

Elkhonen Saks As A Student



This is me as a student at the Tallinn Polytechnical Institute. The photo was taken in 1948. My father and I returned to Estonia in 1944. Everyone who came back from evacuation was first put under quarantine. Therefore, we were brought directly from the train to barracks fenced with barbed wire. It was near Kiviylü [130 km from Tallinn]. We lived there for about a month. We were given food and clothes from the American charity funds. Then we were allowed to continue our journey. Many years later I learned that the place, where we were put under quarantine, had been a fascist concentration camp during the war, in which thousands of Soviet war prisoners and European Jews had been killed. In Valga we were met by Zelma. She was very glad to see us again and had even kept some of our things. We were to begin a new life and went to Tallinn where my sister had found us a place to live. Having arrived in Tallinn in 1944, I studied for half a year in the 10th grade of the Russian high school. I finished school in 1945 with a gold medal (in fact, they handed me a silver medal instead of a gold one, for some reason) and was admitted without exams

to the Construction Faculty of the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute. I lived in a student dormitory because we had no flat of our own. I received a grant, which allowed for a modest life. Since then I could always provide for myself. As a student, I worked at construction sites. First as a worker, then as a foreman. My friends used to give me summaries of the lectures, and I studied them at night. During the first year I worked as a foreman with captive Germans. We were building a large dockyard. It was easy to work with them. They were very disciplined and wanted to show that they were not anti-Semitic all the time. Then I worked with a very difficult contingent, with so-called construction battalions, but I made it. In this manner I studied and worked for three years.