

Faina Melamed



This is me Faina Melamed. This photo was taken in Samarkand in 1945. I had a new suit made and bought a matching hat.

During the war there were many people in evacuation in Samarkand. Some worked as teachers in schools. Somehow I thought that teachers who were there in evacuation were better specialists than local teachers. Director of our school Mark Zavulonovich, a Buchara Jew, was a very cultured and intelligent man, but a strict director. Our teachers were kind and we took advantage of their kindness. During classes we used to escape from school through windows (our classroom was on the ground floor) and go to swim in the lake. Teachers often invited my mother to come to see them to discuss my conduct. Afterward I tried to be quiet for few days, but then I continued in my usual manner. We were all friends in my class. We often went to the cinema and played many games. I had many friends of various nationalities. My close friend Nadia was Russian. Her father worked at the mill and they lived there. They often gave me flat cookies that her mother made. Nadia and her family supported us during the war.

I remember 9 May 1945 [Victory Day] very well. The radio announced that the war was over. People hugged in the streets and we hopped and screamed. Our housekeeping manager kept telling people that it would be good to hang a red flag. Where would one find a flag? I had a cherry dress that I cut apart and hanged it as a flag. It looked different, but people didn't mind. They were crying and rejoicing. Of course, we were in the rear and didn't go through all horrors of the war, but we saw people in evacuation dying of cold and hunger, even though we were trying to support and help them as much as we could.

After finishing school in 1946 I entered an advanced three-year course at the Medical School. After finishing it I began to work in an infectious hospital. Once I went to a kishlak on business trip. There were many severely ill patients in this village. I got scared that I might fail to help them and I ran

away. I was afraid of going back to hospital to pick my documents and I was hiding away. Later my sister Esfir and I went there to pick my belongings but still I didn't pick my documents. I never went back to work. I was young and stupid. Once I bumped into chief doctor of our hospital. He said 'It's only because I respect your sister I shall not sue you'. This was the end of my medical career and my only practice was looking after my mother.

In 1954 I and my mother sold everything we could and moved from Samarcand to Odessa. Later my brother Boris came to Odessa. He had many friends and acquaintances and one of them, helped me to obtain a permanent residential permit in Odessa. My brother's friends also helped me to get a job of secretary at food storage.