

Asia Matveyuk



I, Asia Leikind, photographed in the Bulgarian town of Yambol in 1944. I am wearing civilian clothes. I got so tired of my military uniform and boots that I had never taken off during the war that I couldn't resist the temptation and asked a Bulgarian girl permission to put on her suit and felt myself a young girl with everything ahead of me and the war... belonged to the past.

Before the WWII I studied at Pharmaceutical College and became subject to military service like all other medical employees. From 7 August 1941 my army service began I was enlisted into a field engineering brigade. I was chief of the so-called sanitary unit. I also acted as a pharmacy supervisor. I was appointed chief of the chemical department of the pharmacy headquarters. It evacuated to Kuibyshev [present Samara, Russia, 1400 km from Kiev]. Some time in late September 1941 we arrived in Kuibyshev. Chief of the sanitary headquarters offered me to enter the Medical Academy in Kuibyshev, but, being raised as a patriot, I was eager to go to the front. I served in the sanitary unit and was chief of the pharmacy of the regiment. We no shared duties at the front: I went with assistant doctors and sanitary attendants to pick the wounded at the front line. I mobilized a field hospital and received the wounded, cleaned their wounds and applied bandages and sometimes I closed their eyes and heard their final sighs.

In early 1943 I was sent to the 28th Guard Division that had recently escaped from encirclement. Chief of medical logistics of the division had perished and I replaced him. This was a major's position and I was promoted to senior lieutenant. I went across Ukraine with this division. We liberated a number of towns in the south and east, Moldavia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Our unit was a rear unit of the frontline following the regiment. We got under firing and bombings, but

the Lord guarded me. I might have perished many times, and I remained safe just by chance. In 1943 I received medal 'For valor'.

The war was over, when I was in the Bulgarian town of Yambol near Sophia. We came there in the end of 1944. We were accommodated in the houses and I must say that Bulgarians greeted us happily and sincerely. I made friends with my landlady. I even have a photo where I was photographed wearing her suit that I borrowed. I was so tired of wearing my boots and soldier's shirt, but I had to wear them for a year after the victory. Our division stayed in Bulgaria until January 1946. I was responsible for medical supplies, and they didn't demobilize me.

In January 1946 our unit relocated to Odessa. At that time Vasiliy Matveyuk, a military doctor, began to court me. Vasiliy is Ukrainian, but nationality didn't matter to me. Vasiliy was born in Chernorutka village of Fastov district Kiev region in 1914. Before the war he finished a Medical College and became a military doctor in the army. Vasiliy was single and was very kind and nice to me. He was telling me to marry him and in 1946 I married Vasiliy. I demobilized and Vasiliy continued his service.