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President’s Report

While the memory of the truly remarkable 26th IAGS International Conference is still fresh in our minds, it is not too early to be booking for the Salt Lake City Conference from 14th July to 20th July 2007. Early booking will obviously ensure that you are able to stay at the conference hotel and avoid a last minute scramble to find alternative accommodation once the hotel conference rooms are full.

The conference hotel is in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City and is only two blocks from the Family History Center. The site can be accessed by logging onto: http://www.slc2007.org/

There are a number of time lines that should be taken into account if you intend to be a presenter at the conference. The proposal deadline is December 15, 2006. Furthermore all abstract submissions must be submitted via their on-line abstract module process. E-mail submittals will apparently not be accepted. They have also advised that call for papers confirmation and a password will be sent by e-mail from program@slc2007.org.

Speakers will apparently be notified no later than February 1, 2007. Furthermore, handout material and resource material are due by March 1, 2007, for each presentation and will be included in the syllabus distributed to all conference registrants.

In May 2008 I hope to lead a trip to Latvia. Even though it seems far away this has been enthusiastically received and about seventeen people have already indicated an interest. At the New York IAGS Conference a number of people indicated interest in participating in the trip. At this point it is still at the concept stage and a great deal of planning has to be done. If you are at all interested please contact me by email.

The membership dues are coming in steadily. If you have not yet sent your membership fees please renew as soon as possible by sending your cheque to Mike Getz or by paying using PayPal. Every membership dues paid helps us to continue the invaluable work of our SIG.

Allan Jordan, Cemetery Research Coordinator in USA, has been looking for volunteers who can translate Hebrew tombstones into English. The skills required are fluent English/Hebrew; comfort in doing the translations of names and dates; ability to work in Word or Excel to enter the data into a template; ability to use a CD ROM which has JPG photos on it. He will send them out in batches of about 200-300 and even has one plot with 700+ graves for a truly energetic volunteer. Devora Wilkenfeld was the very first to volunteer and, going beyond the call of duty, volunteered to tackle the 700+. Wow!!

Elsebeth Paikin, our list serve moderator, advises that there are now 649 subscribers for the Latvia SIG mailing list. Every month in the last year has yielded additional subscribers.

Again thanks to Barry Shay, our editor, we have another splendid edition of our newsletter. There are a number of past copies on the website for easy reference.

All the best and with SIG’s greetings.

Henry Blumberg.
President, Latvia SIG.
henry@blumbergs.ca

Editor’s Comments

Just as I was putting this issue to bed, I received a telephone call from Mike Getz and an email from Arlene Beare telling me about an offer from the Latvian Historical Archives to provide the SIG with 24 rolls of micro-film that comprise the complete 1897 All-Russian Census for Daugavpils. Arlene has been working with the Archives to obtain this database for almost a year and we can now say that it is within our grasp. To complete this project, the SIG needs to raise additional funds to cover the cost of the films and to extract the data for Jewish residents and computerize the data in a form suitable for incorporating into the JewishGen Latvia Database. I have devoted some space to this request for donations
later in the newsletter because of the importance of the database for anyone interested in Latvian Jewish genealogy.

All us know the importance of the JewishGen in researching our family history and Arlene’s article provides a heartwarming account of how she connected with the descendents of a family member who had survived the Holocaust. A simple search on JewishGen’s family finder provided the clue that led to the uniting of a family.

I am very happy to include the article by Sue Levy about her return trip to Latvia. Some of you may remember her article about her first trip to Latvia in the November 2003 issue of this newsletter. Sue traveled all the way from Perth in Western Australia to Latvia to rediscover her roots. Her story should inspire others who have not yet returned to the land of our ancestors to do so.

My surprise encounter with history is the subject of the article about my visit the Jewish Museum of Maryland in Baltimore. While I knew that many of my Latvian ancestors settled in Baltimore, I was completely surprised by what I discovered at the museum.

