

Aron Rudiak With His Mother Ruchlia Rudiak And Sister Frieda Rudiak



This photograph was taken in Odessa in February 1945 when I came on leave from the army. I, my mother Ruchlia Rudiak and my sister Frieda Rudiak are in this photograph. Frieda signed the photo on the backside: 'How wonderful we felt then, didn't we, brother?'

In May 1941 I was awarded a second prize at the Odessa regional Olympiad in mathematic. I was supposed to receive my award in late June, but I never received it since the Great Patriotic War began. On 29 August early morning we packed our belongings and went to the harbor. On 4 September we boarded a freight train for cattle transportation heading to the east. We arrived at Kustanai in Northern Kazakhstan, 2000 km from home.

We were accommodated in a school building. Few days later chairmen of Kazakh kolkhozes came to select groups of people. Frieda had finished school with honors before the war. She entered the State Teachers' College in Kustanai. I was admitted to the third year of Teachers' School, but it was closed a month later and senior students including me were transferred to the college where Frieda studied. We had wonderful lecturers who were professors from Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad universities. My mother and sister rented an apartment and lodged a girl that studied in college. I went to live in a hostel. I passed my first exams with only excellent marks. I also worked in 'Trudovik' shop. We made gloves and foot wraps for the front and received food products for our work. I studied there during 1942. In late December recruitment of young men, born in 1925, was announced. Being a disciplined young man I went to the recruitment office, although I didn't get any summons. When they measured my height it turned out to be 149.5 cm while they only recruited men of at least 150 cm tall. An officer making measurements wrote 150 cm in my certificate. When somebody mentioned to him that second-year students were subject to delay of recruitment he waved his hand and said 'He will finish his studies after he returns from the front'.

We moved 700 km to the east from Tyumen where we were assigned to 2nd Aviation School of Tyumen. We were taken to a station from where we walked 25 km to Krivosyolki, [about 3000 km to the north-east from Kiev] village. We were to take a 6-month training studying battles, attacks, defense from tanks, etc. In 1944 I became a member of the Communist Party. There were no special ceremonies, it became a routinely procedure, but I believed it to be my duty to be in the first rows of fighters for the victory over fascism. I received my Party membership card at a meeting few months later.

I requested to send me to the front several times because I was a patriot. One day my commanding officer told me that I was to go back to my studies in college according to another order issued to confirm that students were to get a delay from service in the army. He asked me 'Well, will you go back to college now or after the war?' and I responded bravely 'We need to beat fascists first'. After our training was over my commanding officer tried to convince me to stay at school. He said I was needed there and I agreed to stay and work in the regiment office.

My mother and sister returned to Odessa after it was liberated in 1944. In summer 1945 I came to Odessa on leave. I grew up 20 cm in half a year. My mother didn't recognize me thinking that it was one of her nephews coming home. There was a lot of laughter, joy and tears when she finally acknowledged her son.

I demobilized after the decree issued on 25 October 1945 for wounded veterans, specialists, teachers and 2nd-year and senior students were subject to demobilization. I arrived in early October and submitted my documents to Odessa Construction Engineering College. Rector of the College was telling me to take a year's leave to have rest, but I was eager to go back to studies. I was admitted and a month later I passed my half-yearly exams successfully. I had only the highest grades.