

Lazar Kurizkes



This is my father Lazar Kurizkes. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1939. My father's family lived in Narva , a town in Estonia. My father moved to Vilnius, where some distant relatives lived, after finishing a Russian general education school. He entered the Faculty of Pharmacology of Vilnius University. There was a Jewish quota in Russian higher educational institutions at the time. It constituted 5 percent of the total number of students. My father was lucky to get into this 5 percent quota. During his studies he lived with his relatives. I don't know anything about the time when my father was a student. Upon graduation my father returned to Narva, where he couldn't find a job. My father moved to Tallinn, but there was no job in his specialty there either. There were no vacancies in bigger pharmacies, and my father couldn't afford to start his own pharmacy. He

lost any hope of finding a job in his specialty and went to work as a shipment forwarder for a few factories. He delivered their products to many stores in Estonia on a car. My parents got married after my father moved to Tallinn. They got acquainted at a party and got married in 1922. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. All local Jews had traditional weddings. Wealthy or poor, there was a chuppah and a ketubbah issued by a local synagogue. Religion was an integral part of the life of Jewish families at the time. After getting married, my parents rented an apartment in the house owned by Sweetgauer, a Jewish man. My father worked and my mother was a housewife. I was born in 1924, and I was the only child in the family. Shortly after I was born my parents moved to Raua Street, near where their parents lived. We lived there until the town authorities decided to build a fire station on that site. The house was to be removed, and my parents rented an apartment nearby. We lived in this apartment until the very start of the Great Patriotic War. My father didn't follow the requirement to do no work on the Sabbath. Saturday was another working day for him. However, we followed all the rules on Jewish holidays. My parents fasted on Yom Kippur. The children could have food, but adults strictly followed the rules. My father was a heavy smoker, but on Yom Kippur he didn't even approach his cigarettes for a whole day and night. My parents had their seats at the synagogue. My father bought nice seats for himself and mama. My father didn't know Hebrew. He had a thick prayer book in Yiddish and German.