

Anatoli Kraemer With His Cousins Ilana And Aviva



From left to right: my cousin Ilana, I, and my cousin Aviva. We are celebrating my birthday. The photograph was taken in Tallinn in 1960.

I was a great patriot of Estonia. I saw the poor performance of kolkhozes. Estonia, having been world food exporter until 1940, could barely cover domestic needs. I decided that I should go to the villages. My friend was assigned the first secretary of the regional party committee in Otepää district, now a famous ski training area. He asked for my help. I moved there from Tallinn and worked there for four years.

I was appointed the director of the people's theater in Otepää. It was an amateur theater, the producer was the only professional there. They needed an organizer, who could make it work. I started organizing work enthusiastically. We repaired the theater building, chose a couple of plays and started rehearsals. It was very interesting; I even played some minor parts. I worked all day long.

After Otepää I was offered a job in Tallinn: to run the municipal culture palace. I was not provided with an apartment in Tallinn, but I could stay with my mother. After the war she received a small two-room apartment in the semi-basement. She managed to make it clean and cozy. My stepfather Mark Schynzvit was still alive. Neither my mother, nor my stepfather worked after the war. They got some skimpy pension, but they could get by with that. Of course, I tried helping them out with money, though my salary was not high. Besides, I was supposed to support my daughters. I could give my mother much less than I wanted to.

Mother was a good homemaker and she managed to make a living with the money she got. We did not observe the kashrut after the war, it was next to impossible. There was a deficit of primary

products, not to mention kosher ones. But still, if Mother bought live chickens on the market, she took them to a shochet to have them cut. We marked major Jewish holidays.