

Adolf Landsman With His Schoolmates And Teachers



This is a picture of the graduating class (the 10th grade of secondary school # 10 of Penza), where I studied in evacuation. Our teachers are in the first row. I am the first to the right in the top row, in the second row on the right there is Victor Melnik, next to him is my friend Grigorj Kardash, the fourth on the right is Nikolay. I hardly remember any of the teachers and pupils of this class. I studied with them only one year and never met anyone of them later. The picture was taken in Penza in 1942.

In June 1941 I finished the ninth grade of school. The Great Patriotic War started on 22nd June 1941, at 12:16am. I went to school. All senior pupils got together. We weren't of the drafting age, but all of us were willing to go to the front as volunteers. They told us in the military enlistment office that we were needed at home and that we should come back in a year if the war was still on. The senior schoolboys organized volunteer fighting battalions. We went from house to house and explained how to equip air-raid shelters, i.e. dig-outs should be at a distance of ten meters from the house. Most of the houses were wooden, and they would burn immediately if a bomb hit them. We stood sentry in the street.

When the bombing started we covered fire-bombs with sand. In a week we were offered to join the Komsomol squad, which was supposed to be involved in the construction of defense fortifications on the access road to Moscow. There were throngs of senior pupils and students at Kiev train-station in Moscow. We went in freight cars in the western direction. We stopped in a village of Bryansk district. We settled in the houses of the villagers and we were fed in the canteens of the collective farmers. Military engineers were commanders of our squads. We dug anti-tank trenches. It was a pretty hard job for the urban teenagers, who had never used a spade before. We stayed there for a couple of months.

At first we used to work during the day then we started working at dusk, taking a rest during the day. We tried not to go outside if there was no need to. It was difficult to work at night, especially

during those nights when there was no moonlight, as the trenches were to be of a certain configuration. There I got my first 'battle injury' - I jumped into a trench and at that time somebody threw a spade there and I didn't see it. I was strewn by sand and my head was hit by the spade. I was sent to the sanitary unit, where my head was bandaged. I was released from work for some time. In the middle of August we got together again. We were given certificates of the diggers of a certain category and were even paid money for our work. It was my first salary. At the end of August they took us back to Moscow.

In 1941 my father was employed by the Ministry of Mortar Armament as economist. Soon the ministry was evacuated to Penza, and the whole family left for Penza. I finished the tenth grade of the compulsory school in Penza. My father saw me off to the collection point. His valediction was, 'Take care of yourself! You are our only son.' I was sent to Penza artillery school. In May 1943, I completed the school and was sent to the front, to the 20th separate artillery squad of the Russian Supreme Command.