

Faina Minkova's Father Yuzik Minkov With His Comrades



My father Yuzik Minkov (on the left) and his comrades that he stayed in hospital with. The photo was taken in Baku in 1943. My father wanted to send this photograph to my mother, but he couldn't find her. In 1938 my father was sent to the Party's advanced training course for political officers in Mogilyov. He was rarely at home at that time. After his training my father got an assignment with the NKVD Special Department in the army. He became a professional military. This happened before the war with Finland [the Soviet-Finnish War]. My father went to the front. He was wounded and had his toes frost-bitten. He had to stay in hospital for a while. After he was released he got a job in Kamenets-Podolskiy in Ukraine. My mother and Elizabeth followed him. On 22nd June 1941 [when the Great Patriotic War began] my father was taking a course in medical treatment at a sanatorium. He was taken from the sanatorium to the front. He was a political officer and an NKVD employee. He was appointed a SMERSH [acronym for 'Death to Spies', internal security service division]. But my father wasn't just a clerk sitting in the office. He spent a lot of time at the frontline where he was severely wounded in 1942. He had multiple wounds on his chest, abdomen, arms and legs. He was lying on the ground for over six hours. There was a German sniper on a tree. A star on my father's cap reflected sunrays and the sniper kept shooting until it got dark. Only then my father's comrades got a chance to get him out of there. He was taken to a hospital behind the lines in Baku where he had surgery. It was a miracle that he survived. He had his ribs removed on one side and there were big scars on his chest. He lost a lot of blood. He was in constant pain. There were no analgesics available, and his doctor gave instruction to nurses to give him alcohol anytime he would wake up. Later my father never drank alcohol. He used to say that he had had too much alcohol. My father stayed in hospital from December 1942 till February 1944. Then he was sent to the Caucasus to complete his treatment. He didn't have any information about his family. He didn't even know about the baby. It took him two years to find his family. He got information in 1944 saying that they were in the Ural. The same year he returned to his military unit at the front. In 1945 my father got an assignment in Japan and then in China. [This was during the war with Japan.]