

April 20, 2005

Dear brothers-in-arms,

To get to the front line, I added a year to my age. Otherwise they would not have admitted me to Radio Operator School. It was in 1941, in Chelyabinsk. I then got to a Separate 19th Rifle Regiment, and to a radio operator platoon. I worked on the line, meaning on the front line, among fire and explosions. I will never forget that while I am alive. There were so many different sorts of things.

For instance, several days before the forced crossing of the Visla River, I was contused in one of the battles. After coming off duty, feeling sick, I went in to my dugout for resting and ... fell sound asleep. I was missed when the truck loaded with all the radio gear and cables was at the bank of the river ready to ferry over. The truck was secured with planking and put on the raft, along with 2 soldiers and 2 female radio operators. And more importantly, the Company's banner was there as well. The ferry was being bombed hard by Germans, and suddenly, right in front of the raft, a shell exploded. We rushed to rescue the truck, and we succeeded. And we were awarded: I was awarded with the medal "For Courage". That was the first and dearest reward for me.

Another time, it was already in Germany, in Stettin, when we entered a big beautiful house. We went up to the second floor, and there we saw a table set, with different dishes. Right in the middle of the table was a tureen with an invitingly smelling steaming soup. Nearby there was a large wardrobe. One of my female friends, out of curiosity, opened the door of the wardrobe, and there – a German! He aimed at her, and if not for our scout, that Fritz would have shot us down, but everything turned out right.

Battling, we came up to Berlin. Then we took Potsdam. Some troops began to force their way to the downtown, to the Reichstag (the next day we also visited it), but we had to push on; we were moving to the Elbe River. Our meeting with our Allied Forces happened there. In the American forces, as far as I remember, there were more blacks than whites. At first we were frightened--they looked different, black skin, white teeth, as calico, and thick, red lips. They rushed to us, hugged us. And we were waiting for the Victory together.

And we succeeded in it. And once, our rifle company watched the movie, "Zoya Kosmodemyanckaya," and that prompted the girls from the platoon to exchange their impressions and go to bed late. Before dawn the Master Sergeant woke us up, crying "wake up! Line up!" The first thought was the fascists had cut their way through the lines. We were half asleep, putting on our clothes while running outside. And then the Sergeant could not help crying "Victory!" What a commotion started! Hugs, kisses, laughter, tears. A big jug of alcohol appeared, and the Sergeant treated everybody with a mug of alcohol who wanted to drink.

One German came up to me, presented a bouquet of flowers to me, said in Russian: "Cogratulations, *frau*," and asked permission to take a photo of me. Taken on May 9th, 1945, in the German city of Essen, it is a very precious picture for me. I keep it very close to my heart. I was not even 19 years old at the time.

I have some other relicts from that time, as well. For example, a letter of gratitude, which starts with the words: "By the decision of the 12th session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, you are relieved of your duties in the army, and are ordered to return to the motherland. I hereby extend gratitude for your honorable service for the welfare of our motherland." And it follows with a

signature of the Great Commander of the Soviet Occupational Troops in Germany, Marshal of the USSR, Zhukov.

After the war, I returned to my native village in the Makushinskiy district. My post war life started when I replaced my mom toiling in the field, and started doing everything myself. I did it all with great willingness, and even with boldness.

Then I graduated from Medical School, and the rest of my life has been devoted to medicine. I worked for 10 years in the Pediatric Hospital as a district nurse, and for more than 20 years in the Kurgan Regional Clinic in the Neurological Surgery department as a nurse, as well. My name was even put into the Book of Honor of this clinic, for my labor there.

I was successful in my family life. My husband, Alexei Sorokin, was a military pilot and he fought in the 32nd National Guard Kerchenskiy Red Banner which was a long-range bombardment air regiment. He had 2500 night flight assignments and took part in the liberation of Leningrad from the blockade. He was awarded with 2 Orders of the Great Patriotic War, the Order of the Red Star, the Order of the Red Banner, as well as many medals. But we didn't meet on the front; we met after the war, but he failed to live up to the 60th anniversary of our Victory.

We have a great inheritance—three children, five grand sons, and a great-granddaughter. I am happy for my children and grand children. Right now, I am living with my grandson, Victor, who is a 3rd year student at Kurgan State University. He is both my joy, and my support.

Best regards,

Nadezhda Sorokina,
Line Radiooperator