

# Ours Again!

50 years later, iconic photo still evokes elation of Six-Day War win.



DAVID RUBINGER

*Editor's Note: This story first appeared on the Israel Defense Forces blog on May 20, 2012, during the 45th anniversary of the Six-Day War.*

**I**t was the picture seen around the world. In June 1967, David Rubinger, a press photographer in Israel, followed Israel Defense Forces soldiers who were fighting to liberate the Old City of Jerusalem. At the Western Wall, three soldiers posed for a photograph. They were Tzion Karasenti, Yitzhak Yifat and Chaim Oshri.

While their names are not famous, their faces have become symbols of the reunification of Jerusalem.

To mark the 45th anniversary of that day — the 28th of Iyar on the Hebrew calendar — we found the three men from the

photograph and asked them to share a few memories from the special day.

Zion Karasenti is 69 years old. He fought in the Battle of Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem. Today he lives in Afula and is a director and choreographer.

"I had finally been mobilized, and almost all of the reservists in my unit were already in combat," Karasenti said. "I remember my mother's fear — and her tears. I knew our country had no choice, and I had to do my duty to defend it."

On Ammunition Hill, the soldiers come under fire from Jordanian forces.

"There was a passage covered with barbed wire," Karasenti recalled. "I jumped on it and helped others to cross. I felt no pain. We went into the trenches. They were not very deep, but they were quite narrow. When someone was hurt, we had to lift his body over our heads. The Jordanian army fought hard to the last man."

Karasenti, then 24 years old, was the first paratrooper to reach the Western Wall. He did not immediately recognize where he was standing.

"I saw an Israeli soldier in the area — I had no idea where she came from. I asked her, 'Where am I?' She said, 'This is the Western Wall.' Then, before disappearing, she gave me a postcard and told me to write to my parents. I thought I had dreamed it. But years later, I met this woman. She was a soldier in the IDF Postal Corps."

Yitzhak Yifat, 69, is a gynecologist and obstetrician. In 1967, he was 24 years old and living in Tel Aviv.

"I had a toothache when we arrived in Jerusalem," he said. "I fought while my mouth was still numb from local anesthesia. There was hand-to-hand combat in the trenches on Ammunition Hill. My best friend was hit in the back, and a Jordanian was about to shoot him again. I shot first."

Yifat lost many friends in that battle. Their names are now etched in stone at the memorial at the site.

Not long after the Battle of Ammunition Hill ended, Yifat prepared to enter the Old City. "The entry into the Old City was chaotic," he said. "We entered through a small gate

and wended our way to the Western Wall. I was very moved by what we accomplished that day. I am not religious, but I realized how important it was for Jews worldwide."

Born in Yemen in 1944, Chaim Oshri immigrated to Israel in 1949 and completed his military service in 1965. He was called up for reserve duty in the days leading up to the Six-Day War.

"The battle for Ammunition Hill was the worst time of war," he said. "As a religious Jew, it was very special for me to participate in the battle for the liberation of Jerusalem. We pray three times a day while facing Jerusalem. I could not imagine how magical it would be to see the Western Wall for the first time. That was my dream!"

In front of the wall, a press photographer, David Rubinger, approached the three soldiers and pointed his lens at them.

"He told us to look up and was lying on the ground to take the photo," Oshri said. "It's just incredibly lucky for us to have been present at this historic moment and to appear in this photograph. It is a great honor." 🍀

**ABOVE:** This iconic photo by press photographer David Rubinger captured the elation of regaining the Western Wall.



ANDREW TOBIN

The soldiers in Rubinger's photos: Tzion Karasenti, Yitzhak Yifat and Chaim Oshri on the Tel Aviv University campus in Ramat Aviv on May 7.