

Mikhail And Riva Gauzner In Arcadia



This is a picture of me and my mother Riva Gauzner, nee Vainshtein, in the dining hall of the recreation center Arcadia, Odessa. My mother is the first on the right on the table in the front, I'm sitting next to her. The photo was taken in 1940. I was born on 3rd June 1936 in Odessa, in the maternity hospital in Kulikovo Pole [city square near the railway station]. We lived on the third floor of a house in Lanzheronovskaya Street in the city center. It was a rather dark, dull apartment, but a large one. There were four rooms, a kitchen, and a restroom. Two rooms had windows; the other two were dark. Both my grandparents' bedroom and our room - I stayed with my parents - had windows with a look out over Lanzheronovskaya Street. The rooms were furnished with old furniture. I remember a huge dining table. There was also a cute little table on bentwood legs, with a marble table-top, on which I often hit myself. I went to the kindergarten in Vorontsov Lane, not far from our home. My mother always worked very hard and couldn't stay with me all the time. She worked as a bookkeeper at the house-managing office. But in the hours she could spare for me, she was my dearest one. We never ever had pets in our house. My father suffered from a rare phobia: he was afraid of birds, of their wings clapping. He would suddenly become unreasonably terror-stricken. Wishing to play a trick on him once, some of his friends brought in a sea-gull. My father's eyes went white; he jumped onto the windowsill of an open window and said, 'If you don't take it away at once, I'll jump out of the window.' Our pre-war life was rather modest; I don't remember any noisy dinner parties, although my parents' relatives and friends visited us often. Before the Great Patriotic War, in the summer of 1940, I and my mother went on vacation to the Arcadia recreation center in Odessa, but I don't remember much about it. I was only four years old at the time.