

Avi Dobrysh



That's me at the age of two. The picture was taken in Tartu in 1936.

Before the war, our family had a good life. First, Father was the only bread-winner. Mother was a housewife. I even had a baby-sitter. Then my mother was probably very bored and also started working. We weren't rich, but lived comfortably. We had a large apartment. There was enough money for good food and all the necessary clothes. We couldn't afford expensive things. I remember when Father bought his first Philips radio. It cost a fortune. I think my parents won at a lottery at some Jewish event. In general, they could afford pretty much everything at a reasonable price.

Jewish traditions were observed in the family. Of course, my parents weren't as religious as my grandparents, but still we stuck to traditions. It has always been like that. Mother cooked dishes of the Jewish cuisine. We marked Jewish holidays at home. On holidays Father went to the synagogue. Unfortunately, I don't remember the details of the holiday. I remember that there was a whole box of matzah on Pesach. When I was a baby, I stealthily crawled into that box and ate matzah.

I remember two things from my childhood. My first recollection goes back to the time when the Swedish king came to Estonia for a visit. He came to Tartu and we went to welcome him. It was a warm spring day. There were crowds of people on the central square and an abundance of flowers. The orchestra made it even more festive.

I also remember, when I was four, I underwent an appendix operation. The surgeon who had operated on me often came to my ward and played cards with me. When I asked where my

appendix was he said that he had given it to the cat. When I was an adult, I bumped into that doctor in a restaurant. He put a bottle of cognac on the table and asked if he could join the youth. I said that I remembered him and told him the story. The doctor made a joke saying that I was a lucky patient, as most of his patients could not say that.