

Iosif Yudelevichus And His Family



This is our family picture made in Kaunas in 1934. From left to right -my father Abram Yudelevich, I, my brother David and my mother Taube.

My parents got married in 1923. They rented an apartment in the heart of the Kaunas. In 1925 my elder brother David was born. Father was a private lawyer and made pretty good money. I was born on the 25th of December 1928.

I remember myself from the age of five. Since early childhood my brother I had been close. We were called - Dodya and Osys, pronouncing our names separately. I remember the apartment, where I spent my childhood. There were five rooms in it- one room was after another. The first two rooms were occupied by father: one room was a reception, where his clients and visitors were waiting for him, and another room was father's office. Father's secretary Kozlovskiy was at the reception desk. Father's customers sat on the leathern couches waiting for my father to receive them. At that time my father was one of the most famous lawyers on civil cases in Kaunas. There was a large desk in father's office with a lamp and ink well, a small adjoining table for negotiations and book shelves containing the works on jurisprudence, books by ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and regulation documents. There were few fiction books. Most of them were written by Russian classics - Tolstoy, Turgenev etc. I do not remember whether there were books by Jewish writers at home. There was a large dining-room behind father's office. There was a large round dining table, the one we are sitting now, arm- chairs, chairs, beautiful carved cupboard, bedroom furniture and children's furniture used by brother and I. Of course, there was a kitchen, but I cannot recall my being there. There were servants and a cook in the house so there was no need to go in the kitchen, as the food was served in the dining-room. Mother only ran the house, giving orders. Sometimes she went in the kitchen to make some corrections.

We, children, had the governesses. Our first governess was a Russian girl Irina. She was very kind and tender. I loved her a lot. Even now I cannot get why she was fired by my mother. Maybe she thought that brother and I were grown-up enough to have a nanny and she wanted a governess for us. After Irina German ladies worked for us. The first one was froelein Zina, then Gerta. They also were very kind. Later on, when brother was a lyceum student, I was taken care of Froebel lady Doba, a young Jewish girl.

In summer our family went on vacation for two months. The first month was spent in Kemery and then we went to Buldury- the spa with salves, baths and all kinds of treatments. At that time it was customary to spend summer on the coast. Many of our relatives came there with children, so we were not bored. Later on we spent summer vacation in Palanga. Parents often had rest and recreation abroad. They went to Karlovy Vary, to the spas in France, Switzerland. Usually they went on vacation separately. There were few times when they went together.

I was a rather developed child. I often was present at my brother's studies and I had learnt letters before going to school. When parents were to choose where I should study, they chose secular Jewish lyceum Shvabes right away. My brother also studied in this lyceum. I went to Shvabes lyceum in 1934. Our wonderful teachers and headmaster Rutskus made a real team of like-minded people. The ideas of repatriation to Israel were delicately nurtured in the lyceum. Other than that it was an ordinary school, where subjects were taught in Ivrit. We had religion classes. I was not a bad student. I liked to spend my spare time running around with my friends in the hallway and play children's games. Here in lyceum I got a better understanding of Jewish holidays and traditions.