

Yuri Bogdanov



That's me as a captain. The picture was taken on 9th May 1945.

It is written overleaf: "To my dear Elvirochka, my wife and friend on Victory Day..." I pondered many things over on that day. The picture was taken in Baden, Austria.

I finished the war in the Austrian city of Baden near Vienna. When we took Baden, I was a captain, the head of the communication squad. It was a big division, a few hundred people with many radio stations. We established communication for the entire army.

Our squad settled in a mansion pertaining to some German commander. My personal aide reported to me that the basement of the mansion was taken by a family of seven people, who serviced that German commander.

Besides they had little dogs, either they bred them or kept them for the children to play with. I went to the basement to see those people. They were peaceful Austrian people.

I understood that they were not my enemies. I didn't go to war to be belligerent with old people and children. Those people had done no harm to me. I ordered my cook to bring them our extra helpings.

We had our own kitchen, and there was always food left. While we stayed there, the food was brought to them, which was enough for the people and for the dogs.

Many militaries brought suitcases full of trophies back home. It was possible to take anything. I thought that it was dishonest and indecent. My wife would have never accepted plundered things. I considered the end of war and my survival to be trophies.

I was 24 and my beloved wife and daughter were waiting for me at home. A watch was the only thing I brought back from the war.

When we were on the point of leaving the mansion an old lady, who lived in the basement, came up to me and gave me a wooden box. I opened it up and saw a golden lady's watch with a golden bracelet.

The lady said in German that it was a present from them, their way to express gratitude for my cordial attitude towards her family. She told me she would be very happy if I took that watch for my wife.

I understood how frank she was and I took the present as I didn't want to hurt her feelings. It wasn't a trophy but a present from the bottom of her heart.