

Lev Mistetskiy With Comrades



This photo was taken on the 45th anniversary of the liberation of Vinnitsa region from fascists. Our division that took part in battles for the liberation of Vinnitsa region was invited to a ceremony. In this picture with my comrades I am 5th in the 1st row. We were photographed at the headquarters of the Vinnitsa military regiment in 1989. I've kept in touch with my comrades-in-arms. They found me through a newspaper, and since then we have been meeting in Vinnitsa on 20 March, the day of liberation of Vinnitsa. It's sad that each year there are fewer of us, veterans. Last time there were only five of us at this meeting. The rest are gone. By the 20th anniversary of the victory over Germany I was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War, 1st grade. I have medals for the liberation of towns, memorial medals to the jubilees of victory. I wear my awards when I meet with my fellow veterans and on Victory Day. It's no secret that many people believe that there were no Jews at the front and that they just 'fought' in Tashkent [Editor's note: Tashkent was the town where many people evacuated to during the Great Patriotic War, including many Jewish families. Many people thought that the whole Jewish population was in evacuation rather than at the front and anti-Semites spoke about it in mocking tones.] Once I wore my orders, when a man asked me, 'What, you fought at the front?' Once a woman approached me and said that her father was killed at the front, and I was showing off with my orders. I was very annoyed. I'm sorry that her father was killed, but was it my fault that I survived? I fought honestly and never hid behind anybody's back, and I deserved my awards.