

Etta Ferdmann With Her Mother Zinaida Ferdmann And Father Gessel Ferdmann



This is our family. My mother Zinaida Ferdmann is to the left, my father Gessel Ferdmann is next to her. I am in the center. The picture was taken in Narva in 1938.

I do not know how my parents met. Narva was a small town and Jews always met in the synagogue at charity events. There are a lot of places where two young people can meet each other. All I know is that it was not a prearranged marriage. In spite of the fact that Grandmother Yachna was an ardent follower of traditions, prearranged marriages were not common in our family. All her children had a love wedlock. My parents got married in 1933. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a rabbi and chuppah.

I was born in 1934 and named Etta after my grandmother. My grandmother Yachna lived in a large, six-room apartment with her numerous children. The family was clustered together – all my grandmother's children were living there with their spouses and children. My parents also settled in that apartment after their wedding. Each family had a separate room. The only single person was my father's brother Mikhail. The whole family had meals together at a huge table. We were very friendly. Our family spoke to me in Yiddish or Estonian. My parents spoke either Russian or Yiddish. During family reunions with Grandmother, only Yiddish was spoken.

My father and his brothers achieved everything themselves. They learned the tannery craft. The elder children started working and helped Grandmother with money. Then, they taught the younger ones their craft. All of them were shoemakers, not cobblers, but shoe-designers. This job required certain skills and was well paid. Dad worked a lot and my parents saved money. In 1939 they opened up their own store. It was a small one, but still it was their property that they took pride in.