The interview with Cale Cukerman is another in the series of oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors that have been featured in this newsletter and will continue to be featured in the future. Mr. Cukerman’s account of his escape from Latvia into Russia and his experiences as a member of the Red Army and his return to Latvia is a moving story of survival that appears in a number of these oral testimonies.

In the previous issue of this newsletter, I included an interview with Motel Bliznansky but I inadvertently omitted his photograph, now shown below.

Arlene Beare sent me the information concerning Aleksandrs Feigmanis’s book containing brief biographies of eminent Latvian Jews killed by the Nazis. Aleks has agreed to provide the English text of the book to the SIG for uploading on our Website. The complete book including the photographs of about 90 Latvian Jews who perished is available from Aleks for $70. Aleks can be contacted at: aleksgen@balticgen.com

Finally, I have included descriptions of cities and towns taken from the archives at Beth Hatefutsoth as part of a regular feature in the newsletter. Included in this addition are: Gulbene, Igene, Ilukste, Indra, and Ikskile.

Please remember that fees are now due for the 2006/2007 membership year. These fees not only subsidize the cost of publishing and distributing this newsletter, but also support ongoing projects like testimony translations and database acquisition. Some of these fees will be used to partially fund the acquisition of the 1897 Census discussed earlier.

In closing, I again want to emphasize the need for additional donations to help pay for acquiring the micro-film tapes of the 1897 All-Russian Census for Dvinsk. Either donate directly to the SIG, via Mike Getz (check or PayPal), or to JewishGen and earmarked for the Latvia SIG.

Barry Shay
bbshay@starpower.net

The Power of JewishGen
in Uniting Families

By

Arlene Beare

A few years ago I submitted pages of testimony to Yad Vashem for my grandmother’s sister Rachel, her husband and eleven children. I am in the happy position now to withdraw one of the pages of testimony.

My grandmother, who left Latvia in the late 1890’s, had a sister who stayed behind in Riga with their parents Savel and Ella Scher. Her sister Rachel Scher married Leib-Joel Kaplan from Riga and they had eleven children. The archivists have details of them until they were deported to
the Riga Ghetto in 1941 and it was assumed that
the whole family perished.

I was therefore overjoyed a few months ago to be
contacted by Elina Argaman from Israel who had traced me through the JewishGen family finder when searching for Kaplan. She is the granddaughter of Savel Kaplan, one of the eleven children of Rachel and Leib Kaplan and the only member of his family to survive.

Prior to the war, Savel had married Rivke Shlossman and they had a daughter Esther. My newfound family have told me that Savel Kaplan worked in various German labour camps throughout the war. Toward the war’s end, the Germans decided to exterminate the Jewish labourers and he, along with the others, was transported on a lorry to his certain death. Savel, being a fluent German speaker, befriended one of the guards who then helped him escape. Eventually Savel returned to Latvia and I was told that he refused to speak German ever again.

Savel, on his return to Riga, was unable to find his wife Rivke or their child Esther and so they were presumed dead. In 1946 he married Shaina Rabinovich from Daugavpils and they had two children, Israel and Rachel. Rachel married Michael Krasnik, and they have three children: Elina, Shmuel and Yuval. Elina and Shmuel were born in Riga prior to the family moving to Israel in 1979. Savel and Shaina joined them in Israel in 1984 and Yuval was born in Israel in 1986.

Savel died in Israel in 1988 leaving his widow Shaina, now 88, and too frail for us to meet with her. Savel’s daughter Rachel Krasnik and granddaughter Elina travelled from Haifa in October to meet my sister and me in Jerusalem. Elina and her brother Shmuel changed their surname from Krasnik to Argaman, while Yuval still uses the surname Krasnik. This will no doubt pose a problem for future generations when they try to find their roots. They told me that Argaman is a more Israeli sounding name and was chosen because Krasnik means red and Argaman is the Hebrew word for scarlet.

