

Rohl Joheles



This is my mother Rohl Joheles, nee Galunskaya. This photo was taken in 1921, shortly before her wedding, in Leonard's studio in Kaunas. Our Lithuanian neighbor kept this photo and our other belongings during the occupation. My mother came from the town of Varena at the border of Lithuania and Poland. She was born in 1901. I think she finished two or three grades of elementary school, but I don't know any details. My parents had their wedding in Varena on 22nd July 1921. My parents got married under a chuppah at the synagogue and had a traditional Jewish wedding. It

couldn't have been otherwise in Jewish families at the time. My parents rented an apartment in Kaunas. I was born on 22nd May 1922 in Kaunas. I was named Feige, but since my early childhood everybody called me Fania, which is a Russian name. Mama told me she got severely ill when I was born. She had to send me to my grandfather and grandmother in Varena where I lived the first year of my life. My grandparents often showed me my parents' pictures in a photo album, and when my parents came to pick me, I said 'Mama, papa - album'. There was hardly anything my mother couldn't do. She kept altering clothes and dressed my sister and me to the fashion. She could knit and embroider. She made napkins for the furniture and embroidered rugs. When little round tables became fashionable, mama cut the edges of the kitchen-board, finished it and placed it on our table. She couldn't wait till my father got some time for it and did the wiring herself, however crookedly she managed to do it. Mama whitewashed the walls, moved the furniture and fixed it to make our life more comfortable. Mama was an excellent housewife. However hard the times, she always managed to make dinner somehow.