

Fanni Kann With Her Children Alexander Kann And Nata



his is my paternal grandmother Fanni Kann with her children. My father Alexander Kann is sitting on her lap and his elder sister Nata is to the left. The picture was taken in Tartu in 1910.

I do not know much about my grandmother Fanni Kann. I do not even remember her, though I have a picture where she is holding me in her arms. I cannot recall her maiden name. She was a pianist. She did not give concerts, but taught music. I knew a lot of Tartu Jews who were her students. Judging by their stories, she was a very good teacher. Grandfather practiced medicine. They had two children: daughter Nata and a son, my father-to-be, Alexander.

Father was born in 1909. Nata was three years older than my father. She was born in 1906. Grandfather had his own house on 20 Kalvi Street in Tartu. It is still there. Now the firefighters are based there. All Tartu inhabitants knew the house of the Kanns. It was always open for people who needed shelter and food. Poor students of Tartu University often lived in Grandfather's house. Of course, they felt like friends of the family. They did not pay anything for the accommodation.

The Kanns spoke several languages. There was a strict order – a certain language was spoken with the children by each parent. Grandfather spoke only Russian with us, and Grandmother only German. When Nata grew up, her duty was to speak English with her younger brother. Of course, there must have been great organizational skills and will to do so. As a result, the children had a chance to speak several languages fluently. Naturally, all of us knew Estonian as it was the state language. As far as I understand, my grandparents were religious people. Maybe they were not pious, but they strictly followed Jewish traditions, judging by my father.

Nata and my father studied in the Russian lyceum in Tartu. Having finished the lyceum, my father entered the Legal Department of Tartu University. Father was always a very sociable and charming man. He enchanted people. There were a lot of young people in his house – friends and pals of Nata and my father.