

Masha Zhak And Her Family



This is one of our first postwar photographs. Sitting from left to right: my paternal grandmother Hane-Rokhe Stumer and my mother Dina Kitt. Standing: my uncle, my father's brother Zemakh Stumer, I and my stepfather Benjamin Kitt. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1956. My father died in 1941; he served on a Soviet battleship, which sank near the Hanko Peninsula, Finland. In 1947 Mama married a local Jewish man. My stepfather's name was Haim Benjamin Kitt. He was born in Tallinn in 1909. This was his first marriage. He had not been conscripted to the army due to his health condition. He was in evacuation in the Ural with his parents. My stepfather had three sisters and three brothers. They survived the war and returned to Tallinn. My mother and stepfather were members of the Party. They didn't have a traditional Jewish wedding. They registered their marriage in a registry agency and had a wedding dinner at home. My stepfather moved in with us. My mother and stepfather had their room, and I shared my room with my grandmother. I got along well with my stepfather. I remember being impolite with him one day. He told me to clean the floor and I replied that he wasn't my father to give me orders. However, this was the only time we had an argument. My stepfather was the director of a perfumery store. In 1949 my stepbrother Leo Kitt was born. Of three men from our family that went to the front, only my father's brother Zemakh returned home. He served in the Estonian Corps, and took part in the liberation of Estonia from the fascists. Zemakh got married after the war. His wife's name was Anastasia. She was half-Russian and half-Estonian. She was a very nice person. After the war people didn't care much about mixed marriages. They loved each other well and lived in harmony. Their older daughter Ilona was born in 1946, and son Boris in 1950. After returning from the front Zemakh went to work at the Prosecutor's office in Tallinn. I left school after finishing the 8th grade. I believed it was time for me to go to work and support myself and my family. My friends Pesia and Tsyliya also quit school. Pesia went to work as a shop assistant at the perfumery store where my stepfather, Benjamin Kitt, was the director. Tsyliya went to work at a plant, and I went to work at the knitwear factory. My mother worked at the HR department at the factory. I was a worker in the knitting room. I was a winder

machine apprentice. When my training was over, I started working there. I also went to the 9th grade in the evening school for young working people. However, I quit this school after finishing the 9th grade. It was difficult to attend classes after work. Besides, I was young and wanted to have some free time for myself. Some time later our factory merged with the Marat knitwear factory. They had three-shift work cycle, which was substituted by a two-shift cycle and finally by a single-shift cycle. I was a quality assurance crew leader. I worked at the Marat factory till I retired.