

Simon Grinshpoon With His Friend Matvey Russanovskiy



My friend Matvey Russanovskiy, and I. We walked around the city of Kiev and decided to have our picture taken, to send it home to our parents. We studied together in the Construction College in Kiev. I lost track of him. I only met him once in 1940 after he finished artillery school. After finishing school in 1930 I entered the College for Electrification and Mechanization of Agriculture, located in the town of Bar, 60 km from Yaruga. I stayed in the college for about six months and then ran away, back home. I was only 14, and it was difficult for me to be away from my parents and our nice, cozy home. My mother begged me to continue my studies, but I refused to leave home. I stayed at home for almost a year and spent most of my time at the frontier post [Yaruga was located at the border of Romania]. I liked to take care of horses and do the rounds with the frontier guards. It was my dream to become a professional military, but my mother was strictly against it. She insisted that I entered the Construction College in Mogilyov-Podolskiy in 1931. I lived with our former neighbor from Yaruga, Motia Shteinberg. My mother sent me some food - pancakes, cutlets, stew, eggs and strudels - every week. I went to Kiev in 1932 and entered the Construction College. There were two departments in this college: a Jewish and a Ukrainian one. We studied the same subjects, only in different languages. There was no admission to the Jewish department, so I entered the Ukrainian one. I lived in the dormitory. I always missed home, but I understood that I had to get a profession. In the beginning I went to the railway station every morning to look at the sign ?Kiev-Mogilyov-Podolskiy? on the railcar, so that I could at least see the name of my hometown. Later I met new friends: Matvey Russanovskiy and Zinoviy Pugachevskiy - Jews, and some Ukrainian friends. I became a Komsomol member, and we went to parades and for walks in Kiev together. I stopped observing Jewish holidays and traditions. It was out of fashion at the time. Besides, it was next to impossible to follow the kashrut rules at the dormitory. We were young and had a good appetite. We ate whatever we had. After finishing college I got a job assignment at the Khmelnik road construction site of the NKVD Road Construction Division. I worked for a year, but kept dreaming about the military uniform. I went to Leningrad and entered a military college there. I didn't tell my parents that I was going to Leningrad. When I told them that I had entered the

college they got very upset, but they understood that I was old enough to make my own decisions. I finished a two-year advanced course in 1939. I got a job assignment in Field Engineer Battalion 239 in Chernigov.