

Margarita Kamiyenskaya And Her Father Morits Shouman



This is my father Morits Shouman and I on the beach in Tallinn. We often went swimming. This picture was taken in 1935. My father adored to go for a saunter. I accompanied him. As I grew up, our routes became longer. We went hiking throughout Estonia. We left home on Saturday and came back late Sunday. My mother didn't join us as she was delicate. My father and I spent the night in hamlets. Estonian peasants didn't cluster together in villages. Each peasant family settled on a small or large farmstead depending on the prosperity of the hosts. Whichever hamlet we came across, hospitable hosts offered us something to eat, fresh milk and to stay overnight.

Estonians were good people. There were no thieves. Dwellers of Estonian hamlets didn't even lock their doors when they left the house. They just propped up the door with a broomstick which meant that the hosts weren't in. My father and I were mad about the sea. My father was an excellent swimmer and he taught me how to swim. I spent a lot of time at the seaside in summer time. There was a beach not far from our home. There were swimming courses held by an instructor. I also took those courses. I swam for seven kilometers every day. Then I hired a kayak and went across the gulf. On the way back I longed to swim, so when I was half way I jumped off the kayak and swam. Then I got back on and went back home. I also went in for water jumping. I enjoyed swimming with my father. Once, my father saved a drowning man. Apart from swimming I went skiing and did gymnastics. There was the Maccabi club, which offered a lot of sports activities. There was a wonderful gym there. Besides Maccabi there were a lot of Jewish youth organizations in Tallinn, such as Hashomer Hatzair and Betar. I was a member of the youth organization WIZO. It was a ladies' Zionist organization with an affiliate for the youth. The main task of WIZO was to propagate the Zionist movement as a liberation movement of the Jewish people, i.e. giving up being a slave and becoming a valuable Israeli citizen. Another very important goal was the prosperity of Israel. Money was collected for Palestine. It was allocated to the construction of houses, kindergartens, aid for the wounded. Of course, one of WIZO's tasks was to take care of elderly people. WIZO volunteers visited elderly people, took food to them, cleaned their apartments, and read out loud to them. The Jewish community did a lot for those people as well, but WIZO made its contribution as well. Even now, going back to the past, I realize how much WIZO had done in order for us to become kind and sympathetic people, willing to help those who are needy without being asked and convinced. We were taught those things at WIZO.