



## Stefan Dascalete

My great grandfather was Stefan Dascalete but we all used to call him Tatulicu. He was born on 26th of January 1922 in Horezu, Valcea. But after WW2 started, his life changed.

It was 1944 and for my great grandfather was an extremely difficult period ... "I remember exactly... After the armistice was signed, on

August 23, 1944, I set off with the Soviet army. In September, between the 10th and the 15th, I stayed with the regiment for two weeks, then I left for the front in Transylvania. I went by train to Târnăveni, then I went to near Oarba de Mureș. I stayed in reserve for a week, then I went directly to the front...", these were the kind of stories my great grandfather used to tell us. He was the regiment's telephone operator. For three weeks the front could not be broken, the mountains were the hardest. 11,000 people died there. The Germans then withdrew and they moved forward. The country was liberated! They crossed into Hungary, to a village where they stayed at an agricultural resort where there were famous wines. Tatulicu said he tasted the wines while they stayed there for two weeks - "In the evening, because during the day we had no choice. We couldn't sleep, we were on the switchboard, on the phone". They walked and walked, and finally arrived in Czechoslovakia. One evening they arrived in a village and knocked on a gate and the host came. He told us that we Romanians were thieves and would not let us in. Finally, he arrived in the Tatra Mountains, with snow all over the place... The fighting was fierce, he saw many people dying.

My great grandfather had a near death experience, and not in Hungary or Czechoslovakia, but actually on the Romanian front in Iași. It was on August 20, 1944, when the artillery started firing. At around 11 o'clock they received an order to retreat. They were on the right side of Iași city and retreated next to a forest. He received an order to make contact with a battalion and he had to go through the forest. With the phone in his hand, the machine with the cable on his back, he walked and as he reached 300 meters from the forest he saw a soldier with a rifle in a firing position. The soldier was on his left. When he looked again, the soldier wasn't there, they had shot him. I remember him saying "I ran as fast as I could, I could see the bullets

passing by me. I could have died then, but I was lucky". Indeed he was.

War was not just about battles, it was also about friendships. Tatulicu had made a friend, captain Popescu, who was from Stoenesti, a village not far from Horezu, my grandfather's hometown. One night he went to Captain Popescu, greeted him and talked a lot. They told each other stories, talked about their families. They were somewhere in Hungary, in a forest. Then, when Tatulicu left, Captain Popescu told him something he never forgot: "Dăscălete, we are not getting out of here alive!". My great grandfather encouraged him, told him that they were going home together and they would visit each other. Unfortunately, the poor guy had a premonition... At 8 in the morning, my great grandfather received a phone call telling him that Captain Popescu had died, and a projectile had fallen directly on him.

On May 9, 1945, the news was officially announced. War is over! Everyone was firing their guns in the air, with joy and happiness! My great grandfather finally left for home. Along with his comrades, he walked 20, 30 kilometers per day. They always started at night. This journey was also difficult, but they were happy that they were returning home after 4 years! They arrived in Romania in August, in Oradea where people were waiting for them with flowers. He said he will never forget that day either: "The captain came to see me. On one hand he had the order to leave the camp and be sent home and on the other hand the order to report to a military unit in Piatra Neamt. I had no choice, I had to go... and I stayed there for another year before I could finally go home". The irony is, he didn't suffer anything during the war, but there he ended up in the hospital after a car ran him over. "I didn't regret those years, but I really missed my country, my home."

After finally coming home from the war, he met and married my great grandmother who was the most beautiful girl in town, Aurelia. Together they had two daughters, my aunt Maria and my grandmother Elena. He worked in the food industry until 1985 when he retired. But my great grandfather was restless. He always felt the need to do something. So, only one year after his retirement, he decided to start his own business and rented a place in Horezu where he opened up a small shop. He ran his business all by himself meaning he would search and purchase his merchandise, he would arrange the merchandise in his shop, he kept his own accounting and he was the one and only salesman at his shop, every day from Monday to Saturday. On Sundays he would always go to church, where he had his own seat. This was his schedule until he reached 96. After my great grandmother died, he was never the same man. The last 2 years, he had spent them at home, with my aunt and uncle and with us, every time we went to see him.

## FUN FACTS

1. After WW2, he had never eaten potatoes again because during the war that was the only thing he could eat every day.
2. He loved doing work. Even when he was at home, he couldn't stay still so he was always doing something in the garden or the household, from cutting wood to fixing the fence, he always had chores to do.

My dear Tatulicu died at the age of 98, on 29th of February 2020, at home, in his bed. He was my favourite great grandfather. My mother gave me the name (Matei) Stefan, after him, because she also loved him very much. I am proud to be his nephew and wear his name and I am happy to be able to tell his life story and the history of his life in WW2.

( This story is written by Matei Moraru, a student in fifth grade, elementary school- Genesis College, București, Romania. This is the story of his grand.grandfather)