Ester Vee



This is me, photographed on my 17th birthday. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1948.

I finished school with a silver medal. This gave me the right to skip entrance exams to any college, but only during the first year after finishing school. This silver medal spoiled it all.

When at school, we had five to six exams after finishing each year, while after our last year at school we had to take 11 exams! I'd always been an industrious student and studied many additional materials. I was so tired of these exams that I hated the thought of taking more exams.

If I wanted to go to the College of Art, I would have had to just take one exam, while skipping other exams in general subjects. This one exam was to be the specialty. This exam took a few days. The competition in this College was high, considering that there were entrants from all over the Soviet Union in Estonia. There was noted anti-Semitism over there, while in Estonia Jewish entrants could enjoy equal rights provided they received appropriate grades. I was not dead sure that I would manage the entrance competition, and if I failed, I would have had no exam-related benefits during the following year.

I started looking through higher educational establishments reference books, when I saw the pre-school department of the Leningrad Teachers' Training College. I always liked children and liked spending time with them. I thought this might be interesting for me. From then on I put aside whatever doubts about going to study in Leningrad. I obtained a notice to proceed with my education from the local office for public education. They also indicated that upon graduation I was to go to work at the Teachers' Training School in Tallinn.

There were 13 young people from Estonia to go to study in Leningrad. We went to the same college, but different departments. We were admitted and accommodated in a dormitory. The academic year started on 1st September. My Russian was not sufficient to understand the lectures. In my group I was the only Estonian. It took me about six months to improve my Russian, and I had no more problems with my studies.