who appeared to be tense and anxious, wearing clothes that were obviously borrowed from someone else since they were not his size: "I would like to introduce the Reverend John Grauel of Worcester, Massachusetts", said one of the journalists as he propelled the pastor inside and closed the door behind him. "He was a volunteer on the Exodus", continued the journalist, "and we have rushed him here from Haifa - the British have been trying to jail him". We

⁵ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 Pgs. 97

would like you to hear his account before he places himself under the protection of the American Consulate."⁶

"The next morning, after Grauel had managed to sleep awhile, "I kept my appointment to meet with the U.N. Committee members in Dr. Sandstrom's quarters in the presence of Dr. Hoo, Dr. Ralph Bunche, Dr. Garcia Robles, all members of the U.N. Secretariat, and Committee members Ivan Rand, Canada, Enrique Rodriguez Fabregat, Uruguay, and Nicolas Blom, Netherlands. They questioned me close about my contention that we were not in territorial waters at the time the British attacked, and I assured them that I had the ship's log to verify my statement. I gave them a full account of the battle emphasizing the fact that there was not a single weapon aboard our ship."⁷

"I made one closing statement, 'I have watched these people. I know what they are. And I tell you, the Jews in the European Displaced Persons camps
insist on coming

6 <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/moriya/CARMEL/Theillegalimmigration.html>

7 Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 97
Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House,

Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 97

8 Ibid. pg. 97

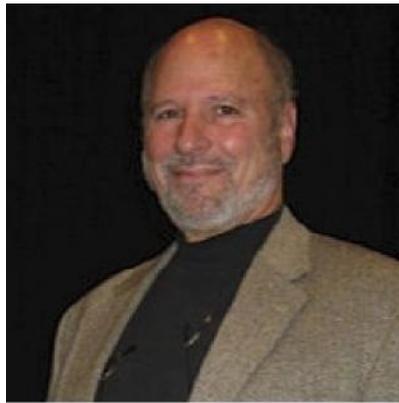
to Palestine, they will come to Palestine, and nothing short of open warfare and complete destruction will halt them.' **There was great gratification for me in knowing that my eyewitness report was now a matter of record. Inherent in the nature of the relationship between Christians and Jews was the fact that because I was a Christian, in this situation my testimony would be given greater credence than that of a Jewish crew member.'**⁸

Golda Meir, a later Prime Minister of Israel, observed that Reverend Grauel's testimony and advocacy for the creation of the Jewish State fundamentally and positively changed the United Nations to support the creation of Israel. Without a Christian minister to offer eyewitness testimony, Israel may never have come into existence.

Reverend John Grauel did what no Jew could do.

*Learn to do good, seek justice, vindicate the victim,
render justice to the orphan, take up the grievance of the widow.*

-- ISAIAH (1:17)



About the Author: Jerry Klinger

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Jerry Klinger is President and founder of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation. The Society has completed projects in 25 states and in four countries.

He was born in Washington, D C and is the son of Holocaust survivors. Jerry was Yeshivah educated and as a young man served in the Israeli army.

As an Associate member of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, in coordination with Chairman Warren Miller, built the Jewish Memorial at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. President Obama visited the site in 2009.

Jerry periodically writes for the Jerusalem Post Christian Edition. He is the author of over seventy

articles on American Jewish History and Christian Zionist history. Jerry speaks on Christian Zionism and other topics at Churches, schools and Synagogue communities around the U.S.

He is founder of *To Save A Life*, a charity focused on helping small Israeli and American charities. He is a past President of his Synagogue.

Jerry has a BA, and MA degrees from the University of Maryland. He did Doctoral work at the University of Maryland as well. He recently retired as a senior vice president with Merrill Lynch/ Bank of America. Jerry is married to the former Judith Rice. They have three sons, five grandchildren and a small Cockatzu dog named *Norman*.

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