I was extremely happy to find these members of my grandmother’s family and we exchanged photos. I had photos of some of the family they had never seen and until now were just names to them. I was also able to name family members in their photos, as they were people I recognised from photos in my possession. There is no doubt that without the Internet and JewishGen I would never have discovered these members of my family.

Return To Latvia
by
Susan Levy

In 2003 I related some experiences of a trip that my husband, Julian, and I had made from Australia to my grandmother’s birthplace in Latvia. On that trip we unfortunately had little family information with us, which resulted in it being more a sight-seeing experience than a genealogical visit. On our return home, we decided to contact the most helpful Latvian Historical State Archives, and return to Latvia in a few years, better equipped to fully enjoy the trip. It paid off!

Early in March 2006, Julian and I received a package in the mail with the research results the Latvia State Archives had uncovered about my family history. I had provided them with a good base on which to search, and I was thrilled with the results. We can now trace our family back to the mid-1700s, and have found a link to Lithuania that is worth pursuing.

The arrival of the information gave us time to partially digest it before departing once more for Europe. On our 2003 visit we were largely unprepared, and so we were able to use those experiences as a reconnaissance trip, which saved us a lot of time and effort the second time around.
This trip was different because my sister Gina and her husband Robert Fraser accompanied us. I have to say that Gina’s enthusiasm for the visit made it even more special.

We arrived by air in Riga and collected our rental car at the airport. We again stayed in Jurmala, but this time at the Baltic Beach Resort. From our rooms we had glorious views of the beach, complete with breathtakingly beautiful sunsets, which we watched from the beach every night. Our stay coincided with the Baltic Forum, the multinational planning conference that examines development in the Baltic states. Consequently the hotel was full with diplomats, government officials and reporters, and we found ourselves tripping (literally) over suits on the way to our rooms.

In my report of our trip in 2003, I wrote of a hideously ugly abandoned Soviet-built apartment block that blighted the central Jurmala pedestrian strip. Three years later, that building is now the Jurmala Spa Hotel, an elegant establishment that accommodates tourists in 4-5 star luxury. I chatted with the reception staff, who told me it was completed a year earlier with Estonian finances and Latvian labor. It took two years to strip and refurbish, they said. Now the results speak for themselves. But they also regretted the drain of young Latvians away from home in search of greater prosperity and better-paid jobs than they can get at home. Latvia’s membership in the European Union may bring some of that prosperity, but will it come soon enough to encourage young people to stay? Meanwhile, we noticed that prices were now higher and there were ATMs everywhere to encourage people to spend their money. Also there were much brighter restaurants and bars, and plenty of souvenir shops selling local crafts, amber and alcohol. Latvia embraces tourists and it is still an excellent holiday destination for scenery and relaxation.

Our first day was spent in getting to know Jurmala, and trying to do some food shopping for vegetarians, as we had elected to self-cater. Really, it’s difficult to figure out if Latvians eat, and if so, where they shop for food, because in the entire week of our stay, we only found one ‘real’ supermarket. This was an excellent Hypermarket on the highway between Ogre and Salaspils. Otherwise we were confined to very small, inadequately stocked all-purpose stores here and there. Anyhow, we managed.

One thing we noticed was that all major stores had their opening hours painted in large figures on the front of the building, as in 7-23 (meaning 7am to 11pm). Very helpful signage, as it indicated a ‘supermarket’ of some kind. We noted the local practice of selling food and non-food products in totally separate stores.

That first afternoon saw us revisiting the Jewish museum in Riga. This gracious building is in excellent condition and is very easy to find. Also parking was surprisingly easy. We were fortunate that Mr Meyer Melers, whom we met on our previous visit, was at the museum so with my poor Yiddish and Robert’s German we chatted with him for a while; we also looked at the very good museum. There is a small but useful range of books for sale, including the Melers’s book of Jewish Cemeteries in Latvia and The Jews in Liepaja (Holocaust lists), both of which we bought to donate to our Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society library back home in Perth, Australia.

