

I didn't know my great-grandfather. All I have of him is his name and birthdate. All I know is that at the age of twenty like most people at that time he went off the war. Sometimes I think about how his life might have unfolded if he had stayed. Whether he would have more sons and daughters, whether he had been able to babysit his grandchildren and meet his great-grandchildren? Or maybe he would become a great person, or engaged in politics, or business, some fields of science, for no matter how you look at it, his youth was ended, his life was cut short at the very start. What if nothing of that had happened: no guns, no tanks, no starvation, no cold, no war, no deaths? Surprisingly it's difficult even to imagine it. The world without wars like a fire that doesn't burn, is something impossible, too sweet to one who wants to believe but can't believe. After all, our entire lives, perhaps since the dawn of humanity, seem to be nothing but an endless, continuous massacre. Wars end, then start again and the victory has to be torn out not with teeth but with bones, sacrificing something greater than just the body. And I don't know how to feel about this, whether to be proud of what our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers did or to mourn of their stolen youth, the happy days they could have but couldn't live? I'm sure that wars are poison and their antidote is a peaceful sky over heads, a life to be lived, not endured. I can do this. I can live, smile, laugh, cry, sleep, knowing that all is well for the moment and that I don't need to be afraid. All this is thanks to their sacrifice, the courage and strength of those people whose faces I saw from my early childhood in the images of the immortal regiments. They are my flesh and blood, children of a cyclically returning history, who did everything possible to ensure that none of what happened then would ever happen again and the gratitude I can offer them always have been, is and will be in how quiet it becomes in my chest with just one combination of numbers – 1941-1945. Grandfather Konstantin Mikhailovich, thank you, and you, Grandmother Marfa Ivanovna, thank you. Thank you all for the deed you performed. I hope that in the end you and all those who gave us this life will not be disappointed. You will never say "It's a pity" looking into the present, having seen how the world has changed eighty years later – eighty years after humanity's main victory over inhumanity.



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