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The beginning of Our War

Our war began two days before the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2024. Our war began at the Mykola Amosov National Institute of Cardiovascular Surgery.

It all started unexpectedly with 6.5 hours of open-heart surgery for my wife Natalie with artificial blood circulation and cardiac arrest. Moreover, from my waiting in the car during this whole operation.

A day and a half later, at 5:30 in the morning, a phone call rang out from an employee of Bohdan's son's company about the beginning of a full-scale war. I refused her proposed evacuation.

Kyivians were frightened by the explosions in the city.



A house on Bogatyrskaya Street in Kyiv after Russian shelling, 14.03.2022. Author: State Emergency Service of Ukraine.
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=332344232266806&set=pcb.332344378933458> (Revised: 10.07.2024)



A house in Kyiv in Podilsky District after russian shelling. 15.03.2022. Author: State Emergency Service of Ukraine. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=332944558873440&set=pcb.332944848873411> (Revised: 10.07.2024)



Kyiv. Sunday morning, June 26, 2022. Residential areas in Kyiv were hit by russian missiles. Photo: Mykola Tymchenko. <https://vechimy.kyiv.ua/news/68215/> (Revised: 10.07.2024)

In addition, at that time, at the other end of the city, which woke up from the explosions and began to move to the west of the country, my wife was in intensive care. I felt the distance and disunity of the family more deeply than ever.

Just then, my son and his wife were returning home from the powerlifting competition from the west of the country, and their train was delayed due to shelling of the railway.

Then every minute it was difficult to wait for irreversible changes. This feeling grew stronger as I read the news that was getting worse.

This feeling was especially intensified when fragments of a shot-down rocket fell 100 meters away in the yard of the houses opposite. A fire broke out – black smoke rose for a long time. After all, dozens of cars were burned and windows were broken in all the houses of the yard. All in 4-5 buildings with 16 floors each!

I spoke with my wife only when a professor, the surgeon who operated on her, came to see her in the intensive care unit. Her weak voice inspired hope.

Five days after the operation, I took Natalya from the hospital, and we were already listening to the explosions outside the window together.

This is how the first week of the war passed, the most difficult for our family. If only we knew that the most difficult thing was ahead!

The war destroyed not only the usual life of the capital but also the logistics chains in the supply of medicines, and caused the departure of some doctors and laboratory technicians in medical institutions.

Therefore, in ten days it turned out that there was no one to analyze the tumor removed from Natalie's heart. We took it in formalin in a plastic container to Lviv, and then abroad.

At that time, the Russian troops were already on the line of the Irpin River, battles were going on near Moschun, blood was being shed and trouble was spreading throughout Ukraine.

We decided to go to Western Ukraine – this was advised by the head doctor of the National Cancer Institute since treatment in Kyiv was not possible then, for which we are grateful to him.

Departure was difficult, but we did not complain. It was hard for everyone then. We left Kyiv on March 5. At the height of the battles for the capital. I was not worried about myself, but about how Natalya would endure the long journey. It took 4.5 hours to leave the city. Previously, this road took 18-20 minutes. Bridges were partially closed, and roadblocks showed maximum attention to passengers and cars. Then there was a long road to Skvira. In this way, we managed to meet our children, a son, and his wife. In addition, this meeting on the road was an attempt to capture the moment, to keep hope for Natalochka's happy return and recovery.

The first day on the road was difficult. I did not get up from behind the wheel for 17 hours. It was difficult, but I could not even imagine how difficult it was for Natalka. Nevertheless, she, as always courageously, steadfastly endured the difficult road like everything in life.

The unfamiliar road looked especially scary, completely broken by potholes at two o'clock in the morning and in the villages (where road signs were removed or wrapped in black film) where hundreds of cars were parked along the road. They spent the night because of the curfew.

We drove through roadblocks with village uncles with hunting rifles, with military and territorial defense with assault rifles. We drove and prayed that none of them would lose their temper. With wild surprise, they perceived a lonely car on the road at night and under such circumstances. However, after the explanations, everyone understood that we were in a hurry.

“The world is not without good people” – so says the folk saying. Moreover, indeed, at four o'clock in the morning in Lityn, Vinnytsia region, an unknown woman was waiting for us. She waited and prepared food for us.

In addition, even after 17 hours of travel, we could not refuse this dinner (and breakfast, and as it turned out lunch) at half past five in the morning, or maybe already in the morning. In two hours, we woke up and were on the road again. We had time to refuel (the line at the gas station took two hours), and then we drove non-stop for 14 hours to Bolekhov, Ivano-Frankivsk region.

We were going to our friend and colleague, history teacher Lidia Mykhailivna. She accepted us as family and supported us for a month.

We went with the hope to get help from the Lviv Regional Oncology Center. Moreover, indeed, we were accepted. Natalie underwent one chemotherapy.

During air raids, all cancer patients were lowered into an unsuitable, cold basement. A day after the first chemotherapy, the enterprise in hundred meters from the center was hit by a rocket fire.

The war also caught us in Lviv. Therefore, we decided to go to Munich, where our children were already looking for treatment options. We left on April 5 with high hopes and expectations for recovery. However, these dreams were not destined to come true....

War has different dimensions, and each has its own, painful and bitter.

Believe in our Victory! Stay with Ukraine!