



# T-34 STORY

OR

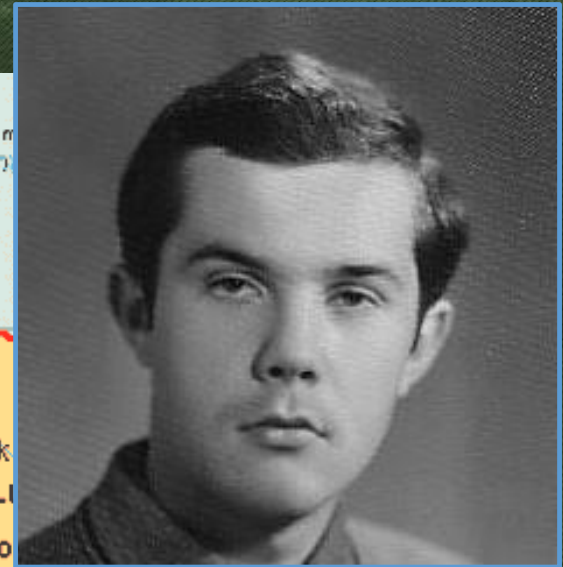
## WHY I STARTED MAKING SCALE MODELS

by Serge Kaznadiy

2016



I was born in Kirovohrad, Ukraine when it was part of the Soviet Union, or the USSR, for short. Being a country with centralized government-run economy, the USSR did not have too many fancy consumer goods. In fact, its goods were not fancy at all. Hobby groups were literally non-existent, as the government did not encourage any groups with any interests at all. The hobby scene was dull.



Serge  
Kaznadiy  
1971

**KIROVOHRAD**





Hobby kits were almost non-existent as well, except for a few ideologically inspired ones, like 1:800 scale *Battleship Potiomkin* (left) and cruiser *Aurora* which occupied a prominent place in the history of Bolshevism. There were models of 1:35 KV tank (below) and a couple of self-propelled guns. Kits included only a bottle of glue but no decals or paints. The kits were sold in so-called *Kulttovari* (Cultural Items) stores. No paints, tools or lacquers were available.





Luckily (or not) there was East Germany which retained its European traditions, including those in manufacturing consumer goods which were of far better quality than those made in the USSR.

This applied to hobby model kits as well. The East German government created VEB Plasticart in 1958, a company which offered almost Tamiya-level 1:100 scale model kits in fancy semi-gloss boxes with attractive artwork. (Germany!) The only limitation was that Plasticart offered only plane and heli models (mostly Soviet ones) and a Soviet *Vostok* spaceship. No armor or ships kits ☹️ Kits by Plasticart were only available in Moscow, the capital city of the Soviet empire, and a few other large cities like Leningrad or Kiev.

