

Ranana Malkhanova With Her Friend Liza Kabatner



This is me (on the left) with my friend Liza Kabatner from Vilnius. This picture was taken in 1950 in Vilnius. Our mothers and we had been friends all our lives. Since the late 1970s Liza and her family have lived in Israel. After the war my mother found a job as a cashier in a canteen. After some months, my mother was stricken with tuberculosis. Her state was very bad, she was in hospital. I was sent to an orphanage. Here I joined the Komsomol and became the leader for junior schoolchildren: pioneers. I enjoyed studying and absorbed the information like a sponge. I had a thirst for knowledge during my meanderings and I liked to take care of the pioneers, teaching them verses and songs, playing games, helping them with studies. I was fed pretty well. It was warm and cozy. The teachers treated me very well. They sympathized with the orphans. I had spent a whole year at the orphanage while my mother had stayed in the hospital. When she was discharged, I went back home. I kept on studying right after I went back. I had straight 'fives' and was a very active Komsomol member. I was constantly busy, either organizing a tour or attending the theater, editing the paper, having classes with those who were lacking behind, etc. When I started the tenth grade, I found out that I was one of the candidates for a gold medal. But things turned out to be different. I was a serious girl on one hand, and on the other hand I was romantic and prone to be infatuated. I didn't go dancing as it was considered frivolous for a girl of my age and it was disapproved by the social opinion and headmaster of the school. Once, my friend talked me into attending a dance pavilion in the park. It was a disaster. We met two soldiers in the park. One of them was Russian and the other Buryat. One word led to another and one dance to another and Matvey Malkhanov, the Buryat, and I couldn't part. He was a very interesting person, erudite, polite and well-bred. In short, we fell in love with each other and soon became very close. We actually became husband and wife. When Matvey asked my mother for my hand, she went berserk and didn't want to give her consent. Matvey wasn't a Jew, and had a rare and unusual appearance. Not only my mother, but the whole Jewish Vilnius was against it. Nobody could do anything. When the

two of us went to the state marriage registration office I was pregnant already. I had to transfer to the evening school, and finished it the same year without a gold medal of course.