

Sheindlia Krishtal With Her Friends



Students of the Kazakh University were sent to work at the collective farm in Dzherkent. All local men were on fronts and, of their own accord, students helped collect the harvest during the summer. From left to right: Bronia Raizman, Eva Braverman and I, Sheindlia Krishtal. Signed on the backside: "Cook, brigadier and political leader. Dzherkent, Summer 1943". Amateur photo.

In 1939 I finished school and decided to enter the philology faculty in Kiev University. When I was a 2nd year student we were trained to be medical nurses. The war was in the air. We didn't believe that Hitler could attack the Soviet Union. Newspapers and radio programs were convincing us that this could not happen.

When the war began on 22 June 1941 students went to excavate trenches in the vicinity of Kiev. Soon evacuation was announced at the plant where my brother worked. My father, Fira, Faina and I evacuated with Samuel's family to Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan [about 4 thousand km from Kiev]. Our trip lasted for about two months. We went on a freight train that was continuously bombed on the way. We went through Kuibyshev where Riva and her 6-months old daughter had to stop. Lilia got ill from exhaustion and had to stay in hospital for 6 months. Faina stayed in Kuibyshev with Riva to look after Lilia and Samuel, my father and Fira went to Alma-Ata.

Lecturers from Moscow and Leningrad Universities were also in evacuation and taught at my University. There was a very high level of teaching at the University. There were students from all corners of the Soviet Union in our hostel: Rumania, Ukraine and Russia. We were young and didn't focus on hardships - we were not starving and that was all right. We made soup with flour and water that we called zatirukha. We had meals at the canteen. I took an active part in public activities. I always went to Komsomol meetings and was a political officer in our troops that were sent to do agricultural work.

I studied and worked at the radio committee in Alma-Ata and wrote about the situation at the front. I wrote about Polish, Russian, Jewish and Ukrainian soldiers. In 1944 I finished university in Alma-Ata and continued my work at the radio committee until re-evacuation was announced in 1945. How happy we were to come back home. There were fireworks on Victory Day of 9 May 1945 - people came out into the streets congratulating each other on victory, crying and laughing. We - my father and I, Fira, Faina, Riva, Lilia and Samuel with his family - returned to Kiev.