

Liya Epshteyn



This is me, when I was a Russian language teacher in school. One of the students took my picture during the lesson. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1961. In 1948 I passed exams in Riga Teachers' Training Institute, Philological Department. I was specialized in Russian language and philology. I lived with aunt Sarah. I did not feel anti-Semitism, when I was a student. Both teachers and students treated me loyally. My friends were Russians, Letts. When I graduated from the institute I got a mandatory job assignment to teach Russian language and literature at Tallinn Accounting College. Of course, I was happy to come back home. I worked in that college for several years, and it was closed down and all teachers were transferred to an Estonian compulsory school. Being a school teacher is hard even for those who like their profession. It was like an incessant horror for me. At college the students were more grown-up and they were aware that they ought to study. It was hard for me to work with schoolchildren. I came home emaciated and I had to check

the papers and get ready for the next day's classes. I spent more time on the discipline in the classroom than on teaching. I worked at school for 14 years, and understood that I could not go on with that any more. I saw a job opening in Tallinn conservatoire. They needed a teacher of Russian language and literature. Eight people were applying for that position, but I was selected. I worked there for 21 years. My students were adults and they were willing to study and found the classes interesting. It made me happy and I tried finding challenging materials for my classes and got ready for each class as if it was an exam. The students loved me. Even now, when I see my students in the street, they are thanking me for my classes, which they were pleased with. Of course, I am happy to hear it.