

Yuri Bogdanov With His Front-Line Comrades



That's me (to the left) with my front-line comrades, unfortunately I don't remember their names.

It is written overleaf: "To my most precious friends - my wife and my daughter to commemorate hard war days and my front-line soldiers. Yours truly, Yuri. 1943."

In 1939 I finished ten grades of compulsory school at the age of 18. I decided to have military service for a regular term and then enter an institute. But my plans were doomed.

In February 1942 the severest battles started in the village of Zakharkovo.

The next day we took the village of Zakharievo. We were walking across the village. It was snowing. I saw a German officer leaning against a wall. He was curled up lying still with his left hand stretched out, all covered in snow.

I touched him with a gun to make sure that he was dead. He fired immediately from an automatic pistol. I was wounded in the head. The bullet came in over my upper lip and exited close to my left ear. Then I happened to be in the hospital in Orekhovo-Zuyevo.

The doctor said one or two millimeters off and I would have been dead. Fractionary cranium parts were coming out for many years. I still have a scar from that wound. I stayed in the hospital for a few months and then returned to our troops.

Soon I was wounded for the second time. A mine fragment hit me on the side on my soldier's thong made out of thick leather, which saved me. Part of the thong pierced my abdomen, but softened the shock and stopped the fragment.

The doctor removed that piece of thong and the shell fragment. After being discharged from the hospital, I was sent to the Stalingrad front of the south-western army.

Before going back to the front I was given a one-week leave for full convalescence. I went to Moscow. The city was devastated , there were neither family nor friends. Finally I was able to find an acquaintance of mine. It was a girl from a senior grade of my school, one year older than me.

Her name was Elvira Martirosova. I wouldn't say that I was in love with her during school-days. We hardly knew each other at that time.

Elvira was just the only acquaintance I met after being discharged from the hospital. I was convinced that I would die at war, and it was very important to see somebody I knew before going back to war.

We spent the whole day together. I had to leave in the morning. Elvira suggested staying in her house overnight. That night became our nuptial night. In the morning I knelt to propose to her and besought her to get registered in the marriage registration office.

My wife came to see me off at the train station, straight from the state marriage registration office. I went to the Stalingrad front. I went through the entire war after getting married.

My combat life didn't become any better but I wasn't wounded ever again, moreover I didn't even get a scratch. I think it was for the sake of my wife.

Our daughter Tatiana was born in 1943. It is difficult to put my emotions in words. In spite of war, rivers of blood and devastation, a little human being was born - my daughter!