

Frieda Portnaya's Brother Mikhail Waldman



This is a photo of my older brother Mikhail Waldman -- Misha -- taken in Kiev in 1925, when he was two years old. Mikhail, my only sibling, was born in 1923. He went to a Jewish school. Later, all Jewish schools were closed and he went to a Russian school. In the middle of June 1941 my mother and I went to stay at my Aunt Manya's in Korostyshev for few days. Mikhail stayed in Kiev as he was taking his final exams at school. Misha, along with other young people, was sent to Donbass to harvest the crops. They were trying to save the younger people and sent them to the East rather than to the front. My mother and I were evacuated to the Northern Caucasus and were accommodated in the court building in Piatigorsk. There were many families, and we all slept on

the floor. One night somebody knocked on the door, and when I went to the window to see who it was, I saw Misha standing there! It turned out that when the Germans approached Donbass all the mobilized young people were dismissed. Misha knew where we were from a letter and managed to reach us. I was so excited that I jumped from that window, on the first floor, into his arms and my mother ran to him with tears. My brother was conscripted into the Army in 1942, from Semipalatinsk. He took part in the defense of Stalingrad and it was a miracle that he survived. Afterwards his unit was sent for R and R in Kazan, and later he was sent to the First Ukrainian Front. He wrote us that he was in an anti-tank gun service unit. After reading this letter my mother said that she would never see her son again. This was true. Misha sent his last letter from somewhere near Kiev. He wrote, 'I will be in my native town soon' and we understood where he was. Later we received a letter from the commanding officer of the unit, informing us that Misha had been severely wounded on September 2 and died on the way to the hospital.