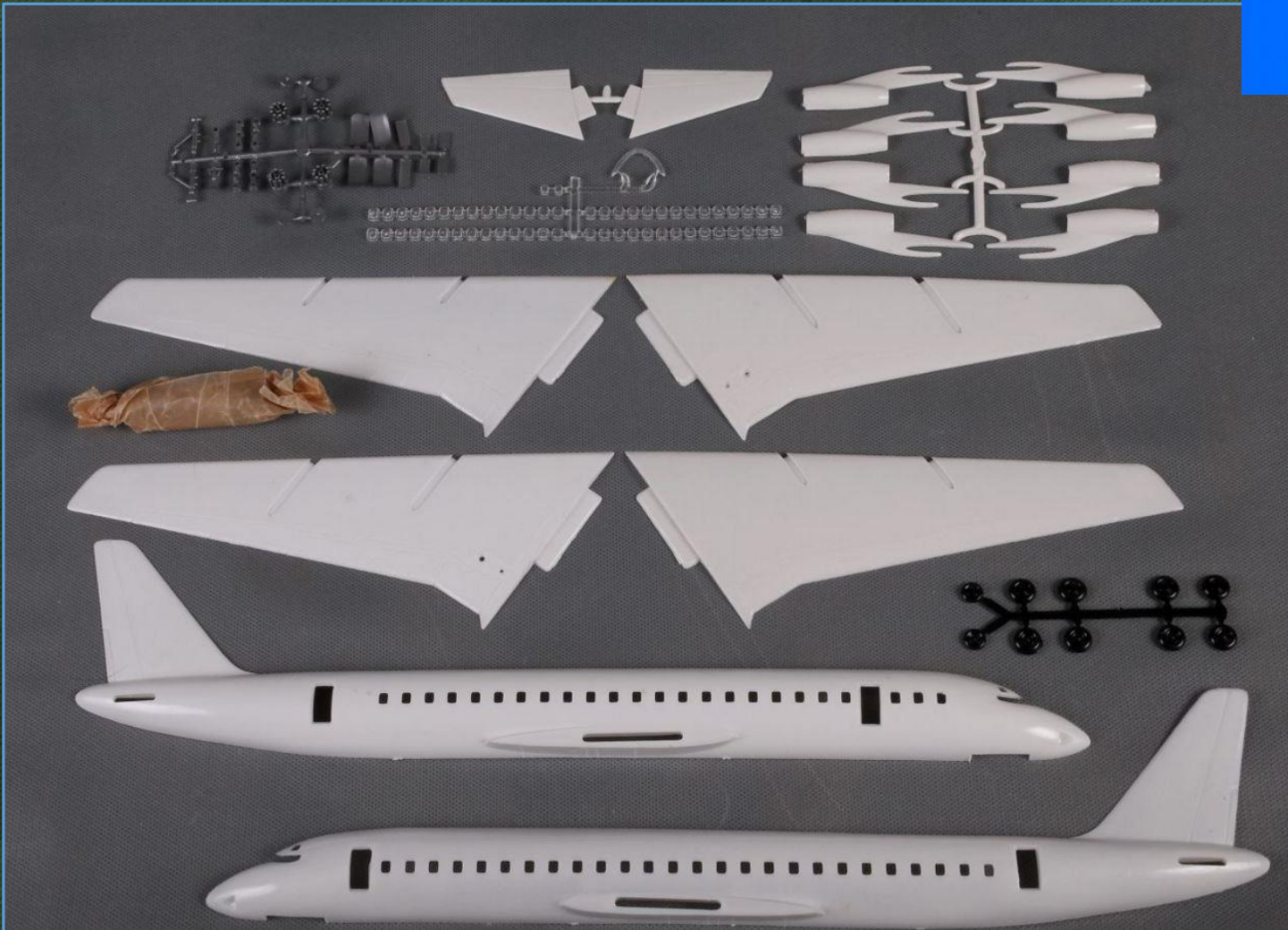
I was lucky to study in Moscow for 5 years, and I assembled 6 Plasticart kits.



1:100 SCALE



Plasticart kits contained a tube with glue and a tube with silver paint, wrapped together like a candy on the photo below. The chassis were made of silvery plastic, wheels of black plastic, and you only had to paint the wings and underbody in silver. And apply decals. Done!





I assembled the KLM DC-8-53, Air France Caravelle, B.O.A.C Comet, Swedish SAAB Draken fighter, Soviet Tupolev "Bear" bomber and Soviet MI-10 "Skycrane" helicopter. That was half of ALL that was available in the USSR. Again, no tanks, ships, cars or figures.



I think Wheels & Wings Hobbies has about 200 times better choice of kits now than the entire USSR had at that time



KLM DC-8-53

I very much liked the KLM DC-8-53 model, and I dreamt of boarding a plane like that and flying to different countries and continents. Unfortunately, the model did not live to this time. As a token of memory about it, I bought the 1:400 diecast replica by *Aeroclassics* in 2014.



Air France  
Aerospatiale Caravelle

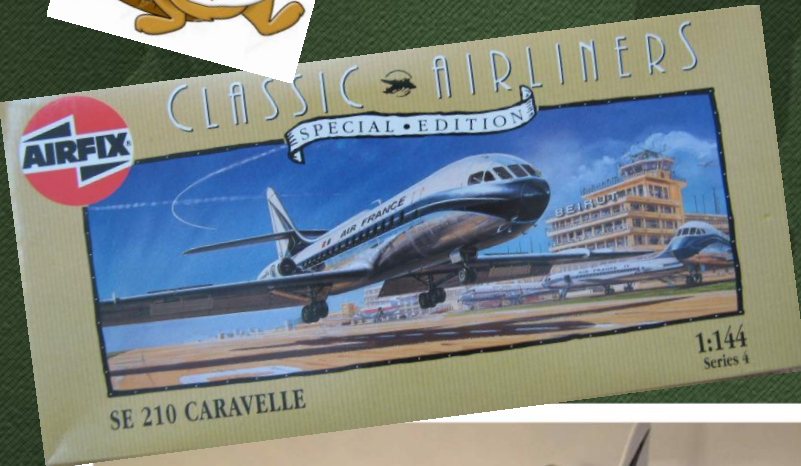


# OH, CANADA!!!



When I arrived in Canada, I assembled the 1:144 Caravelle scale model by Airfix, *in memoriam* of the lost Caravelle model I made as a teenager in 1972.

