

Rosa Linger And Her Schoolmates



This is the picture of the 2nd grade of Liepaja Jewish lyceum named after Sholom Aleichem. The picture was recently sent to me by my former classmate Ilia Turok (the last to the left in the second row). I do not remember most of my classmates. I can recall their faces, but not the names. I am standing the first to the right in the 3rd row. As far as I remember, apart from Ilia the girl sitting to the left from the teacher is still alive. I think her name is Anna. Maybe there are some more people who are alive. I do not know for sure. Sarah Roshen, sitting in my row to the right from the teacher, became a famous violinist in Latvia. Most of my classmates died in holocaust. Some of them died lately. Ilia's father had lived in Southern Africa since late 1920s. He wanted to get settled there first and then take his family there. In the 1930s Ilia, the three of his brothers and mother left for Southern Africa. Thus, Illia happened to be in Capetown. He had lived there all his life. He was the chief architect of the city. When he retired, he came to Latvia with his wife. He was in Liepaja ,Riga. He knew my maiden name and found me. Thus we met again. We kept in touch for a while and then I got this photograph from him. It was made in Liepaja in 1930.

My parents got married in late 1919. Our family belonged to middle class. We were neither poor nor rich. I was the eldest child. I was born in 1921 in Liepaja and called Rosa. My Jewish name is Rohl-Leya. My middle sister Hinda was born in 1924 and younger, Sarah - in 1930. Parents ran business, so we always had maids at home- to cook food and watch children. Since childhood I could see from my parents how hard people should work in order to achieve anything in their life.

The first words spoken by me were in Russian. People spoke Russian to me at home until I turned the age of three. Since most population of Liepaja spoke German, I went to private German kindergarten to learn German. At home parents spoke Yiddish between themselves and I was well up in that language pretty soon. In pre-school age I spoke three languages fluently. Besides, father was fluent in Polish as village Borovka was on the border with Poland, and many Borovka dwellers spoke Polish.

All members of our family were pious. On Fridays parents finished work earlier and went to mikvah. When they came back, mother lit candles and prayed over them. Then everybody sat at the table.

Father said kidush over bread and everybody started festive dinner. On Saturday parents went to the synagogue obligatorily. None of my parents did work about the house on Saturdays. Father had a very beautiful voice so she worked part-time as a chazzan in Hasidic synagogue. When father came back from the synagogue, he read torah, and then all of us went to see some of our relatives.

My sisters and I went to Jewish school. In 1933 it was decided at the meeting of Jewish community of Liepaja that Jewish school with German teaching should be closed down. There were two schools like that and both of them were closed down. The following schools were in Liepaja: state Yiddish school state Ivrit, Liepaja State Jewish Lyceum named after Shalom Aleichem, and Lettish lyceum. Children were allowed to finish school year and then they were supposed to transfer to one of the above-mentioned schools. I went to State Jewish Lyceum named after Shalom Aleichem. It was a very good lyceum. Having finished that there was a chance to enter any university. The building of that lyceum is the only one out of all Jewish schools in Liepaja, which is still there. I successfully finished lyceum in 1939.