

Liya Kaplan



This is me at the age of six. The movie 'Sonny Boy' was very popular at that time and my mother dressed me like the main character of that movie. Unfortunately I have never seen it. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1928. [Editor's note: The US-movie 'Sonny Boy' was first released on 18 April 1929, thus it is unlikely that the photo was taken in 1928.] There were five children in the family. The eldest brother, Samuel, was named after my maternal grandfather. He was born on 4th April 1915. My elder sister Ida was born on 11th September 1916. My second sister Vera was born on 14th September 1918. Her Jewish name was Dveira. Rudolf was born on 9th November 1919. I, the youngest, was born in 1922. I was named Liya. Father purchased a house for our family. I was born

in that house. It was a two-story wooden house in the center of Tallinn. The house was big. There were nine rooms and a large kitchen on the ground floor. There were rooms on the second floor as well. There was a huge, gorgeous orchard by the house. My maternal grandmother, Khana, lived with us for a while. Then she wanted to be on her own and my father, who loved and respected my grandmother, rented a small two-room apartment for her. I remember my grandmother had nice copper dishes in the kitchen. Her place was neat and tidy. I called on grandmother almost every day. I loved her very much, I liked to spend time with her. She knew a lot and was well-read. She always had time to listen to me and help me tackle my childish problems. We mostly spoke Yiddish at home, sometimes German was generally accepted in Baltic countries. All of us knew Russian as well. Most children didn't know Ivrit. That's why there was a kindergarten in the Ivrit school, which was attended by children at the age of six, one year before school. I also went to that kindergarten. At the age of seven I entered the Ivrit school, where my elder siblings went. Apart from Ivrit, we studied German, French and English. The school was secular, but we studied religion, history and Jewish tradition.