

Mieczyslaw Najman's Order Of The Patriotic War Certificate



This is a Soviet certificate for the Order of the Patriotic War, which I received in 1985. I was serving in the Red Army from 1941 to 1943. In 1939 the Germans came to my hometown Drohobycz, stayed for a week and left, and the Russians came. When the Germans invaded in 1941, I had to go to war, to the military. They came home, a truck waited, took us all to Boryslaw. Me separately, my brother separately. My mother - it was a horror for her, crying and grinding her teeth she's going to be left alone. She cooked eight chickens, I remember, for the way. I put it all into a rucksack, it was very hot, the stuff got smelly, I had to throw it away. The next day was already like war. The Germans had already entered Boryslaw. When they started shelling, everyone ran away. They were giving such a banging, such a cannonade, bombs, everything. There were many nationalities there, Ukrainians, Poles? Everyone ran away, only the Jews stayed. We were co-opted to some other group. They packed us and sent us to Russia, to Kharkov. And there they started training us. My unit, Battalion 55-98, went to the front, to the front line in Stalingrad. We suffered bombings for several days. And one day we finally started withdrawing delicately through that volley of bombs, but then we mobilized ourselves and, towards Stalingrad! And we started giving those Krauts an awful licking. The war raged on, my unit was broken up, I was left without a unit, without anything. I had a gun and they ordered me, stay here, do this, stand guard, things like that. We recaptured Stalingrad and we? dispersed like hell, the units got separated from each other. The Germans are shelling, the fight goes for each and every house. And people fled. You want to get to the other side of the Volga, but you can't do that unless you're wounded or sick. So one Russian guy tells me, 'I'll bandage you, you bandage me, and we'll put some blood on it.' I went to the ferry. 'Davay!' We set off, but the ferry is very run-down. I had, I remember, the last portion of sugar. I thought, 'Before I die, I'll eat everything I have, sugar and some other tidbits.' The German started shelling, and the ferry leans more and more, until it starts taking water. From this side, and this one, and this one. 'My God, I'm the chosen one, I'm the only one here. You save me here, I'm with You. Fear

nothing!' that's how I was talking to myself out loud.