

Liza Lukinskaya

This is my picture in 1935 in Siauliai on the occasion of my birthday, photo atelier Rivkind.

When I became a student of the Lithuanian girls' lyceum in 1929 I was mostly in a female environment. I was the only Jew in my grade. Actually, another Jewish girl joined our grade two years before my graduation. I was friends with Lithuanian girls: Polina Uskaite, Gribaite, Lukasheite. We were friends for ages. My classmates, both Lithuanian and Russian, treated me very well and paid no attention to my nationality. There was only one teacher, Vishinskine, who was an ardent anti-Semite. Even during the classes that had nothing to do with ethnicity she blamed Jews for all kinds of trouble. I was very active and sociable. The girls liked me. My friends and I went for walks in the park. We gave each other hugs. Sometimes we went to cafes to eat ice-cream, watched movies. There were two movie houses in Siauliai at that time. There was the Lithuanian Drama Theater. I liked to watch performances there. I liked everything, connected with the theater and the stage. My dream was to become a ballet-dancer. I loved amateur performances. I danced on the school stage, played the grand piano and accompanied singers on the piano. I felt like fish in the water.

In the last but one grade we had a Judaic class. Less than ten students out of the entire lyceum attended that class. When I was a junior student I was a member of the Lithuanian scout organization Ptichki. I never joined the scouts for senior students. When I was a senior student, I started seeing boys. I went out with a Lithuanian boy, Eduardas Kudritskas. It even seemed to me that I fell in love with him. At home I even started bringing up the subject of marrying him. Then my parents said that they would marry me off only to a Jew.

I succeeded at school and in 1938 I graduated from the lyceum ranking among the top students. I wanted to become a doctor. In order to enter the Medical Department at Kaunas University I had to take an exam in Latin. We had studied it only for two years and I was afraid that I wouldn't pass it, so I decided to enter the Biology Department. I could enter it only via an interview and then get transferred to the Medical Department in a year, which wouldn't be complicated. I parted with my friend Eduardas and left for Kaunas. Soon I forgot about him. Puppy love goes by very quickly. I settled at the place of my Aunt Fanya, my father's sister. The first years flew by very quickly.