

## Ema Tuncer



Here you can see my mother Ema Tuncer in her brother Eli's summer house in Burgaz. The photo was taken in 1984. My mother's name was Neama, the name of her great aunt, but they called her Ema. Her surname was Benezra at birth but it was changed to Finanser, with the introduction of the Surname Law. Mother had eight siblings. As she was the third child, she saw her mother pregnant most of the time and helped raise many of her siblings. She took so much care of her brother Eli, who was 18 years younger, that she loved him more like a son than a brother. She would tell me, 'He is not your uncle, he is your brother.' As I was an only child, this is how I came to have an uncle/brother. My mother liked to tell whoever would listen about her childhood in Sirkeci. With hindsight, I am so sorry we used to interrupt her. We said, 'Mummy, it's enough; you've already told us about it a hundred times.' We didn't take any notes of those gems. How I regret this now! Mother got married late, at age 36. Before getting married, she converted to Islam, together with my father. According to what she told me, they needed to go to the Mufti together to get the necessary permission. The Mufti asked them why they chose to convert to Islam. They candidly said that it was in order to get Turkish citizenship for my father, who was Romanian. The Mufti signed the necessary permission promptly without giving them a sermon or making the least difficulty. My mother was very impressed with that Mufti's maturity. My mother's brothers rarely came to visit us with their families. Mother, on the other hand, was very attached to them and called them often. They came to see her, but mostly by themselves. My mother was a lively, cheerful person, who enjoyed life. She loved telling jokes. One day, when my children were between eight and ten years of age, she called them to her side and said, 'You are old enough now; I can tell you adult jokes from now on.' My children remember her with a great deal of affection. They say, 'Who else has a grandmother who told her ten-year-old grandchildren adult no-no jokes?'