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This photograph shows me in 1970s in Leningrad. Here I'd like to tell you about my life in the army.

We went in evacuation to Kazakhstan (to Kokchetav) when the blockade of Leningrad was lifted. There Mom got fixed up in a job at a stud farm. I do not remember what kind of work she did, but I can tell you that she received very good salary: we bought a cow and were provided with milk. It happened in 1943 when I was 16 years old. As I was brought in the spirit of patriotism, I went to a military registration and enlistment office (in secret from Mom) to submit an application for sending me to the front line. Officers from the local military registration and enlistment office told me that I was too young, that it was necessary to grow up and put me out of doors. But I was very persistent and at last at the age of 16 years and 8 months they took me to the army.

By the way, earlier on our way to Kokchetav a tragedy happened: I was left behind the train in Kirov (now Vyatka). Mom sent me to buy a glass of berries at the railway station, and at that time the train left. I remained alone without documents and money. The commandant of the railway station took pity upon me and placed me in the hospital: you can imagine what a child from the besieged Leningrad looked like!

I do not remember how much time I spent in the hospital. Later they sent me to Omsk [a city in Siberia] by train. There local authorities gave me new documents (restored according to my words) and sent me to the Railway Transport Technical School to become a machinist assistant. During that period of time I knew nothing about my Mom and brothers, but I knew the address of the wife of my mother's brother: she and her children were evacuated to Sverdlovsk. I wrote her a letter

and she informed me where Mom was. That was the way I found mother in Kokchetav. As my technical school was a military organization, they refused to let me off. And do you know what an idea came to my mind? I turned out to be clever enough to ask Mom to send me a document that she was near death! But Mom managed to send me such document (she even managed to make the document attested!).

That was the way I arrived in Kokchetav to my Mom. There I secretly started visiting the local military registration and enlistment office. I did not want to come back to Omsk to the School I did not like. At last they sent me call-up papers and Mom had no choice but to let me go (by the way, she never got to know that it was me who initiated the process). The military registration and enlistment office sent me to the Aviation Military School. I was going to become an air-fitter. The school was evacuated to Petropavlovsk (in Kazakhstan) from Leningrad. There I studied half a year. Of course they did not teach us to be mechanics, they simply prepared us for war: we practised shooting, dug entrenchments, etc. In September 1943 we were sent to Vitebsk region and my soldier's life started.