

Alexander Mussel



This photo was taken during my education at the Military Academy in Leningrad in 1950.

I finished the ten-year school in June 1941, right before the war. I wanted to enter a Higher Military College. I thought that the environment in the army was very good, and that it would help me to get rid of some of my drawbacks as well. I considered myself a bit lazy, though I finished school with excellent marks. However, my capabilities were limited. I was shortsighted, so I could not apply to the Engineering College. I applied to the Military Medical Academy and attached all health certificates. At the beginning of the war I was summoned to the medical commission but I was rejected because of my eyes.

I was summoned on 21st June 1941. We were lectured about the international situation at the recruiting center. The lecturer told us that we had very good relations with Germany. The next day

when I was preparing for exams at the Military College together with my friend, we heard that the war had begun. I went to my school and helped to evacuate the small kids. Later we were ordered to dig tank ditches in the Luga district. I was summoned to the military registration and enlistment office in July 1941 and assigned to the Antiaircraft College, though due to my sight problem, I suited the task even less than at the Military Medical Academy.

Our college was evacuated in August 1941. We didn't even know where we were going. We were loaded onto the train along with the college equipment and departed. We found ourselves in Omsk where I stayed at that Military College until September 1942. After that our course graduated ahead of the study schedule – we were on an accelerated training program – and sent to the Caucasus. The Caucasus was cut off by attacking Germans. We got there through Siberia and Central Asia, crossed the Caspian Sea at night on a tanker. I served in the antiaircraft defense forces for the city of Baku [today Azerbaijan] until the end of the war. Baku was the main source of oil for our country. We were kept in constant alertness up to 9th May 1945 and were always on duty.

I entered the Military Academy after the war. I had a hard time graduating from the Academy in 1952. The Doctors' Plot as well as increasing anti-Semitism influenced both the assignment and the career. People of Jewish nationality were assigned regardless of their desires, capabilities and talents. I, Kruchinetsky, Dlin and several other officers were assigned to an antiaircraft-missile range in Kapustin Yar, Astrakhanskaya region, into almost a dessert, a dry plain. Missiles were allowed to be tested only in low-populated areas. We did not even know where we had been assigned. When we came to the interview before departure, we were told that the location was 'three to four hours from Moscow.' We were not told that it was by plane. Such a cunning move. We didn't have any choice though. I served in this wild plain for six years. I wanted to get transferred to Leningrad, but it was very difficult. I think that my nationality was also a reason for this difficulty.