

Ester Vee With Her Classmates



This is the first grade of the Jewish gymnasium in Tallinn. We were photographed after classes near the gymnasium. 1st row, from left to right: Harry Hoff, Fanny, our teacher Basia Shneiberg, me, Dora Vigderhaus and Frieda Slomka. Standing in the 2nd row are Libert Kantor and Donald Dubrovkin. This photo was taken in 1939.

When I turned six, I went to the Jewish gymnasium. Actually, they admitted eight-year-old children to the gymnasium, while I had just turned six in August and went to school in September of the same year. I don't know why it happened so. Perhaps, my mother wanted to know how I would manage my studies, considering my insufficient Yiddish. If I failed, they would have sent me to an Estonian school the following year. However, I did well from the very start at school.

On my first day I was so excited that I don't remember anything about it. All I remember is that I badly needed to go the ladies' room, but there were strangers around and I was too shy to ask the way. One girl in a red dress came to my rescue and showed me the facility.

There were two classes at school: one Yiddish and one Hebrew. I joined the Yiddish class. The children of wealthy and renowned Jews of Tallinn studied in the Hebrew class, while in the Yiddish class there were children from common families. We had the same teachers, though. I remember that our teacher of Jewish religion and history was Gurevich, the chazzan of the synagogue of Tallinn. He also taught us singing.