

David Lebkovich

Russian Vets

Lebkovich 1

Duration 10:39

- 00:00 (Interviewer intro) 00:10
- 00:10 (Lebkovich) Aha...um...My name is David Lebkovich. I was born on May 1, 1923. What else? (Interviewer) Where were you born?00:30
- 00:30 (Lebkovich) I was born in Vitebsk. We were evacuated from Vitebsk to Chkalov region during the war. (Interviewer) Let's begin from the beginning. What did you do before the war?00:46
- 00:46 Before the war I was a young boy. I worked as an electrician. Um...I worked as an electrician till the very end. From...from Vitebsk...we were evacuated. We were evacuated to Chkalov region. 01:14
- 01:14 I enrolled in a driver's school. That was a preparatory course, just 6 months long, if I am not mistaken. I went to a driver's school. Once I graduated, I was drafted to the army, 2 months later. 01:37
- 01:37 I was drafted to the army. We were kept in Chkalov region, going to polygons, doing nothing...just a chit chat...they weren't preparing us for the combat activities, just talking, "What are you? Who are you? How did you sleep? With who did you sleep?" etc. (chuckling) 02:05
- 02:05 After Chkalov region... Ah...I had worked for a short while at a grinding mill, right before the war. After receiving my driver's licence, I had worked at a grinding mill for a short while. 02:22
- 02:22 3 months later probably... I was drafted to the army. It wasn't until 6 months or so later that I was drafted to the army. I was drafted to the army in '41. We were busy with our drills and push-ups, "Stand up! Sit down!" etc. 02:52
- 02:52 3 months later we were transferred to Stalingrad area. We got off the train near Stalingrad, on the approaches to Stalingrad, 25 kilometres or so, maybe 30, away from Stalingrad. 03:26
- 03:26 Near Stalingrad... oh and also, I was a mortar man too. I was trained in mortars too. However, I didn't get to shoot before the war... in the army...before the war... rather before being drafted. 03:42
- 03:42 Afterwards, when I was taken to Chkalov...rather Chelyabinsk region...rather Stalingrad region...we were sent... I was a mortar man while at the front line. 03:56
- 03:56 We were stationed in a village. I was a mortar man. It had been a month since I came there. A man approached me, "David, do you have your driver's licence with you?" 04:10

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- 04:10 I go, "Yes, I do. Why?" "They are making up a list of drivers". I went there. I was put on the list. They verified my info. I drove a ZIS 5. Do you remember? At that time, I was assigned to drive a one-and-a-half-ton truck. 04:32
- 04:32 I wasn't a great driver, driving that truck. It was a lightweight truck and my skills were a little rusty at that time, after driving a ZIS. We were sent...I served as a mortar man for about 3 months. 04:50
- 04:50 When they started making a list of drivers, I went there, and I was given a ZIS 5 truck, that was a one-and-a-half-ton truck. I lugged a lightweight artillery gun, a 45 mm one. 05:12
- 05:12 That was an antipersonnel gun, that was all, nothing else. It wasn't meant for knocking down tanks. I was demobilized... ah and... (Interviewer asks questions) Were you a driver in Stalingrad? (Lebkovich) Yes. (Interviewer) Were you involved in the Battle of Stalingrad? (Lebkovich) Before Stalingrad? (Interviewer) Tell us about Stalingrad. 05:48
- 05:48 We got...um...it took us awhile to get to Stalingrad. We walked for 3 nights...on foot... village Karpovskaya...I forget... or... we were stationed there. On arrival, we found barracks and soldiers there. 06:15
- 06:15 In the morning, after our first night there, we started moving to Stalingrad. Stalingrad had been destroyed already. We could see, from the opposite side of the river that Stalingrad was in ruins. 06:36
- 06:36 Near Stalingrad, I... oh and after being a driver...I keep mixing... I keep forgetting... (interviewer gives instructions. conversation) (Lebkovich)I am mixing up, I am not prepared... I tell episodes, because it's difficult to recall everything in sequence. (Conversation) 07:13
- 07:08 (Lebkovich) Afterwards, I received... oh, there was a village called Gumrak near Stalingrad. There were lots of cars and trucks in that village. I picked a truck without a truck bed. 07:32
- 07:32 It was called Bogward. That was a French made vehicle. We installed the truck bed taken from another vehicle and I started driving that truck. I carried a 76 mm artillery gun. 07:55
- 07:55 We were in combat action...all the time, with no breaks. I wasn't exactly in combat action, my task was to supply our regiment with shells. I drove to pick up shells. Once, at night, in a freezing cold weather... my radiator was covered on the outside. 08:32
- 08:30 I lost it in the wind, I lost the cover, and the radiator froze. Is it necessary to tell? (Interviewer) Please go on, it's interesting! (Lebkovich) I was alone in an open steppe. I lied down, it was in the early morning hours. 08:56
- 08:56 I saw a village in the distance. I went there, to the village. I knew the phone number I needed to call. I didn't know how to find officers. 3 hours later, I found a sublieutenant. 09:26

