

Pesia Marjenburger



This is me in this photo. I'm 3 years old. My father photographed me during a walk. This photo was taken in Tartu in 1938.

I was born in 1935. I was given the name of Pesse, and my full first name is Pesse-Sore. I have dim and fragmentary memories of my childhood. My mother told me many details, when I grew up. My father liked spending time with me. He liked playing with me. I remember how during our walks he used to hide away and I started crying from the fear that he got lost. I can still remember this childish fear of losing my father. When I was born, my father bought a camera to take pictures of me, though this was an expensive thing to buy at the time. Unfortunately, these pictures were lost, when we evacuated. I loved my father dearly. I associated him with a holiday: walking, having ice-creams and playing games. Mama treated me more strictly than my father did. We were not quite wealthy, but we had sufficient food and clothes and everything we needed to live a decent life. My father pampered me. I had a sweet tooth, and my father brought me fresh cakes from the bakery round the corner every morning before going to work. I woke up in the morning, and there was a cake on my bedside board waiting for me. Each morning started from a little festivity. My father was a very kind and interesting person. He seemed to have attracted people. He had many friends and acquaintances.

I was a very independent girl. My mother told me that I already went to buy bread at the bakery, when I was 3 or 4 years old. My mother was watching me crossing the street from the window, and waved her hand to me, when I was on my way back. I can remember this.

My parents did observe Jewish traditions, but this was more a tribute to the public opinion rather than deep religiosity. They did it, because this was a common thing to do, and not because they felt like doing this. I don't think we celebrated Sabbath at home. On big Jewish holidays my parents went to the synagogue. There was a large choral synagogue in Tartu. It was visited by all Jewish residents of Tartu on Jewish holidays. Tartu was the second largest town in Estonia, and the Jewish community was numerous.

We visited my mother's parents to celebrate Jewish holidays. My grandmother made traditional Jewish food. She always observed the rules. She had special crockery for Pesach, which she kept in a particular cupboard. The family reunion included my grandmother, my grandfather, my grandmother's sister Rokhe-Leya, our family and my mother's younger sister Sonja. Sometimes we had some guests.

My mother's parents treated my father well and loved and pampered me. I was their only granddaughter. The thing was, they could only enjoy the pictures of their daughter Fanny's children. As for my father's parents, there was some tension in relationships with them. Even when I was born, they did not visit Tartu to see their granddaughter. They could never forgive my father to have got married without having their consent.