

A Widow's Revenge

Mariya Oktyabrskaya was a telephone operator, wife of a Soviet army officer, and the proud owner of a T-34 tank, which she used to kill enough Nazis in World War II to earn her the title of *Hero of the Soviet Union*.



Here's her story. After the outbreak of war, Mariya was evacuated to Siberia while her husband went off to fight. He was killed almost immediately, although the news didn't reach Mariya until nearly two years later. Driven by rage, and with nothing left to lose, Mariya sold her house and belongings in exchange for a T-34 tank, which she donated to the Soviet Union under the condition that she be the one to drive it.

Although her unit was initially skeptical of what they saw as nothing more than a publicity stunt, their opinions quickly changed after her first battle, in which she eliminated numerous machinegun nests, artillery guns and the Nazis who manned them. When her tank was hit and immobilized by heavy enemy fire, she immediately jumped out to repair it. For this action, she was promoted to sergeant; goddess of steel might have been more appropriate.

Unfortunately, after many battles and many dead Germans, her luck caught up with her in January of 1944. She was killed during a battle near the village of Shvedy, while making yet more repairs to her immobilized tank. She did not, however, die before eliminating several machinegun nests, trenches, a self-propelled gun and yet more Nazis for good measure.

Revenge is a powerful motivator. It has the power to motivate a wife to sell everything, buy a T-34 tank and kill Nazis. What it doesn't have the power to do is to motivate us to forgive, to heal or to restore. Although Mariya Oktyabrskaya's story is one of great courage, there is nothing redemptive about it. That's because there is nothing redemptive in revenge.

Love, on the other hand, also has the power to motivate us to make great sacrifices. We see it often in the centers of Life Care and Century Park.

Jesus was motivated by love when He left it all behind and came to earth to fight the powers of sin and death. The difference is that once He accomplished His mission, He secured forgiveness, healing and restoration for all mankind.

No doubt the Apostle Paul was thinking of Jesus' example when he wrote, "Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord (Romans 12:19).

– Beecher Hunter