

Liya Kaplan With Her Siblings



This is me with my siblings. From left to right: Ida, Samuel, me, Vera, Rudolf. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1937. There were five children in the family. The eldest brother, Samuel, was named after my maternal grandfather. He was born on 4th April 1915. My elder sister Ida was born on 11th September 1916. My second sister Vera was born on 14th September 1918. Her Jewish name was Dveira. Rudolf was born on 9th November 1919. I, the youngest, was born in 1922. I was named Liya. There were two Jewish schools in Tallinn, both in the same building. There were only private Jewish schools, there were no state ones. In one school, classes were in Ivrit and in the other one they were in Yiddish. Most children didn't know Ivrit. That's why there was a kindergarten in the Ivrit school, which was attended by children at the age of six, one year before school. I also went to that kindergarten. At the age of seven I entered the Ivrit school, where my elder siblings went. Apart from Ivrit, we studied German, French and English. The school was secular, but we studied religion, history and Jewish tradition. We were members of youth Zionist organizations at school. I was a member of Hashomer Hatzair, my friend joined Betar. There was no animosity among us. Having finished at the Jewish high school both of my elder brothers entered the economics department at Tartu University. My brother Rudolf was born crippled. During birth his right hand was damaged by obstetrical forceps and it remained mutilated. Rudolf was not in despair though. He learned how to write with his left hand and was good at drawing. He was intelligent and charming and everybody who spent time with him soon forgot that he was disabled. My sister Ida was afflicted with pneumonia in 1939. There were no antibiotics at the time and they didn't know how to treat the disease, so she died within a couple of days. Ida was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn in accordance with Jewish rites. My sister Vera had a very good ear for music. After school she entered the grand piano department at Tallinn conservatoire.