

Maria Koblik-Zeltser With Her Class



This is me, Maria Koblik-Zeltser, with my class in the town of Kant, Kyrgyzstan, on the day of finishing the 10th grade in spring 1944. I am the fourth to the right in the top row. My friend Iza Kramarova is the fourth to the left in the top row, and another friend of mine, Manya Kalmanovich, is next to her.

Two weeks after the Great Patriotic War began, my brother Abram, who worked as chairman of the municipal council, told us to get evacuated immediately. Brother gave us a big cart and saw us off. It was 6th July.

We left our home for uncertainty. We got to the district center in a cart, and then we went to Stalingrad oblast by train. When Stalingrad was being attacked, we moved farther. The chairman of the kolkhoz gave us the best bulls to be harnessed in our cart. We went to Ushakhino, Saratov oblast, and gave the bulls to the local kolkhoz. We still keep that certificate. In Ushakhino we took the train. It took us a couple of weeks to cross the entire Kazakhstan and reach Kyrgyzstan. For a couple of months we lived in Belovodskoye. Father found a job as a guard. My mother and I knitted kerchiefs and blouses and sold them. It was good for us to take a lot of things from home. Now we were able to exchange them for food. I was sent to Frunze to attend the courses of agricultural storekeepers. We were taught how to sort out, grade and pile vegetables. Upon my return I was a forewoman of the vegetable storekeepers.

Then my parents started insisting on my studies. We went to the town of Kant, not far from Bishkek, and rented a room there. Father found a job as a guard at some warehouse. Mother knitted, though it was hard for her, because her eyesight got much worse. I went to school. There were mostly other evacuees in my class. Before I was admitted to the school I had to pass a test. I passed it and was enrolled in the tenth grade. Even though I was two months late, soon I managed to catch up with the rest of the class. I was exceptionally good at sciences: Mathematics and Physics. The physics teacher treated me very well and convinced a Russian teacher to have additional classes with me. Of course, she taught me free-of-charge, because we couldn't afford to pay her. Thanks to that Russian teacher, I was able to finish the tenth grade with honors. There were a lot of Jews in our class and we were friends. My best friends were Iza Kramarova and Manya

Kalmanovich. They also were excellent students. Unfortunately, we didn't keep in touch after finishing school. I don't know what happened to them afterwards.