

Alexander Ugolev With His Mother And Father



I don't remember what season it was, probably spring. My Daddy and Mum decided to take a photograph of me. I guess it was connected with my birthday: in 1932 I turned four years old. All of us were in high spirits. They dressed me smartly: a woolen sailor's jacket with silk shimmer. I put it on only for solemn occasions. I remember that it irritated my skin and smelled of naphthalene. At that time boys dressed the following way: no tights, but stockings with garters. My stockings were too big for me - bought for me with room for growth - and constrained on my legs.

I remember how they arranged lighting in the studio and asked me to pose for the portrait. I understood that we came to be photographed. While our family waited for our turn, I examined photos in the studio hall.

My parents got married already in Leningrad. They simply went to a civilian registry office and registered their marriage. I was born on 16th April 1928. Now it is written in my passport that my name is Alexander Efimovich Ugolev. I changed my name after my son's birth: I wanted to make his life easier. I was born in Leningrad, attended all children's educational establishments: a day nursery, a kindergarten, a zero class.

I never went through the ceremony of bar mitzvah. But they arranged a brit for me. I guess my grandfathers initiated it. You see, my parents were atheists. It seems that among my family members only my grandfathers Abram Ugolev and Haim Tsyppkin observed Jewish Tradition and practiced Judaism. Nobody else did it. On the contrary, a lot of my relatives became Communist Party members and atheists. Probably, at the terrible times of revolutionary changes and Stalin's mass repressions my uncles and aunts followed the law of self-preservation.

Since my childhood everybody called me Alexander, and Sasha or Sanya as a term of endearment. I found out that my Jewish name was Isaac, when I studied at school. At first I didn't like its sound and became upset. But my father was a clever man. He showed me a portrait of Isaac Newton and told me how talented was this scientist, and I calmed down. I even took pride in my Jewish name.