

Avi Dobrysh With His Mother Miriam Dobrysh And Aunt Lena Emelianova



From left to right: my mother Miriam Dobrysh, I, and my aunt Lena Emelianova, my father's younger sister. The picture was taken in Tallinn, when we went to visit Lena in 1941. On Sundays all members of the family spent time together. We used to walk around Tartu, had lunch in a restaurant. I was friends with the elder son of Father's brother Hirsh. He was two years older than me, and his brother was two years younger than me. I was closer with the elder one. In summer we went to the small town Elva, not far from Tallinn. Jewish traditions were observed in the family. Of course, my parents weren't as religious as my grandparents, but still we stuck to traditions. It has always been like that. Mother cooked dishes of the Jewish cuisine. We marked Jewish holidays at home. On holidays Father went to the synagogue. Unfortunately, I don't remember the details of the holiday. I remember that there was a whole box of matzah on Pesach. When I was a baby, I stealthily crawled into that box and ate matzah. My grandmother Roche-Leya often came from Tallinn to see us. I often went to Tallinn to see them. I was her first grandson and she loved me dearly. The family of my mother's parents lived on Raua Street in Tallinn. They owned some houses. Grandmother bought two log houses, and leased one of them. I remember two things from my childhood. My first recollection goes back to the time when the Swedish king came to Estonia for a visit. He came to Tartu and we went to welcome him. It was a warm spring day. There were crowds of people on the central square and an abundance of flowers. The orchestra made it even more festive. I also remember, when I was four, I underwent an appendix operation. The surgeon who had operated on me often came to my ward and played cards with me. When I asked where my appendix was he said that he had given it to the cat. When I was an adult, I bumped into that doctor in a restaurant. He put a bottle of cognac on the table and asked if he could join the youth. I said that I remembered him and told him the story. The doctor made a joke saying that I was a lucky patient, as most of his patients could not say that. I also remember events organized at the Jewish lyceum. There was a charitable lottery. As far as I remember, such events took place on Chanukkah. In 1941 I was enrolled in preschool at the Jewish lyceum. I didn't have a chance to go to school because the war broke out.