

Boris Dorfman With His Crew



This is a picture of me (fifth on the left) and my construction crew next to the house that we built. We received additional food coupons as a bonus for the construction of this house. The photo was taken in Kiselyovsk in 1944. I had finished three years of college when the war began on 22nd June 1941. Since I studied at the Construction Faculty I was summoned to the military registry office where they ordered me to take a construction group to the border to reinforce the borderline. This happened on 29th or 30th June 1941. We came to the border of Moldova and Romania in the vicinity of the Prut River. We didn't have any spades and there was a lot of mess and confusion around. There were about 500 construction workers in the area. We lived in barracks and had meals in canteens. We stayed on the border of Bessarabia for about a month. We were almost forgotten until Germans began to advance into the area where we were working. Then an order to retreat was given, but nobody knew where we were to go. There were about 50 of us left. We headed to Tiraspol from where we were sent to Odessa. From there we retreated with military troops and reached Rostov, which was about 1,000 kilometers from home. From there we were sent to Stalingrad where we were accommodated in a stadium. We sometimes got to places by freight trains and sometimes by trucks. We suffered from lack of food. Everything was a mess. On the way from Odessa to Stalingrad we had to do whatever kind of work to get some food. We got into air raids and many perished. I survived. We were mobilized to construction units. We were called 'Westerners' [residents of the areas occupied by Soviet troops in 1939-1940] and weren't sent to the front for fear of betrayal. From Stalingrad we were sent to Saratov. We were divided into groups of 5. My group was sent to harvest in a kolkhoz. In late autumn 1941 we were sent to Siberia where we were to work in the coal industry. I came to Kiselyovsk, Kemerovo region [over 3,000 km from Kiev]. It was a town of miners. In the beginning I worked as a laborer constructing houses for arrivers in the town until I became a foreman and then the manager of this construction site. I received a sheepskin jacket. Winters were cold there. I received special food coupons and lived in a room in a hostel. We got orders to carry out different tasks. Kishinev was liberated in 1944 and I began to write letters to my college to continue my studies. In 1945 I received an

invitation from the college to continue my studies in the 4th year. I got released from work in late 1946 and could leave for Kishinev.