Then, needing sustenance, we enjoyed a coffee and a snack at the L’Chaim kosher café on the corner.

Our primary target for the trip was a return visit to Jaunjelgava, known to us as the Friedrichstadt that our grandmother talked about. She was born there in the 1880s (she always said she was born in January 1886 but official papers gave her birth date as December 1882 – we don’t understand that): in 1900 she left, sent ahead by her family to England where relations or friends had already settled. Her parents, grandparents, six younger siblings and assorted cousins left about the same time, so our immediate family was spared the trauma of the Holocaust.

Not all my grandmother’s cousins left the country, and in the 1930s my mother’s sister traveled twice across Europe to visit them: a risky undertaking for a single Jewish woman, but she returned safely both times. From the letters she wrote home we were able to learn the names of
cousins, and some addresses as well. Not one of those relations answered letters after the war, which brings us to a tragic and fairly obvious conclusion.

Jaunjelgava is bigger than we realized on our first visit. By driving around all the back roads (some of them many times, as we found the largely unnecessary one-way street system to be confusing) we got to know the town pretty well. There are a lot of gaps where houses have presumably been demolished or fallen down over time, and most houses have a little orchard and garden. It is a pretty country setting, watched over by a single large Soviet-built apartment block that was bustling with life. Opposite the apartments stands the school, in front of which is a rather unique outdoor theatre, a small wooden stage with about a dozen rows of simple wooden benches in front and trees all around. Trees grow through the roof of the stage, lending it a very rakish look.

Curiosity led us to the service station marked on the map – but this was nothing more than a single bowser at the back of a large dirt yard behind the municipal works building. It’s self-service – but it does the job. Other facilities were also fairly minimal – we never did find a public toilet! In fact, there’s not much evidence of progress or rebuilding anywhere in the village – being so off the beaten track, Jaunjelgava doesn’t seem to attract new people now.

The town square had been smartened up since 2003, with new paving, lawn and flowerbeds, and the lion was sporting a fresh coat of gilt paint. The town library is downstairs in the pink building on the square that also houses the bank and the council offices. We visited the library because we had heard on the Latvia SIG Listserve that the people were very helpful. And they were. The librarian spoke no English but went upstairs and returned with a very cheerful secretary who had limited English. They gave us maps of the town and we explained what we hoped to see and do. Clearly there is no money to spare for luxuries in the town – the plumbing in that building was the most primitive we found anywhere on the trip. The library itself is very small, occupying just two rooms: the books are generally old, and catalogued according to some local system.

After a picnic lunch in the car by the river (the weather was damp and windy) we set off in search of the cemetery, and finally located the Jewish section right at the back, away from the road. It’s a lovely setting, amongst the trees with lily-of-the-valley coming into flower all over the place. We spent a long time walking around and taking photos. By a coincidence, one of the graves Gina photographed was a Westerman who was on our family tree. A gardener who was removing tree seedlings wanted to talk, but we had no common language. However, that didn’t stop him from talking to us!

Gina Fraser with the Gardener
Jaunjelgava Cemetery
We were moved to see the Holocaust memorial, knowing that it meant the end of a thriving Jewish community that was hundreds of years old. The message on a fairly recent plaque advised that on one day, 7 August 1941, the entire Jewish population of the town, over 500 people, had been killed.

Another day we drove to Sigulda. We had no particular reason to go there, except that websites described it as the ‘Switzerland of Latvia’, with beautiful hills and forests. Having seen no hills at all, we went in search of some. The country there is gorgeous, with lovely forests and valleys. Although there is public transport to the area, it’s really best to drive because the main tourist sights are some distance apart and all are out of the town itself (which is very pleasant, with rows of neat houses with pretty gardens).

Tourist information was available from the park ranger centre, in a very modern A-frame building opposite a delightful church with its own reflecting pond (complete with photogenic white swans). We walked across to have a look and found a church service in progress. We stood in the foyer for a few minutes and listened to some very good choral singing.