Thanks to a fantastic selection of hobby products in Canada, I also added figures of N-scale passengers boarding the Caravelle. I bought the figures at *Credit Valley Trains* in Mississauga. The figures are glued to a piece of plastic packaging.





# T-34 TANK WAS DESIGNED IN KHARKIV, UKRAINE IN 1940



T-34



MIKHAIL KOSHKIN  
1898-1940



City of Kharkiv,  
Ukraine





MY FATHER IVAN KAZNADIY (EXTREME RIGHT) WAS A T-34-75 MACHINE-GUNNER AND RADIO OPERATOR. PHOTO TAKEN IN GURNO, POLAND, 1944

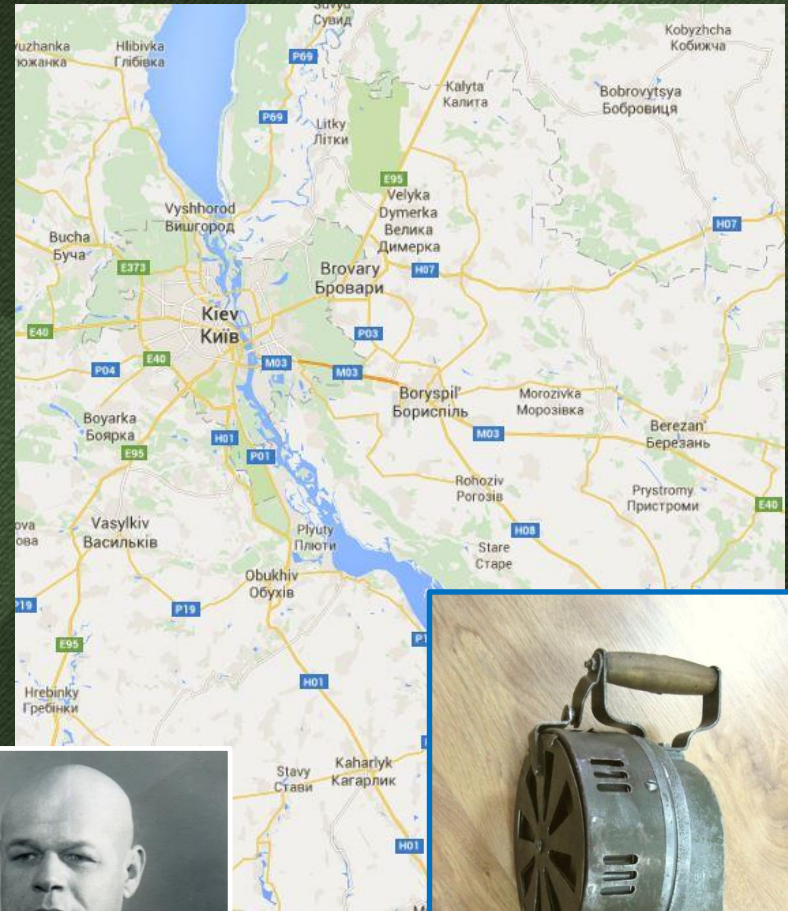


HIS TANK WAS PART OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> TRAINING ARMOR REGIMENT, 3<sup>RD</sup> TANK ARMY OF THE GUARDS, 1<sup>ST</sup> UKRAINIAN FRONT UNDER THE COMMAND OF GENERAL PAVLO RYBALKO



## BATTLE OF KIEV – FALL OF 1943

My Dad joined the Armor Corps in August 1943. He finished the hastily created 2<sup>nd</sup> Military School in Omsk, Siberia, and he got the rank of a Sergeant. His tank participated in the Forced Crossing of the Dnieper River as part of the Battle of Kiev Offensive. To ensure a sudden and concealed attack of 200 tanks, General Pavlo Rybalko (right photo), Commander of the 3-rd Tank Army of the Guards, decided to use manually operated air raid sirens which were used by every second tank crew on the turret. The sirens produced a lot of noise and thus subdued the noise made by tank engines. The Germans could not understand why the Soviets signal air raids with no German air raids in the area, which ensured a successful offensive. The offensive lasted for 10 days, and Kiev was finally liberated on 13 November 1943, with 22 German tanks destroyed and 2,546 Germans taken prisoners.



