Ester Vee With Her Grandfather Afraim Rokhlin



This is me and my paternal grandfather Afraim Rokhlin. My grandfather loved me dearly and spent a lot of time with me. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1936.

I was born in 1931. My parents gave me the name of Esther. Before I was born my mother quit her job and earned money by knitting children’s socks and hats, which she delivered to a store. My grandmother and grandfather insisted that my parents left me with them. They believed this would enable my father to dedicate sufficient time to his studies. So I was left with my grandfather and grandmother in Tallinn. My parents stayed in Tartu.

My grandparents loved me a lot. My grandmother and my grandfather’s sister Riva took care of me. The whole family loved and pampered me. After my father graduated from Tartu University my parents moved to Tallinn. My parents rented an apartment, and I returned to my parents. Initially they rented a smaller apartment in Imante Street. I have very dim memories of this period.

We spoke Estonian at home, but it wasn’t because my mother was Estonian. My grandmother and grandfather also spoke Estonian. They knew Yiddish and so did their children. I also knew some words in Yiddish, but not sufficient to communicate in Yiddish. I often mixed Estonian and Yiddish words. I learned to write and read in Estonian at the age of four. I couldn’t understand why some letters were dotted and others were written with a small tilde. I wrote all letters with this tilde saying that it was a fair thing to do. It took me almost a year to write letters properly.

When I learned to read, I spent much time reading. Stories about children were my favorite. I had several Estonian books about children, and I loved them a lot. I knew them by heart, actually, but this never stopped me from reading them again and again. I also liked drawing and spent a lot of time drawing.