

Ester Vee With Her Mother Hulda Rokhlin And Father Jacob Rokhlin



This is our family. This photo was taken at our home in Tallinn in 1935 on my birthday by a photographer that was specifically invited on this occasion. My mother Hulda Rokhlin (nee Mantel) and my father Jacob Rokhlin is sitting with me.

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.

My mother had a knitting machine. She knitted nice striped socks for children. Mama also made very beautiful dolls. She bought celluloid heads and made the bodies herself stuffing them with sawdust. Then Mama made lovely dresses for the dolls and designed their outfits. She also made dolls for me. They were my favorite toys. I played with my mother's dolls and often took them with me to the kindergarten and later to school.