

Boris Bashmet With His Comrade



My father Boris Bashmet (on the left) with his fellow comrade before they were sent to the front. This photo was taken in Odessa in summer 1941.

I remember well the day of 22nd June 1941. In the morning we heard the roar of planes and heard the firing. We ran outside. We were terribly scared. The thing is, there was a raid on Odessa on the first day of the war and then there was a month of quiet. My father was called to the military office; he was subject to recruitment.

My father was a private in anti-tank troops. He was in captivity, and he was wounded and had to stay in hospital. Near Stalingrad he was sent to a village riding a horse. There he was captured by Germans and they intended to shoot him. A Russian reported on him saying: 'But he is a Jew,' and Germans were going to kill him, but my father managed to escape. My father hid on a stove and the Germans were too busy to look for him.

When the village was liberated, my father was sent to a punitive company being a former prisoner-of-war. At that time prisoners-of-war were treated as traitors. He was wounded by a mine and taken to a hospital. There were splinters from this mine in his legs for a long time, and he also lost few fingers. When he was discharged from this hospital in 1944, he came to us in Alma-Ata. He arrived walking on crutches. He decided to learn to ride a bicycle and it took him a long time. We had to help him on and off the bicycle since he could hardly move at first.

By this time Uncle Aizik, his family and Grandmother Feiga moved in with us. My father and his younger brother obtained a license for making candy. They rented a facility, purchased sugar and boiled candy using some interesting technology. They boiled sugar, added color agents, poured this mass into pans and cut it. Then they cooled, dried, sugar powdered and sold them. They also made ice cream for sale. My uncle had a stand at the market. They also bought gauze, colored it and made curtains. They also painted cards. My father was very handy.