

Edik Braverman



This is my brother Edik Braverman, photographed in evacuation in Gulbach in 1943. He was starving and had a swollen belly, his eyes have the expression of an old man. This photo was sent to our father at the front. It is signed on the back with the words, 'To Daddy from his son Edik'. My brother Edik was born in 1939. And, this was a kind of life we had before the war: we enjoyed ourselves and hoped for a better future. World War II put an end to our dreams. We heard about the war on 22nd June 1941 at noon, when Molotov spoke on the radio. On the following day my father received a call-up from the military office. He joined the army on 26th June. There was panic in town. We left in late August 1941 when Chernigov was bombed and many houses were on fire. The driver was in a hurry and actually threw us onto the truck. On the way to the railway station the truck stopped several times to pick up women with children. At the railway station we boarded a train for cattle transportation. Our trip lasted about ten days. We were hungry. My mother gave us a marmalade candy and a small piece of bread. At bigger stations the train stopped and my

mother and her sisters went to get some hot water. Sometimes they brought some soup or warm cereals that were provided to passengers of the train. We finally arrived at a kolkhoz in Stalingrad region, 1,000 kilometers from home. I don't remember its name, but I remember how friendly the collective farmers were. We were accommodated in the house of a very hospitable woman. My mother and her sisters went to work at the kolkhoz. This was the harvest season and there were big crops. We, children, went to the bank of the Volga where we played with local children. We stayed there for two or three months. When it became clear that the war was going to last longer we decided to go farther east. We were afraid that fascist troops would soon arrive where we were staying. In spring we moved to Gulbach, a settlement in Papskiy district, where we got a plot of land. We tried to grow vegetables there. Cabbage and potatoes didn't grow in this area. Local residents grew wheat or barley. We grew millet that summer and were happy to have it. I went to pick brushwood in the fields. I made huge bundles of it and dragged them home. We grew corn and roasted it on the fire: this was incredibly delicious. I also went to gather salt at a swamp with adults. It had a bitter taste and we had to wash it many times before we could use it. I had numerous wounds on my legs that didn't heal from standing in salty water. We received bread per coupons. The woman that handed out the bread felt very sympathetic with us. She gave my mother work to do: she had to put together all bread coupons for reporting purposes. My mother and I did this work at night and the woman gave us half a loaf of bread for it. My mother cut the bread into equal, small pieces to give it to the children. She cut a slice for herself, kissed it and gave it to me saying, 'Give it to Edik because he is the youngest of us'. My mother was always hungry, but she couldn't afford to even eat a small piece of bread. We stayed in the settlement until the end of the war. I remember 9th May 1945, Victory Day. All people ran into the streets, kissing, crying and hugging each other. My father came to take us home shortly after the victory. After the war Edik finished secondary school with honors. He worked as a locksmith and then he finished Leningrad Technological College. When he was in his last year he married a Russian girl from Leningrad. Edik visited us in 1965. Upon graduation he got a job assignment in Vilnius and a room in a hostel, but his wife didn't want to leave Leningrad, her hometown. Edik told me that he decided that he couldn't go on living with her. She wasn't his friend, he realized. He believed that a family had to be a close union, like Shamil and I, based on love and understanding. Then my brother married Sonia, a Jewish woman from Chernigov. This marriage failed as well. I think he might have compared his marriages with me and my husband's and believed us to be the ideal family. Edik and Sonia have a daughter. Her name is Evgenia. She lives in Moscow. Edik lives in Moscow with his third wife Valentina now. They have a daughter, whose name is Elena. She studies in college and works.