

Etta Ferdmann With Her Parents Zinaida And Gessel Ferdmann



That's me with my parents, Zinaida and Gessel Ferdmann. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1958.

I finished school in 1955. I was not willing to leave Tallinn to go study anywhere, not even at the famous Tartu University. Moreover, I was an only child in the family. After school I entered the history and philology department of Tallinn Teachers' Training Institute. When I was in the fifth year in 1960 there was an announcement for the students of the fifth course to teach Russian language and literature on the islands of Estonia. There was a high demand for teachers there. Those, who agreed to go there, were to defend their diplomas separately and have open diplomas,

that is, without mandatory job assignment. The terms were attractive. Besides, I wanted to try my choice of profession. I chose the island Hiiumaa in the north of Estonia and headed there. I remember how my parents were seeing me off in winter time. I had to take a small plane, where only ten people could fit. I was given a very warm welcome at school. I had work there until the summer holidays and then I came back to Tallinn. I defended my diploma and graduated.

My private life was not very happy. My father was as strict as my grandmother. He also thought that there was no way I could marry a non-Jew. For some reason I was mostly admired by Russians. Of course, none of them was allowed to enter our house. It was out of the question. At times my father would not speak with me for weeks if he found out that I had a Russian admirer. Thus, I remained single.

For 20 years my mother was working as a saleswoman in a kiosk Tallinn. She was the best saleswoman in Tallinn and very many people knew her. Though she changed over the years, put on weight, young men came up to her and asked, 'Are you Lady Donets?' She was probably still recognizable. Mother was pleased with that. She was even awarded a Zhiguli car for outstanding work. She could not drive the car at that time as she was walking with crutches. I drove that car for 15 years. Mother was very hard-working. She retired at the age of 70, though the pension age for women was 55 in the Soviet Union. Mother was deeply respected, both of my parents enjoyed respect from everybody who knew them.