

Chana Perelman



This is my mother Chana Perelman, nee Kaplan, by our house in evacuation in Nizhnyaya Uvelka. The picture was taken in 1943. I remember our life in evacuation in Ural very well. When we reached Nizhnyaya Uvelka, Mother took me by the hand and we went looking for the rural administrative building. It was the place where they were supposed to tell where our family - my grandparents, mother and I - were to get settled. I remember poor rustic ladies looked at my mother as if she was a wonder as she was wearing high heeled shoes, posh clothes, a silver fox fur and a hat. Finally, my mother found the rural administration building and we went to the place we were told. I did not know the name of the hostess. She was not young. Like it was customary in Russian villages, people called her by the patronymic Kuz'movna. She gave us a poky room, which was still good for those times. Then Mother said that she was shocked when she saw some people

sitting at the table, combing their hair and then pressing something. First, she could not get what they were doing, and then she understood that they took out the lice. She was so stressed that she remembered that till the rest of her days. Mother never forgot the kindness of Kuz'movna. She helped us a lot. She took care of Mother. Mom practically did not know anything about house chores. She even washed the floor for the first time in evacuation. She was 32, but it was the only time she did it. Each time she tried cleaning, some of the rural ladies told her, 'You, Anyuta, would better play the piano in the club, I will clean myself, you just smudge it more.' At that time there were no tape recorders, but young people, wanted to dance to music. Mother played the piano in the club during the entire period of our stay in evacuation. All people loved her. Grandmother cooked for us. Kuz'movna had a goat and she gave a glass of milk to me every day. Though, I spoke no Russian at that time, I made friends with Kuzmovna's younger son Ivan. He was several years older than me and took care of me. As a result of our friendship my first Russian words were expletives. He did not scold me - it's just that all villagers were swearing. Now I understand how funny we must have looked together - a village boy and I wearing a white fur coat and a bonnet. Mother dressed me the same way as in Tallinn. Here I had the same habits brought up by Frau Opperman.