

Naum Kravets



Here I am in the forest by the airdrome in Panevezhis. I am waiting for the crew to take off.

The picture was taken in fall 1943.

I decided to go to the front as a volunteer. In July 1942 together with my fellow students I went to the headquarters of the Ural military circle requesting to be drafted into the lines.

In January 1943 I finished school and was assigned to the 15th separate reconnoiter regiment of the Baltic Navy, which was conferred the Red Banner twice. I had to go to Leningrad. It was the time when the city was still besieged. I was to be dispatched from Moscow, so I came to my native town for a day.

There was nobody from my kin or acquaintances there. I corresponded with my mother and knew that her kin from Kharkov had been evacuated to Chimkent, Uzbekistan. My mother and sister went to them after my departure.

Our apartment in Moscow was occupied. There was a woman with two children. Her husband was in the lines. She suggested that I should stay overnight. I was lying on my sofa among the things I was used to since childhood, but I couldn't fall asleep.

The next morning I went there with the director of the housing department and attesting witnesses to make the inventory of our belongings.

Then I was to leave Moscow for besieged Leningrad via the 'Road of Life' over the frozen lake, accompanied by incessant firing. The regiment was positioned in a Leningrad suburb.

From there I took a car to Oranienbaum bridgehead. There were four navy bomber reconnaissance ICBM-2 on the lake by the city of Valdai. I didn't have to serve there for a long time, because when German aviation attacked, those four aircraft's burned down like candles.

I came back to Leningrad, where the main regiment forces were positioned. I was assigned as operator of the radar station. They decided to include me in the crew of the regiment commander.

I think I survived owing to a great crew of pilots. Then I was taught how to shoot. I was an air navigator on planes.

I cannot say that my first battle was the hardest. It was scary all the time. But the feeling of fear was momentous during the first seconds of flight. There was a brutal fear when leaving the airdrome: it gave you the creeps and you had a lump in the throat.

But it didn't last long as you see the eyes of your fellow who got over that feeling. When the work is done, you don't fear, just get focused on things to be done. You are to be responsible. Then you calm down.