

Tsylia Aguf's Daughter Victoria Zaretskaya With Her Grandfather Michael Aguf



My husband's father Michael Aguf and my daughter Victoria in Kustanay, Kazakhstan in the summer of 1943. They were photographed by their neighbor, who just dropped by to see them. My husband was born to a Jewish family in Kharkov in 1919. His father, Michael Aguf, was born in Lugansk, Eastern Ukraine, in 1888. His mother died when Michael was 3 years old. His father married another woman. He didn't get along with her. When my husband's father was young he got inspired by revolutionary ideas and joined the Communist Party. Before the Revolution of 1917, when he was 18, he was arrested on charge of undermining the tsarist regime and revolutionary activities. He was in jail for four years and then he was sent to exile in Siberia. After the revolution the Bolsheviks released him and he made a party career. In 1918 he began to work at the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party located in Kharkov at that time. He married Elena, a Jewish woman, and in 1919 their twin sons, Mark and Boris, were born. I was working as a pioneer leader at a pioneer camp in Vorzel, a small town near Kiev when the Great Patriotic War began on 22nd June 1941. I went back to Kiev. My husband-to-be insisted that I evacuated with him and his parents. My husband's father was a party official and got train tickets for the whole family. He joined the Territorial Army to defend Kiev. It was a comfortable train. It didn't stop or wasn't kept longer than necessary at stations, and we reached Kustanay in Northern Kazakhstan [2,500 km from Kiev] very soon. Kustanay was a small town populated with Kazakh people. There were no Jewish families in the town. Mark and I got married there. We had a civil ceremony and obtained our marriage certificate at a registry office. The day after we got married he went to the military registry office to ask them to cancel his release from the service in the army that he had as a 5th year student of a higher educational institution. Within a week's time he went to the front. I was pregnant. I was very upset because I thought that it was untimely to have a baby. I carried heavy loads to terminate my pregnancy, but it didn't work. I gave birth to a strong healthy girl in Kustanay in 1942. I named her Victoria.