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- 09:26 I told him everything; he made a call. An emergency repairs team arrived taking off and defreezing the radiator; and I was on my way to pick up shells. I used to carry shells for artillery guns and missiles for Katyusha's. 09:47
- 09:47 I also used to carry gasoline, for some time; later on they used fuel tanks to fuel vehicles. They used to give us canisters to pour gas into. After Stalingrad, we went to the Kursk Bulge. 10:20
- 10:20 The Kursk Buldge was even worse than Stalingrad. (Background conversation)10:39
- 10:39
End of file
- Lebkovich 2
Duration 4:06
- 00:00 (Interviewer) What was after Stalingrad? 00:07
- 00:07 (Lebkovich) After Stalingrad, we were sent to the Kursk Bulge which was even worse than Stalingrad. By the time we arrived, there had been too many casualties in the Battle of Stalingrad, those who had been in action 00:22
- 00:22 Those who were the first in action were the first to be killed. That was the way it was until the end of the war. First in action, first killed. 00:34
- 00:34 Too many casualties. The snow was covered with dead bodies. At night, a cart would come to pick up dead bodies. All night through, they carried and carried and carried...00:49
- 00:49 After the Battle of Stalingrad I got to a tank unit at the Kursk Bulge. I would deliver gas and ammunition. I had to drive to the station named Kachalino to pick up ammunition. 01:19
- 01:19 I think it's still there. I drove over frozen water; water would run over the ice. While we drove, there was a wharf on the opposite side with a passage in between. 01:43
- 01:43 When you are behind the wheel, you've got to look at the passage instead of the water, in order to get to the opposite side. Too many people drowned there too. God helped me. 01:58
- 01:58 Um...We carried... the last time...The Katyusha's used to give a salvo and take off right away: the smoke from the explosion... from the fire... the rails... Katyusha's were mounted on rails...the smoke remained for some time after the salvo, so the Germans could see where the Katyusha's were located. 02:29
- 02:29 So they would give a salvo and take off right away. When we were near Kursk, the Germans were not able to knock down Katyusha's. So they stayed in one place, don't know how long. 02:46

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- 02:46 We also carried missiles for Katyusha's, to the unit...ah...near the village of Kobylevka...Kobylevka...those were villages we cleaned up from the Germans. We would enter a village on one end, and the Germans would leave it on the other end. 03:07
- 03:07 That was like a tall tale. Nobody can say that wasn't possible. That was what would happen during the war. There were many tales during the war. 03:20
- 03:20 (Interviewer) Tell some memorable episodes. 03:33
- 03:33 (Lebkovich) Um... I don't know... I was contused. A bomb blew up near my truck, hell knows where it had come from. My ears got blocked. After a short while I was back at my work. I was sick... [a phone rings] 04:06
- 04:06 End of file
- Lebkovich 3
Duration 7:50
- 00:00 (Interviewer) What was after the Battle of Kursk?00:06
- 00:06 (Lebkovich) Um...Kursk was taken. The Germans were thrown out of Kursk. We... we didn't enter Kursk. Um... from Kursk... ah...76 mm artillery guns were taken away from us. Instead, we were given 76 mm self-propelled guns. 00:37
- 00:37 The 76 mm self-propelled guns were used in combat. For my fast work... the first day we broke the encirclement...I was awarded the Medal for Bravery. (Interviewer) Were you encircled in Kursk? 01:09
- 01:09 (Lebkovich) We were... it turned out, we were encircled by the Germans while the Germans were encircled by us. That was a double encirclement. 01:17
- 01:17 As I mentioned before, we would enter a village, while the Germans would leave on the other end of the village. That was how close to each other we would be. 01:28
- 01:28 We liberated many cities. We saw the end of the war in Czechoslovakia. After peace had been concluded with the Germans, we continued to fight in the mountains for 6 more days. 01:58
- 01:58 It was only then that the quiet time settled down. After Kursk...I can't recall now...what particular cities we liberated. Kiev had been already taken by our troops. 02:28
- 02:28 The enemy had been cleaned up from Ukraine. However, we continued fighting against the Bandera army. They were bothering us a little. One night, I was standing on guard. I saw a man in a suit running with his body bent down. 02:54

