

Mark Kabakov And His Friends



These are my friends and colleagues, crew members of mine-sweeper ÅÅ-117. The picture was taken in Murmansk in 1950, when I was involved in post-war mine-sweeping on the Northern Seaway.

In the second row the last to the right is I, to the left from me in the second row is my friend Mikhail Nikitin, the last to the left is Efim Rubinchik, the last to the right in the first row is Ivan Kazakov. The picture was taken at the end of our service in the Arctics.

For me personally the war was still not over when the act on capitulation was signed by Germany on the 9th of May 1945. I take pride in the fact that I was still involved in military actions when the war was over. In 1947, when I graduated naval academy, I was assigned an officer to the 6th Krasnoznamennyi mine-sweepers division the Northern navy.

Up to 1950 I had been dealing with postwar minesweeping. Germans obstructed Northern seaway with mines. Minefields were reaching New Land Island [about 2500 km. to the north-east from Moscow].

The Northern seaway was one of the most vital arteries of Soviet Union and it was practically closed down for navigation. All navigating vessels, including the merchant ones could only go to the areas, having been tested by mine-sweepers or being escorted by them.

Our task was to find the mines and exterminate them with the help of mine-sweepers. As a matter of fact, we knew the location of the mines. There were minefields maps. We were supposed to clear them. I had worked at the mine-sweeper ÅÅ-117 for three years after war.

Our division consisted of those kinds of vessels. Mine-sweepers belong to the class of vessels, which are supposed to sweep the mines. They are equipped with the sweep-nets, containing cutting jaws. Sweep-nets are located astern the mine-sweeper. Sweep-nets are steel hawsers, deepened to a certain distance from the water surface, containing cutting jaws, which cut anchor ropes, fastened to the mines.

The mines are buoyant and float to the surface. Then they were fired by the guns. There were different kinds of mines. The mines, set up by Germans in 1942, 1943 contained those perfect fuses- acoustic and electromagnetic. That is why the minesweepers we worked on were acoustic and electromagnetic. The worst thing was that the mines, installed by Germans had 'ship counter'. We also had such mines.

The essence of that malicious device was that the ship could pass for couple of times and the mine would not be revealing. Let's say on the fifth time (depending on the number of times) the circuit closed in, and the mine blew up. It was done to make mine-sweeping more complicated. The maximum number of times on the counter was 12. That is why we went back and forth for 12 times.

To be on the safe side we made as many trips as it was max number programmed in the counter. We had dealt with that for 3 years. Our navy had stayed in the sea the longest. It was rather far away from the ship base and military ports: Polar in Barents Sea and Archangelsk in White Sea.

Thus, one voyage in the Arctic lasted for three months. Then we came back in Archangelsk, where the ship went through maintenance repair and then again headed to the sea for three months.

The total time spent in the Arctic was half a year. There was no fun in that. We were paid very well and it was the only good thing. I, mechanic of the mine-sweeper had such a salary that it was exceeding my combined income for the entire marine service, which was pretty long- 34 years.

During Great Patriotic War I was awarded with Great Patriotic War Order of the First Class, medal for victory in the Great Patriotic War and a number of other medals.

In 1950 I was assigned to higher courses for the officers in Moscow. Having finished them I served as a military representative at torpedo building plant in Alma-Ata [about 3000 km to the east from Moscow]. After that I had served in the Baltic navy for 6 years, then at Black Sea navy for another 6 years.

Then I came to Moscow and worked for four years in scientific research institute as a military representative having the rank of commodore. I resigned in 1974. I was clad in military uniform in 1940 and resigned in 1974.