

Grigory Gendler



This photograph taken on the front line near Kursk in 1943 shows me with one of our tanks at the background.

At that time headquarters formed large tank units, and basing upon our brigade they created the 8th mechanized corps under the command of Katukov, our brigade commander. Later it was transformed into the 1st Guards Tank Army.

The army was moved to Kursk region (near Belgorod). It happened in summer of 1943. First of all near Kursk we mastered new technical equipment (new advanced tanks with longer guns). We lived in villages nearby.

At that time reporters from Moscow arrived to our brigade. Among them there were 2 photographers and a well-known sportscaster and reporter Vadim Sinyavsky. During the war he often came to front lines (for instance he was in Sevastopol during its defense, where he was wounded).

I was ordered to assist Vadim Sinyavsky in searching for participants of actions near Moscow and recording stories of tankmen about their fights. He recorded the story of Katukov about actions near Orel. Sinyavsky brought special equipment for recording; he had got everything necessary for that work.

He wanted to record stories of tankmen accompanied by singing of famous Kursk nightingales. I found a small shady grove, where I supposed nightingales would sing at night and at dawn. So we

went there early in the morning and managed to hear and record energetic singing of nightingales.

I was asked to read the soldier's oath. Our tankmen lined up repeated the words and Sinyavsky recorded it. Later I asked him to record my message to my parents, but unfortunately they did not receive it for unknown reason. Also a other message I sent to Moscow to my schoolmate Olga Pashuk (she is still alive). She received the record, but later lost it.

Many years later I got a letter from my brother-soldier Guryev, where he informed me that he knew about 75 extant sound recordings with my voice reading the Guards oath. Those records were stored in a Moscow archive. The archive workers got in touch with me and I told them about that episode of my biography in details.

In the beginning of July 1943 Germans passed to the offensive near Belgorod. The peak of approach of Germans was on July 3 and 4, 1943. At that time Orel was in hands of Germans, and we were to the north of it. Germans were going to smash our armies near Kursk and make another attempt to occupy Moscow.

For that purpose Germans moved several armies from the Western front to Kursk region. Our tanks occupied positions in tank ambushes according to our favorite tactics.

Of course soldiers were different (during 2 years of actions the brigade suffered heavy losses), but our people were perfect, they were chosen. It was me who told new soldiers about our actions, traditions, about heroes of our Brigade. I also told them about weak spots of new German tanks Tigers and Ferdinands. You see, I was a Komsomol leader!