GENERAL P. RYBALKO  
1894-1948



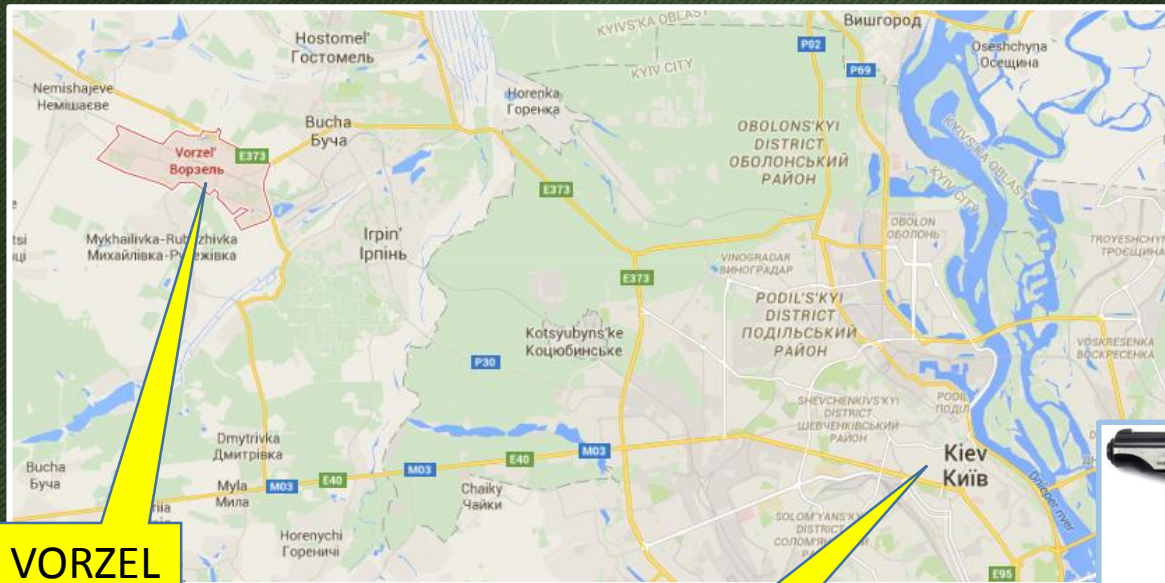
SOVIET AIR RAID SIREN



However, despite a generally successful attack, my Dad's tank was hit on 4 November 1943 in the picturesque resort town of Vorzel, some 40 km from Kiev. Luckily, no one got killed as the shell was a non-explosive round with armor piercing core but it jammed the turret. The crew left their T-34 through a bottom escape hatch, and my Dad tore his new uniform, as the edges of the hatch were not trimmed properly at the tank factory. They just cut out the circle with acetylene torch and attached the cover.

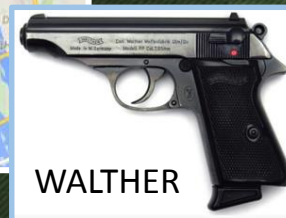


My Dad was running away from the tank, blind-shooting from his captured German *Walther P38* hand gun which the Soviet Command tried to give to tank crews wherever possible, as it was smaller than the Russian-made *Tokarev TT* hand gun.



