

Theodore Magder



This is me at the age of five or six. This photo was taken in a photo studio in Kishinev, approximately in 1927. My father, Solomon Magder, worked a lot. But I wouldn't say that my father spent little time with me. He read to me, taught me about arithmetic and nature. At the age of five I actually completed the syllabus of the 1st grade of elementary school. I was to take an exam in front of a big commission and this was the first exam in my life. My father was sitting in the conference room where I was standing before the commission. There was the 'intuition' subject in the first grade, something close to natural sciences. So the commission asked me to name home pets. I named a dog, a cat, a cow, a duck, etc. When they asked me which of them was my favorite, I said 'duck' and explained that it walked in a funny manner. I even demonstrated how it walked

and the commission and my father burst into laughter. The commission gave me the highest mark and explained to my father that I was a smart boy and had an original way of thinking. So I became a pupil of the 1st grade. In 1926 I went to the Romanian gymnasium. There were 40 pupils in my class, seven or eight of who were Jews. Other classes had about the same ratio. I didn't take part in any Jewish activities and, like my father, identified myself as a Romanian to a bigger extent. It should be noted that before Romania became fascist, Jews had no problems in their relations with other nations. There was no segregation in the gymnasium: when Christian children had their religious classes, Jewish children studied the history of Judaism and Jewish history. This was an elective course and my father didn't force me to attend it, but I did as I found it interesting. Later it was cancelled.