

Evgenia Shapiro's Father Jacob Shapiro



My father Jacob Shapiro in Romania during his service in the Soviet army. The photo was taken in 1945. Until July 1943 my father was a military commissar of the radio unit of the Far East front, and later he became head of this unit. He was the only Jewish head of the communications unit in the Red Army. My father had organizational skills and was a professional. In 1942 the Eastern front headquarters transferred my father to the position of a commander of the communications battalion in Saratov. My mother and I followed him, but children weren't allowed to be with their parents during the war. I remember hiding in a bag. Other children were also transported in bags. When the train was inspected by the conductor's crew its passengers pretended they were having

a snack on 'sacks full of potatoes'. I believe the head of the crew knew that there were children in those sacks, but he never made any comments in this regard. In 1944 my father went to the front. We stayed in Saratov. My mother was a typist in a military unit. We lived in a small room in a barrack with two beds, a table and a couple of chairs. We didn't have any personal belongings - it was all army property. My mother received food packages, and I don't remember any lack of food. In 1944, when Kharkov was liberated, my father got an assignment to form a military unit in Kharkov. My mother and I followed him to Kharkov. I went to school there, but I don't remember anything about it because we only stayed there for a few months. At the end of 1944 my father got an assignment in Kiev for half a year, and from there he was sent to be commander of the battalion in Ploeshty, Romania. My most vivid memory from our short stay in Kiev is the march of German captives along the streets of Kiev. They were dirty and shabby, these people. They could hardly walk and supported one another. A street-cleaning vehicle followed them, washing the streets. In 1947 my father returned from Romania and got a job in Kharkov. My mother and I followed him to Kharkov. We lived in a small room at the military unit and later got a room at the Red Warrior hotel. After a year and a half my father received a three-bedroom apartment.