VORZEL

KIEV



WALTHER



TOKAREV TT



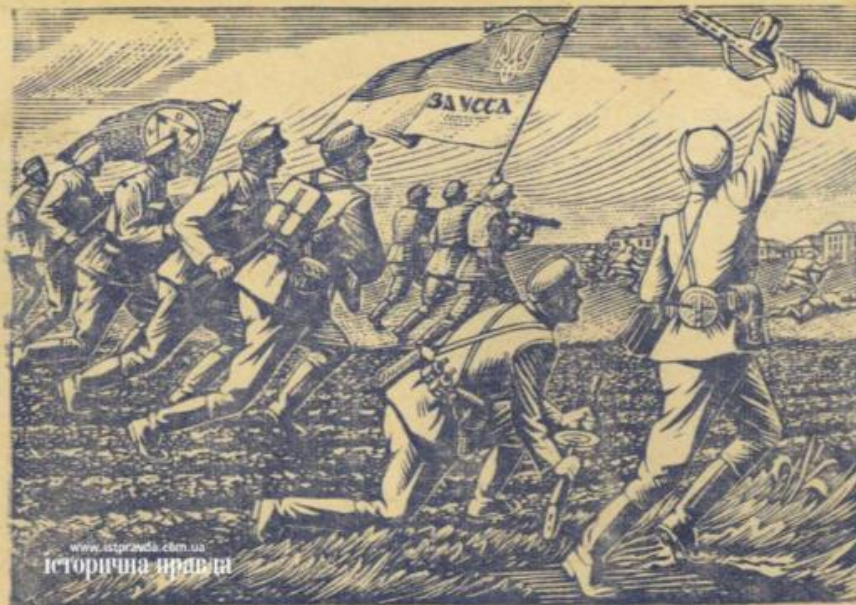
Ukrainians were divided in WWII. Western Ukrainians who suffered a lot from Soviet regime shortly before the war, joined German units, like the Waffen SS Division *Galizien*, while Eastern Ukrainians were drafted by Communist draft boards and they fought in the Red Army. Apart from that, Ukrainians formed the so-called Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA) which fought against the Nazis and the Soviets.



The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was a Ukrainian military formation and later guerilla army that engaged in a series of battles during WWII against Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Communist Poland.



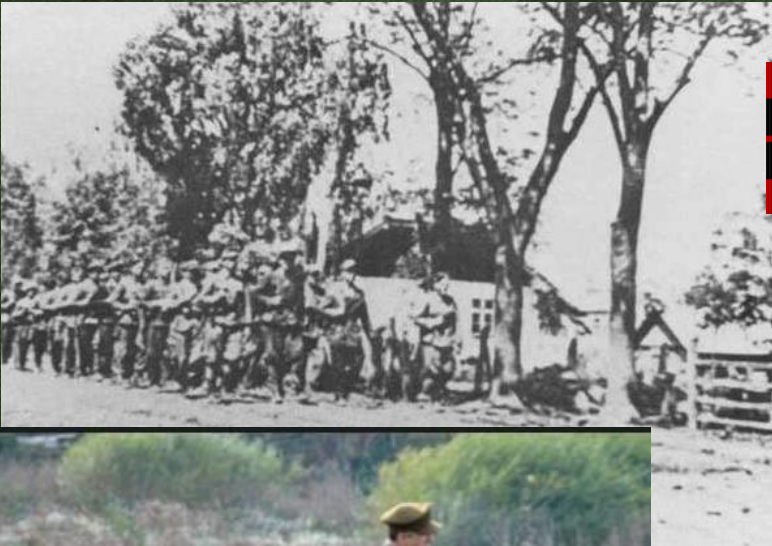
UIA EMBLEM





## COMBAT NEAR SHEPETIVKA, WESTERN UKRAINE (BATTLE OF GURBY)

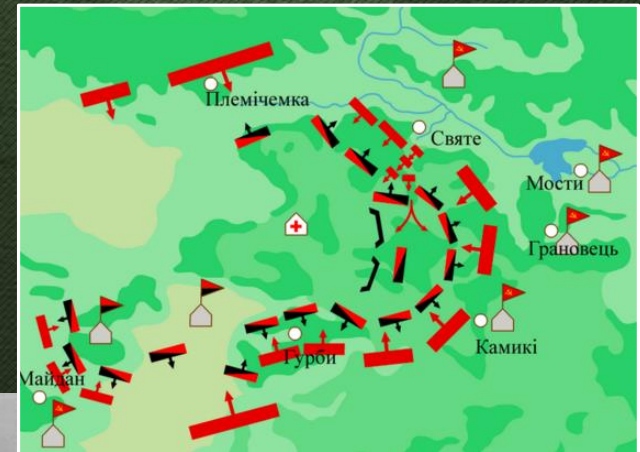
After the Battle of Kiev, the Soviets moved westwards practically unimpeded until they reached Western Ukraine and clashed with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army which resulted in a series of extensive combats in April 1944, including a fierce combat near the town of *Shepetivka*, where NKVD units supported by the Army tried to unsuccessfully encircle the UIA and lost many tanks and manpower. The UIA retreated and finally surrendered to the Allies in May 1945. Dad never told me about the *Shepetivka* combat, the story was later narrated by his T-34 crewmate Petro Pavlyuchenko, gunner.



