

Morits Shouman



This is my father Morits Shouman, while a doctor at the Tallinn marine port. This picture was taken in Tallinn in 1940. My father worked as a doctor for an insurance company, which was involved in insurance and medical services for the marines and port workers. Besides that, he had a private practice. He had an office at home and received patients there. There was a law in the period of the First Estonian Republic regarding medicine: no doctor was entitled to refuse a patient for medical assistance. If a doctor was called during an accident, he was supposed to render assistance whether the patient was able to pay or not. We lived in the vicinity of the Tallinn port and my father was often called to the harbor at night. It was a very dangerous district. He had a

permit from the police to keep a gun in case he had to go to the port as per night call. He never used it. My father said that there were fishy people who appeared in the darkness. They came up and encircled him. Then he heard somebody whisper, 'Don't touch him, he's a doctor', and those people left. I can't say that my parents were religious. Some Jewish traditions were definitely observed. My father always contributed money to charity. Though rarely, my father did go to the synagogue. I don't know on which days. It seems to me that my mother didn't go to the synagogue except on Yom Kippur. It was the only holiday we always marked at home the way it was supposed to be. We conducted the kapores rite, but we didn't do it with a living hen, but with money. Then we took that money to the synagogue for indigent people. We obligatorily fasted all day long on Yom-Kippur in accordance with the tradition. I still fast on Yom-Kippur. On Yom Kippur my parents used to spend almost the whole day in the synagogue. I also went to the synagogue on that day, but not for the whole day. At home dishes of Jewish cuisine were cooked, such as chicken broth, and gefilte fish. We had matzah on Pesach, we didn't eat bread. We didn't mark any other Jewish holidays at home.