

Simon Gonopolskiy And His Mother Rosa Gonopolskaya



This is me and my mother Rosa Gonopolskaya, nee Weiser, in evacuation. The photo was taken in Kustanai, Kazakhstan, in 1942. In the fall of 1941 we arrived at Kustanai town in Kazakhstan. The town was located in the steppe. There were one-storied houses in it. There were two schools in the town. At first an inhabitant of Kustanai Anastasia Mikhailovna - or Stura, as we called her - took us and we lived with her. She gave us food and we stayed in her house for some time. My mother

received some allowances per my father's officer certificate. My mother and I wore those same overcoats and leather boots that we received at the storage facility in the last days of the siege of Odessa. In about half a year Stura found a bigger apartment in a wooden house for us. Tenants and livestock stayed in the house in winter. I went to the 7th grade at school in Kustanai. It was housed in a two-storied building. There were representatives of various nationalities in my class: Russian, Kazakh and Ukrainian children. Many came from evacuated families. At the very beginning of my studies local boys decided to test my character. I had never been a brawler before, but when they called me a 'zhyd' [kike] I felt hurt. We didn't have bags and tied books together with a wire. I used this wire to fight with them and this solved the problem. They never teased me again. I finished the 7th grade at the age of 15. I was tall and broad-shouldered and went to work as an assistant worker at the woodworking facility. After work my cousin Ilia and I took small bags with sawdust, chips and sticks home. This was fuel for the stove. Our landlords' daughter worked at the milling facility and brought bran from work. We made food from this bran. We shared everything we had and got along well with our landlords. I matured at work. I'm grateful to my mother for sending me to work. Later the factory began to manufacture spoons, saltcellars and boxes from production wastes and I learned the profession of a turner. I didn't go back to school.