UIA



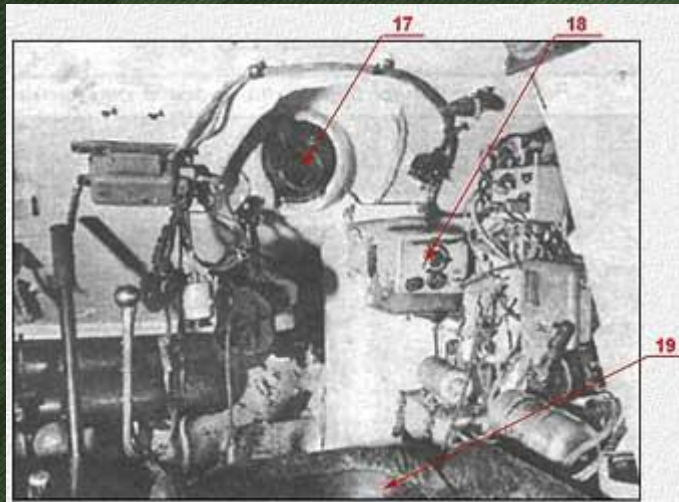
NKVD





In commemoration of my father's participation in WWII, I assembled this 1:35 T-34-75 model (1943 version) by Tamiya purchased at *Hornet Hobbies*, trying to make the tank look as close to the historic photo as possible (right). I only failed to remove the front mud flaps .

The bottom photo shows the inside of the T-34 machine-gun section complete with the radio station operated by my father.



## MY T-34 SCALE MODEL





# AUSTRIA - 1945

In May 1945, my father was transferred to a different unit which patrolled Austrian forests against the remaining Nazi fanatics, snipers and guerillas. To this end, the Soviet Command used the Lend-lease British Valentine Mk. IV tank.



In Austria, my father participated in army concerts, playing an accordion and he even wrote verses, possibly preparing for his subsequent theatrical career after the war.





When the crew received their new Valentine tank, my father was very impressed with the nicely packed and high-quality canned food and personal care products that came with the tank. He was especially impressed with the warm and nicely tailored tank crew clothes. Fearing guerilla attacks, the crew slept inside the tank, and the warm tank crew clothes came in very handy in the fall and in winter. He lived at Austrian family households in the towns of Ternitz/Winpassing and Neusiedl-am-See for two years. He was also quite impressed with the Bett Flasche (hot water bottle) which the Austrians put in his bed to warm it up before sleep as Austrians slept with their windows nearly half-open even in wintertime.



LEND-LEASE  
FOOD  
SAMPLES



BETT FLASCHE



Commemorating my father's service in Austria, I assembled a 1:35 Valentine Mk. IV tank model made by the Ukrainian MiniArt company. The kit consisted of about 630 parts, including 200 individual track links which was hard to put together. The kit also included parts made from thin metal. Apart from very detailed exterior, the model also has an equally detailed interior complete with gun mechanism, machine gun, radio station, driver's seat and all the controls.



Having assembled the model with figure 52 on the turret, I later found – by an interesting coincidence -- an archive photo of an unidentified 52-marked tank. The MiniArt 4-version paint guide read the tank comes from an “Unknown regiment” Most likely, it was Eastern Europe anyway.



Having patrolled the Austrian forests for two years, my father was then transferred to an Air Force unit patrolling Soviet air space near the Baltic states. My father was a cockpit gunner on a Petlyakov Pe-2 assault plane and he flew out of an air base near Viborg, the former Finnish town of Viipuri. He only served for 4 months and he was then demobilized and returned home. I am currently assembling the 1:72 Pe-2 from a vintage model kit made by Airfix in the 1970s and given to me as a gift, also by an interesting coincidence. My father then graduated from a Theatrical Arts Academy and he became a stage director at a theater in Central Ukraine. He staged over 70 stage productions and he played 10 roles.

## COCKPIT GUNNER



DRINKING PARTY AT AN AIR BASE NEAR VIBORG





# IVAN KAZNADIY



GURNO, POLAND, 1944



1926 - 2006



# THANK YOU FOR WATCHING !



( Questions? [kaznady@gmail.com](mailto:kaznady@gmail.com) )