

Sasha Goldberg



This is Sasha Goldberg, my sister Hana Gehtmann's fiancé, photographed while in the army in 1941. He is wearing a uniform from the time of the Great Patriotic War in this picture. In spring 1936 I received a telegram from Kiev. My sister had tuberculosis and was in hospital. I went to Kiev immediately. My sister got treatment in hospital and in a recreation center in Kiev. Then she came back to study in college. Each year in summer she got a free trip to the tuberculosis recreation

center in the Crimea. She got better and began to see her fellow student Sasha Goldberg, a Jew. They planned to get married after finishing college, but life had its own rules. On 22nd June 1941 the Great Patriotic War began. We didn't know anything about the war in Europe and it came as a complete surprise to us. My sister defended her diploma a few days after the war began and got a mandatory job assignment to Kryukov-on-the-Dnieper, a small town near Kremenchug [250 km from Kiev]. There was a railcar repair plant there. I quit my job because I decided to go with my sister. Her fiancé Sasha was sent to the military plant in Cheliabinsk, a distant town in Russia. Before he left he took us to his mother, who lived in Artyoma Street. She helped us to get on a boat sailing down the Dnieper to Kremenchug and from there we had to get to the town where the plant was located. The boat was overcrowded. People were evacuating to Dnepropetrovsk and from there farther East. Hana worked at the gas pipeline construction for about a month and a half. Her condition got much worse. She coughed spitting blood. The chief engineer took my sister to a hospital in Kuibyshev. She stayed there through the fall and part of the winter until February 1942. I visited her, but just occasionally because I worked every single day. In February Hana asked me to take her home. A doctor, an elderly Jewish woman, told me that Hana would die within a month and a half. I took her to our room. Her condition was getting worse. A month later Hana, who was confined to bed, asked me to take her back to hospital. She probably didn't want me to see her dying. She was taken to another hospital, not far from us. My sister couldn't walk and was carried on a stretcher. Hana died at night, on 14th April 1942. Some workers made a coffin and I and a few men got on a truck to go and bury my sister. We didn't bury her in the cemetery because the road to the cemetery was impassable. There were a few graves of people that had died on their way into evacuation near a forest. I buried my darling sister Hana, my closest and dearest one, near the forest. I answered letters from her fiancé Sasha pretending I was her. I couldn't force myself to tell him the truth. When I finally told him that my sister had died, he wrote back a long letter asking me to send him her photographs. I did. I met Sasha by chance around 1960. He told me that he had been at the front and was wounded. He got married after the war. I never saw him again after that.