

Haya Lea Kats In The Camp In The Town Of Tavda



This snapshot was made in the camp in the town of Tavda.

It is East Ural Lag. In the photo I am wearing the coat in which I was arrested. That was a coat made in the Rovno factory; reglan coats were fashionable then. It was flared at the bottom and I wore it for a long time.

Later I re-made that coat and presented it to another prisoner from Vilnius. It was a beautiful coat. I had sparse but long hair, so I braided them.

I had been to 11 different prison camps, and after 4 years of wanderings I was announced the verdict: 10 years of imprisonment and 5 more years in exile. I was standing there, not understanding, and whispering: "10 years, 10 years...".

A security girl gave me a photo: "Here, Kats, take it for memory!". And I keep the photo to this day. After the verdict I got to the camp called East Ural Lag, in the city of Tavda.

It was a mixed camp for men and women. In the beginning I was sent to general works, and in a couple of days, having understood that I could sew, they charged me with tailoring.

In that camp I met the Victory Day on May 9, 1945. The chief of camp collected all of us and announced the Victory. But nothing had changed for us.

In 1951, when 3 months remained before discharge, I was sent to a strict regime camp in Mordovia, because there was an order by Stalin to put all the "political" prisoners to strict regime camps. After we reached Krasnoyarsk, we sailed on a barge up the Yenisei River to the settlement of Maklakovo [nowadays - the town of Lesosibirsk].

It was a big settlement with an extensive forestry. There I established a workshop producing light dress and became known around the settlement. My life in the exile began.

I organized the shop, and had no shortage of work or workers, or money. I rented a room, bought a sewing machine, and started to live a normal life.