

Edith Umova And Her Family



This is our family in this photo. From left to right: my mother Hasse Umova is holding me, and my father Hilel Umov is holding my older sister Lea. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1941.

After they got married my parents rented the first floor in the house of my grandmother's brother Wigodski. I can't remember how many rooms there were. My father's cousin Stakh Wigodski lived on the second floor. He was a student of Tartu University and spent more time in Tartu than in Tallinn. We lived in this house until the start of the Great Patriotic War.

Shortly before getting married my father went to work at the Estonia Theater. He made costumes for the theater, and in the evening he worked at home making clothes for the theatrical staff. My mother kept on working as a packager at the factory. My mother had no dowry, and the newly weds had to start their marital life from scratch. However, they managed to buy whatever they needed and go on. In 1934 my older sister Lea was born. I was born in 1937. My father chose the name Edith for me.

We observed Jewish traditions at home, though I wouldn't say my parents were religious. My father never prayed at home and only visited the synagogue on Jewish holidays. We celebrated Jewish holidays at home according to the rules. My mother cooked traditional Jewish food and covered the table with a white tablecloth. On Pesach we had matzah at home and we ate no bread then. We also celebrated other Jewish holidays according to all the rules.

During the Estonian Republic the attitude toward Jews was very good. Jews were treated like full members of the society, and there were actually no limitations of their rights. The only thing was that Jews weren't allowed to be officers in the army or hold top-level official positions, but this was the only restriction of their rights. My father was a member of the Jewish society of culture in Tallinn. After the war we found a record in the archive confirming that my father was a member of this society between 1926 and 8th June 1940. When Estonia became a Soviet Republic, this society and other Jewish organizations were terminated.