

Pesia Marjenburger And Her Former Classmates



This is me and my former classmates. We were friends and met several times after we finished school. This is our gathering at Masha Stumer's home. From left to right, row 1: Masha Stumer, her stepfather Benjamin Kitt. Row 2: Tsylia Perelman, Edith Umova and I This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1960.

I attended no school in the evacuation. My mother believed the war wasn't going to last long and then I would go back to an Estonian school. This was why I went to school in 1945, when I was about to turn 10. However, there were many overage children like me at that time. In the evacuation I almost forgot the Estonian language and mama sent me to a Russian school. I met Tsylia Perelman, a Jewish girl, in the first form, and we became close friends. We are still friends with Tsylia. Tsylia was two years younger than me, but this made no barrier to our friendship. When we were in the 4th form, Edith Umova came joined our class. Tsylia had known her before. Edith's mother used to work for Tsylia's grandmother at some point of time. We became friends, and we still are. However, Tsylia is a closer friend to me that Edith.

I became a pioneer at school. I did all right at school. I wasn't a very active pioneer. I always preferred minding my own business. I wasn't quite sociable, when a child. I was my mama's girl. I never liked leaving mama.

After finishing the 8th form I turned 18. I was of age and I believed that my stepfather was not bound to support me and I had to earn my own living. Harold and Mama had a different opinion, but I firmly decided I wasn't going to be a burden to them. I became an apprentice in the Sanhygiene store. Later it became merely a perfumery store, but at the time I went to work there, they were selling washing powder, perfumery and even some plain drugs. My apprenticeship was

over after two weeks, and director of the store appointed me to the position of a shop assistant. Director of the store was my school friend Masha Stumer's stepfather Benjamin Kitt. I must have taken some natural skills after my mother. Of course, each period of time has its own specifics. While before the war the objective of a shop assistant was to convince a customer to buy a product, after the war stores hardly offered any products whatsoever. When there was something available in the store, there were long lines forming immediately. Shop assistants had to be smart, reserved, confident and be able to put down whatever conflicts at the start. People were spending hours standing in line. They grew angry and irritant, and were always ready to snap at a shop assistant. However, they never complained of my services. My customers even left their grateful notes in our blotter book. We had continuous contests for the title of the best shop assistant in the store, and I won numerous performance awards and thanks. We also received a rise to our salary for good performance. So, each of us was stimulated to perform better. I liked my job a lot. It wasn't always easy, though. When a supply of deficit goods was delivered to our store, there were lines forming long before our opening hour. There were even fights, when we ran out of goods, when there were still people in line expecting to get what they wanted. However, we managed all right, and there were no complaints about our performance. I worked in this store for 16 years. My aunt Sonja worked in a commission store. When she decided to quit her job, she offered me her position. I worked there 16 years before retiring.