

## Tsylia Aguf's Daughter Victoria Zaretskaya



My daughter Victoria Aguf during our evacuation in Kustanay, Kazakhstan, in 1944. The photo was taken to send it to her father who was at the front. In June 1941 I went to work as a pioneer leader at a pioneer camp in Vorzel, a small town near Kiev. I was there when the Great Patriotic War began on 22nd June 1941. I went back to Kiev. My husband-to-be insisted that I evacuated with him and his parents. My husband's father was a party official and got train tickets for the whole family. He joined the Territorial Army to defend Kiev. It was a comfortable train. It didn't stop or wasn't kept longer than necessary at stations, and we reached Kustanay in Northern Kazakhstan [2,500 km from Kiev] very soon. Kustanay was a small town populated with Kazakh people. There were no Jewish families in the town. Mark and I got married there. We had a civil ceremony and obtained our marriage certificate at a registry office. The day after we got married he went to the military registry office to ask them to cancel his release from the service in the army that he had as a 5th

year student of a higher educational institution. Within a week's time he went to the front. I was pregnant. I was very upset because I thought that it was untimely to have a baby. I carried heavy loads to terminate my pregnancy, but it didn't work. I gave birth to a strong healthy girl in Kustanay in 1942. I named her Victoria. We didn't raise Victoria and her brother Boris [born in 1956] Jewish. Firstly because we weren't religious and secondly because religion was persecuted by the Soviet authorities. Our children studied in Russian schools. However, they always identified themselves as Jews. They knew about the tragedy of Babi Yar. We learnt about it right after we returned to Kiev from evacuation. Our daughter, Victoria, finished a secondary school in 1968 and tried to enter the Kiev Polytechnical Institute. She passed her entrance exams but wasn't admitted. We realized that her Jewish nationality was the reason for their refusal to admit her. Victoria got a job at the Arsenal plant [a big military plant in Kiev that specialized in the production of optical devices]. After working at the plant for several years, she entered the Moscow Aviation Institute, where she studied by correspondence. She graduated as an optical tools specialist. She began to work at the design office of the same plant. She got married in 1974 and a year later her son Michael was born, so she dropped the idea of moving to Israel. Victoria married a Jew named Zaretskiy, but she divorced him in 1976.