

Photographs Of War Veterans At The Velizh Museum



This photograph was taken at the Velizh museum. It shows the photographs of the war participants. Above the photographs the following text is written: 'These people came back from front lines alive.' The photo of my husband is first from left in the second row. My husband spent his childhood and youth in Velizh.

My second husband was Aron Semenovitch Leveter. He was born on 23rd February 1915 in Riga. His father was a Bolshevik and perished during the Civil War. My husband didn't remember him. In their family there were two children: my husband and his elder sister Riva. His mother moved to Velizh of Smolensk region together with her children. It happened in 1917 or 1918. His mother started working at a siccative factory, where they dried vegetables and fruit. In the Russian provinces there were a lot of such factories. The director of the factory felt sorry for the poor widow with two children and did his best to help her, basically with production of his enterprise. They lived in real poverty. Their life became a little bit better, when Aron finished a technical school and started working as an operator at a factory. Unfortunately I can remember neither the exact name of the technical school, nor the factory. He told me that he was very much afraid of fire: the factory building and most of the equipment were wooden. He was even more afraid to be accused of sabotage. Because of this reason and also because operators had crummy salaries, Aron changed his profession to that of a driver.

I was the second wife of Aron Semenovitch. Before the war broke out he was married to Maria Berova. She gave birth to their daughter. Aron went to the front immediately after the war broke out. When the Germans approached Velizh, my husband's mother, his sister and his first wife with their little daughter in her arms left their native town on foot. But the mother returned, she said she would be waiting for her son at home. But she didn't manage to meet her son there: together with other Jews of Velizh she was put into a shed and burnt alive on 29th January 1942.

Aron Semenovitch was at the front during the war. He was a driver of a Katyusha rocket launcher. The tragedy in Velizh, when all Jews there were burnt alive, happened in his absence. And in Velizh there were a lot of Jews, you could say Velizh was a Jewish shtetl.

I got acquainted with Aron Semenovitch in 1977. We both were lonely; it was my friend who introduced us to each other. We got married in 1979. I had children neither of the first bed, nor of the second.