

## Gherda Kagan's



This is my mother Raisa Zivik-Kagan (from the right) with my co-student friend Mirra Katz. This photo was made in Odessa in 1928. My mother Raisa Zivik-Kagan was born in 1906. When my mother was six the family lived in a big house on the corner of Yekaterininskaya and Malaya Arnautskaya Streets in the center of Odessa. They had an apartment on the third floor and on the first floor there was a dog that my mother was scared of. Once, when my parents went out my mother's brother David climbed under a bed in the dark room and barked. This caused consternation that developed into a heart disease that my mother suffered from for the rest of her life. She stayed in bed for a year and had to give up music. Doctors didn't allow her to study at all. It was hard for the girl to go up to the third floor and my parents found another apartment in a house in Starosennaya Street. My mother was a very sensitive girl and probably, that was why she drew well. Being bed-ridden for along time she made many drawings. She climbed a windowsill and from there she threw all her drawings to local children. In 1916 my mother entered a private grammar school. In 1920, when the grammar school closed, my mother went to the Odessa school of applied arts. There were wonderful teachers in this school. My mother made friends with two girls and they kept in touch until the end of their lives. The name of one of them was Gherda and my mother named me after her. My mother finished this school in 1925. With her friends she entered Odessa Art College. My mother was eager to join Komsomol, but since she was a 'lishenka' they didn't admit her, but since she could write well they made her responsible for Komsomol

meeting minutes. The only thing she didn't like was 'simpleton' Komsomol behavior like walking embracing one another, for example. When they were five-year students, my mother and her friends were expelled from college for being 'alien elements'. They went to Kharkov, the former capital of Ukraine and managed to have them restore their status as students in college. Students of the Art College washed their brushes in kerosene that they bought in a store across the street from their college. There was chemical school across the street and students took their primus stoves that they used to experiments to the store to fill them with kerosene. In this store my mother met my future father Isaac Kagan. When my father accompanied my mother home for the first time he asked her when they reached the tower in Richelievskaya Street: 'What? It's even farther? I can't walk any more'. My mother got angry, being a proud girl, and this might become the end of everything, but they met again in the store and made it up.