

Chinda Kagan And Her Schoolmates



This is the 4th grade of German Jewish lyceum, where my sister Hinda Kagan studied. She is sitting the 5th to the right in the second row next to the teacher. My cousin Sarah Katsisna, daughter of mother's sister Hanna is to the left from teacher. Avrom Fleishman , the son of mother's brother Gershen is sitting in the first row to the right. The picture was made in Liepaja in 1935.

My parents got married in late 1919. Our family belonged to middle class. We were neither poor nor rich. I was the eldest child. I was born in 1921 in Liepaja and called Rosa. My Jewish name is Rohl-Leya. My middle sister Hinda was born in 1924 and younger, Sarah - in 1930. Parents ran business, so we always had maids at home- to cook food and watch children. Since childhood I could see from my parents how hard people should work in order to achieve anything in their life.

The first words spoken by me were in Russian. People spoke Russian to me at home until I turned the age of three. Since most population of Liepaja spoke German, I went to private German kindergarten to learn German. At home parents spoke Yiddish between themselves and I was well up in that language pretty soon. In pre-school age I spoke three languages fluently. Besides, father was fluent in Polish as village Borovka was on the border with Poland, and many Borovka dwellers spoke Polish.

All members of our family were pious. On Fridays parents finished work earlier and went to mikvah. When they came back, mother lit candles and prayed over them. Then everybody sat at the table. Father said kidush over bread and everybody started festive dinner. On Saturday parents went to the synagogue obligatorily. None of my parents did work about the house on Saturdays. Father had a very beautiful voice so she worked part-time as a chazzan in Hasidic synagogue. When father came back from the synagogue, he read torah, and then all of us went to see some of our relatives.

My sisters and I went to Jewish school. In 1933 it was decided at the meeting of Jewish community of Liepaja that Jewish school with German teaching should be closed down. There were two schools like that and both of them were closed down. The following schools were in Liepaja: state Yiddish school state Ivrit, Liepaja State Jewish Lyceum named after Shalom Aleichem, and Lettish lyceum. Children were allowed to finish school year and then they were supposed to transfer to one of the above-mentioned schools. I went to State Jewish Lyceum named after Shalom Aleichem. It was a

very good lyceum. Having finished that there was a chance to enter any university. The building of that lyceum is the only one out of all Jewish schools in Liepaja, which is still there. I successfully finished lyceum in 1939.