

Yelena Ivanovna With Her Son



This is my second mother in this photo: my rescuer Yelena Ivanovna photographed with her son at the monument to the soldiers, who had perished during the war, in the background. This photo was taken in 1945 and sent to me in 1947. The photo is signed: 'Remember our escape from death'. During the war I was in hiding with other orphans. Once, when a battle was over, we walked on, trembling from fear, little homeless kids caught in the war. We were even more scared than those children whose mothers, grandmothers or whatever relatives were with them. We reached a trench where there were people hiding. They started yelling to us to go away before the fascists saw us. A woman called us to come closer. She asked us who we were and where we were from and we stayed beside her. She was a common Ukrainian woman, kind, fair-haired. She had a kind face. Her name was Yelena Ivanovna. From then on we stayed with her. We followed her like ducklings following their mother duck. There were ten of us. She took us out of the combat area. We met retreating Soviet troops on the road. Yelena Ivanovna talked with an officer for quite a while. He advised her to go to a village where we might be safe. He said the army was retreating, but that

they would come back. Yelena Ivanovna was a smart and strong woman. I wasn't the only one she helped. Soldiers of the Soviet army, who were behind their units, and wounded, happened to be in the rear of the enemy, also came into the house where they could always have a meal and stay overnight. Partisans also came into the house. We were growing fast and understood that we weren't supposed to talk about it. We learned to keep silent. The girls and I were happy when those soldiers stayed overnight. We believed that our forces weren't far away and were going to liberate us. After the war Yelena Ivanovna helped the girls to go to work and sent me to a children's home in the village of Konstantinovka, Kurgan district, Krasnodar Krai. She also went to look for her son and mother whom she had lost during the war. Saying 'good bye' to me, my adoptive mother promised to take me away from the children's home, but this didn't happen. I stayed in this children's home for three years. I received a letter from Yelena Ivanovna. She found her family in the town of Yeisk and lived there. Yelena Ivanovna died in 1980. We had corresponded, maintained warm relations and sent each other treatments and gifts. We also visited each other. I've always remembered that I owe my life to this common Ukrainian woman.