

Raisa Roitman And Her Friends



The picture was taken on 17th May 1944 in Tashkent. Here I am with my fellow students of Tashkent Medical Institute. From left to right: the girl from Kiev (I don't remember her name), Ida Rapoport, currently living in Israel, then me, Raisa Roitman, and Leya Shapiro from Dnepropetrovsk.

During the war, I worked as a loader at the cotton oil factory. Before I left the factory I was allowed to soak my clothes in cotton oil. I put as many clothes as possible and soaked them in oil very well. The members of my extended family were waiting for me by the entrance. There was a considerable lack of fats in our diet, so they had to suck cotton oil from my clothes. I was standing there and crying. Almost all the factory workers were taking the cotton oil the way I did, and there were other people close to us, who were saturating in oil like my relatives. Mother used to cry a lot because I worked very hard. I tried to leave some oil for my little brother. Motle took the hunger really hard. He died in 1943.

In spite of working hard, I finished school with honors in 1943. Father sent me some money. He insisted on my continuing my studies. I went to the town of Osh, located at the border of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Rostov University was evacuated there. I submitted my documents and was enrolled without taking any exams, because I was an excellent student. I entered the Chemical Agents Department. I settled in the hostel. A new stage in my life began. I became a student. I had studied at Rostov University only for two months. In late October there was a terrible explosion in the laboratory of our university and a couple of our students died, many students were evacuated with severe scalds. I didn't tell my mother about it, but Mother had a hunch that something had happened. Mother came to Osh, and having found out that I had remained alive by a miracle, insisted on my leaving the institute. I always listened to my mother and left Osh, in spite of liking my studies and having friends there.

I was transferred to the Tashkent Medical Institute, where I studied until 1944. I have never regretted that, because I understood that medicine was my calling. There, in Tashkent I made friends with Jewish girls from Moldova, with whom I lived in the hostel. Gradually our life was getting better. I received an increased stipend and was paid for knitting, so I had the opportunity to send some money to my mother.