

Mendel Rivkin



This is a photo of my brother Mendel Rivkin. The photograph was taken on 13th June 1944 at the Leningrad front line. My brother Mendel, born in 1917, liked the song from the film 'Seven Hearts of Oak' very much. When my brother Haim, born in 1920, left for the army, he asked me to sing the song 'Our armor is strong and our tanks are fast' for him. He listened to me and cried. It happened on 27th May 1941. The first year of our evacuation in Tashkent I didn't study, I was to either work at a factory or enter a technical school to get a profession. I decided to get advice from Mendel and wrote a letter to him. I received his answer. I still have his letter. In his letter Mendel addressed our parents, 'Don't permit her to start working. The war will end some day. Let Rachel finish school and then enter a college.' And I decided to go on studying at school. I was in the eighth grade. In 1942

we received a notification about my brother Zussy's death. In July 1944 another notification was received: it was about Mendel's death. We kept it from our parents. It happened the following way. It was necessary to go to the regional military registration and enlistment office to re-register officers' certificates. Aunt Mussya also received a certificate from Mendel, but at that time she wasn't able to go there and asked me to go instead. The manager of the financial department told me, 'It's good Mussya Yakovlevna hasn't come. Mendel Borissovich has been killed.' I cried, 'Tomorrow my parents will come here to receive their certificates. If my mother gets to know that her second son is gone, her heart will break.' I was sobbing so painfully that they decided to call the chief. He ordered his subordinates not to show Mendel's documents to my parents when they came. The employees of the regional military registration and enlistment office hid Mendel's documents so meticulously that when these documents were required for putting his name on a memorial board of the College, where he studied, they couldn't find them.