

## Morris Schiff



This is I. During lunch break at work. I liked to get in the garden to read a book in fresh air. My colleague took my picture. The picture was made in Tallinn in 1970.

Upon our return from evacuation I went to school. I had completely forgotten Estonian during the years of evacuation, so I had to go to Russian school. I was down-in-the-mouth for being the eldest child in the class, though Tallinn. It was hard for me to study. Frankly speaking I was also rather lazy. Languages were the hardest for me. I spoke good Russian as I learnt it in evacuation, but my writing was poor. The teacher was surprised to see my mistakes as they were so untypical. As for Estonian, both oral and written were literate, but I did not have a very good vocabulary stock. My handwriting was poor. I was pretty good with humanitarian sciences, where I could retell things, but it was hard for me to remember names and dates. It was also hard for me to learn poems by heart. I was bad at drawing. I had no ear for music. Alas, I had no capabilities. Finally, I started cutting lessons. Mother knew nothing about it of course. Only by the end of the fifth grade, she found out that I had poor marks in 5 subjects, and she went after me. When I came back home from school,, mother gave me some food, and had me study right away. She sat next to me and checked my homework. Though, I was not a gifted student, but such diligence was fruitful: I had good marks in almost all exams. I did not want to study when I was in the 6th grade. I told mother that I wanted to learn some profession. In 1947 I became apprentice of clock mender. It became my profession for the lifetime.

I never was a religious man, but after my return from the army I ordered kipah for myself. There was a hatter in Tallinn, an old Jew, who knew my grandfather Isif. I ordered it from him. I showed him grandfather's picture, where he was wearing a black kipah and asked him to make the same

for me. I still have it. I am atheist, but still I go to synagogue really. I put kippah on there. I never concealed that I was a Jew, moreover I spoke about it openly. In spite of having Jewish appearance, some people took me for Estonian. In those cases I always said that I was a Jew and behaved accordingly.

I had never been married. Ladies did not pay attention to me. I was very bashful when I was young and I did not know how to get acquainted with the ladies. Then I became a convinced bachelor. I am used to that. I am OK with that. My wife probably would be irritated by my arguments. I do not regret being alone. I am fine with my loneliness.