

Anatoli Kraemer And His Family



This picture was taken near our summer house in Elva in 1927. From left to right: my grandmother Vera Pasternak, I (in the front), my cousin Alexander and our governesses behind us.

I was born on 24th April 1924. I was called Anatoli. For some reason I did not have a Jewish name. My father did not live with us for a long time. He was not a bad man, but he had a great flaw, which was not characteristic of Jews, he took to the bottle. I was a year and a half, when Mother divorced him. Father moved to Tallinn after the divorce. We never spoke about him at home.

Our family lived in my grandfather's house. It was a large, two-storied house. There were huge rooms, looking like parlors with columns. The first floor was occupied by my uncle David and his wife Ester. There were also a large kitchen and a dining-room, where the whole family had meals. There were three apartments on the second floor. My grandparents lived in one of them, my mother's sister Rebecca with her husband Semyon and children lived in the second one, and our family lived in the third one.

On Yom Kippur adults always fasted for 24 hours according to the tradition. Small children were released from fasting. When I started going to lyceum, I was also supposed to fast. I was very active and agile, feeling hungry all the time. I managed to snatch some food in the kitchen, without anyone seeing it. Adults spent the whole day in the synagogue on Yom Kippur praying, until the first evening star appeared in the sky. My cousin Alexander and I went to the synagogue with the adults, but we could not stay there all day long, so we played football with other Jewish guys in the yard of the synagogue.

In summer all of us went on vacation to Narva Joesuu, a very popular recreation place. There were all kinds of amusements for the tourists. Every year there was the Narva Joesuu beauty contest called 'The Queen of Narva Joesuu.' My aunt Ester was chosen the beauty queen.