

## Shahne Berznitskiy And His Family



From right to left: my son Ilia Berznitskiy, my friend's daughter Aushra in the red jacket, my friend from the Jewish chorus David, me, my grandson Daniel and my friend Kira Krylova. The photograph was taken in my apartment in Vilnius on my birthday in 2005.

My son Ilia was an excellent student. Since childhood his artistic talent was noticed. Having finished school Ilia pretty easily entered the Vilnius Construction Institute, the architecture department. Upon graduation Ilia worked in his specialty. Then he was carried away by an interesting project: animation cartoons. At present Ilia is a recognized master of animation. In 1980 he married a Jewish girl, Elene. In 1982 Ilia's and Elena's son Daniel was born. When Daniel turned 15, his mother decided to take him to Israel. Ilia wasn't willing to go to Israel and for his wife to avoid complications, they got divorced. Daniel and his mother immigrated to Israel, where they are still living. My son and his ex-wife have their own lives, but they are still friends.

Ilia has dual citizenship. He lives in the USA and teaches animation at the New York Academy of Arts. Ilia is a professor. He has apartments in New York and in Vilnius. He often visits his native town. He has a lot of work here as well as creative plans. Ilia makes films in Lithuania. He has a lot of friends. My grandson Daniel, being a citizen of Israel, also came back to Vilnius. He followed in his father's footsteps. He graduated from the Academy of Arts. Daniel does not have a job yet. I hope he will continue his father's work.

I am old as the hills, but I'm still healthy, energetic and young in my soul. I'm a very active person and I'm not ready for eternal peace yet. Since the time when Lithuania became independent, we - having lost belief in communist ideas, a huge multinational socialist state and many other things - gained independence and the freedom of choice. The most important is that Jewish life revived in our country. Many people found themselves. During the postwar period, I, an active member of the Communist Party, couldn't have thought of marking Sabbath, not working on Saturday, eat matzah on Pesach. I'm currently an active member of the Unified Jewish Community of Lithuania. I sing in the choir of the community. I dance in spite of my age. I take part in all events, mark Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. I'm constantly busy. Apart from social events, I take care of the orchard, planted by Charna and I. I have a lot of friends among the Jews of the community and non-Jews as

well. I met a wonderful Russian woman, Kira, in a bus. She is also keen on horticulture. She and I go to the orchard, to the cemetery, to the graves of our close people. I plied Kira with love for the Jewry. She studies Judaism and celebrates Sabbath with us on Friday.