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- 02:54 I shot and hit his leg. Afterwards, I was awarded Medal for Combat Merit. Um... I don't remember well now... (Interviewer) What did you do after the war?03:19
- 03:19 (Lebkovich) After the war? After the war we came to Ivano-Frankivsk. I worked as a driver in Ivano-Frankivsk, delivering groceries...um...Afterwards we left Ivano-Frankivsk for Chernivtsi. 03:39
- 03:39 In Chernivtsi, I, too, worked as a driver. Um...I worked delivering groceries... um...gasoline was being distributed from fuel tanks which made my life easier. What else? (Interviewer) As a Jew during the war, were you mistreated? 04:18
- 04:18 (Lebkovich) I had 4 friends, ethnic Russians. One of them was Kolya from Tambov, the second one was Petya Semagin from Chelyabinsk region; the third one was Fedya from Kharkov. They used to defend me with might and main. 04:40
- 04:40 When someone called me "Kike", Kolya who was a big guy, came up to him and gave him a heck of a smack so that he fell down. Later on, he complained about Kolya's giving him a smack. 04:56
- 04:56 In return, he was told that I was a Red Army soldier, not a Kike. I never saw him afterwards, the guy who had called me a Kike. I didn't feel any difference, not at all! 05:13
- 05:13 There were occasional escapades. One guy, by the name of Birioukov, a sublieutenant...once, he said to me that he had a respect for me as a soldier, but he had no respect for me as Lebkovich. 05:30
- 05:30 I said, "You're an idiot!" Kolya was there for me too; he came up to him [inaudible], saying "Get out of here!" He went away. They were good guys and real friends. 05:46
- 05:46 Once, Petya Semagin woke me up in the middle of the night, "David, get up, I've got a piece of bread and butter for you". Good old mate, Petya was. 05:59
- 05:59 Later on, I was demobilized from the army, that was in Chernivtsi. I left Chernivtsi for Canada. That's a short story of my life! (Chuckling) (Interviewer)06:26
- 06:26 (Lebkovich) I had good friends. We wrote letters to each other for a long time. Um...There was one more friend, Valentin Mayorov... I forgot to mention...He used to cry when he didn't get to see me for a long time. 06:40
- 06:40 They were good friends. I was good to them too! Very good! If I had some food, I always shared with them. Those were great guys, yes they were. I didn't sense any of that. 06:57
- 06:57 Take my brother-in-law. He was an infantry soldier. His mates always bothered him, trying to hurt him. His corporal used to turn a blind eye at that.

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Once, in a hand-to-hand fight, when a German was about to thrust his bayonet into the corporal, Izya kicked and killed him with a gun butt. From that time on, nobody ever bothered Izya. 07:30

07:30 He was a good brother-in-law, he was. He was wounded in the left arm. My other brother-in-law was wounded in the right arm; both of them were shot with explosive bullets. 07:40

07:40 The story of my life is very short, sorry about that. (Background conversation) 07:50

07:50 End of file

Lebkovich 4
Duration 1:53

00:00 At first, they were going to award me the Order of Patriotic War. Instead of the Order of Patriotic War, I was awarded a Medal for Bravery. (Interviewer) Tell us about your medals. 00:14

00:14 (Lebkovich) I have Medal for Bravery, and Medal for Combat Merit, that's all I have. (Interviewer) Any medals for liberation of cities? 00:23

00:23 I didn't take them. (Interviewer) You didn't...(Lebkovich) I'm not taking them here either. (Interviewer) Yes, I've heard...(Lebkovich) There was a 70-years commemorative anniversary medal here...(Interviewer) Right, right...00:32

00:32 (Lebkovich) I'm not into playing with them, no, I'm not. I know some guys are suckers for pinning up those medals for liberating cities, thinking those are important medals. 00:44

00:44 Right, there was no respect, whatsoever! We moved to Chernivtsi, there was no place to live in. Those who hadn't been in action, had best apartments; I was with wife and a baby, and no place to live in. 01:04

01:04 They gave me a shabby little apartment, I had to renovate it myself to make a liveable place. Much later, the government gave me an apartment. No respect at all! 01:18

01:18 That's what was surprising about that. I went through hard times and had no place to live in with my family. I came home from the war, and I had no money. Those who hadn't been in action, had all the money they needed. 01:45

01:45 They would buy good apartments. (Interviewer wraps up). 01:53

01:53 End of file

End of interview