Nearby was the cable car that crosses the river. It’s very popular and glides above the treetops as it approaches the Sigulda side. We didn’t ride it but watched it arrive from the other side totally packed with humanity.

Across the river, we visited the Gutmana cave with its thousands of names carved in the rather soft sandstone; it’s a massive visitors’ book! At first I thought the hundreds of carvings in the cave were a desecration of a unique place, until I realized what a priceless record it is, of people who have visited it over hundreds of years. We wondered if it has ever been documented because the softness of the stone means the signatures will eventually wear off. A few meters away from the cave a quaint wooden kiosk stands in the park - a delightful relic of its time.

Ventspils is a very busy port city, with a huge dock area on both sides of the river. We saw ships and boats of all sizes arriving, loading and unloading. We watched in fascination as a ship was loaded with coal. No modern bulk handling – a mechanical shovel picked up a load, swung around, opened its teeth to drop the load into the hold, then swung around to collect another lot. This was after a similar operation had scooped the coal out of railway wagons.

We were interested to see that this busy and affluent-looking town seemed to proudly display its old dilapidated buildings alongside newer, well-maintained buildings. Disused relics are often set off with modern civic sculptures beside them, as if they also form part of the town’s streetscapes. The town centre also featured large interactive artworks for residents and tourists to enjoy – children’s swings beside the road, or a seat with a huge colored cow sitting up one end. Along the dockside drive there is an eclectic mix of sculptures, including a couple of very large and colorful cows.

The old city is a stone’s throw from the docks and my aunt wrote in her 1930s letters of walking down to the docks to get some measure of privacy from the relatives she was visiting, who were intent on marrying her off to an eligible man they knew (she never did marry)! A few blocks away we found a building where she had visited. Built in 1910 it was a solid corner block of apartments, vacant now but recently used for offices. In the 1930s she had stayed with our family’s cousins in a poor little cottage in a small nearby street. The Latvia State Archives advised us of the family’s address in 1935, and that this house no longer exists. The apartment was described in the 1935 census as being on the ground floor, comprising one kitchen and four other rooms; heating was by stove; lighting by electricity; water supply by draw-well; no bathroom; and a shared toilet outside the flat in the same house. This accommodation was more affluent than that of his poorer brother who, in 1935, lived with his family in accommodation comprising only one kitchen and one other room; heating by stove; lighting by kerosene; water supply by draw-well; no bathroom; and a toilet outside - a grim prospect in the cold weather.

Another building we saw a few streets away gave its year as 1757.
Down the road and around a couple of corners, we came across a building that looked like a synagogue. Tall and solid with a lot of windows and a pair of staircases inside the entrance, we believed it might have once been a shule. Now it was a Baptist church. And across the corner we found the Summer Synagogue, which is now used as a factory and is in woeful condition. There was no mistaking the building, with its distinctive triangular windows high on the front gable. The owner rudely chased us off when he saw us taking photos – they must get sick of tourists hanging around.

Our final day was spent in visiting the memorials of Bikernieki, Rumbula and Salaspils. Julian and I had been there before, so we didn’t photograph them this time, but paid our respects to the thousands of innocent victims whose lives ended there. These memorials were of more interest to my brother-in-law, who had lost relatives from Vienna in these forests. Robert was able to say kaddish for those unfortunate family members he was never able to meet.

Returning to Riga from Salaspils, we stopped at the Outdoor Ethnographic Museum on Brivibas iela, some kilometers south of Riga. This museum can best be described as a model farm reconstruction; with authentic old buildings that have been transported in and reassembled to show what country life was like in the past couple of centuries. It’s a fascinating window on history, and it certainly gave us some insight into how our grandmother’s family and ancestors lived not far away. Everything is faithfully restored and clearly marked (in English too). The weather was pretty bad that day and we were lucky the rain held off as we walked around and looked in the buildings, which include a very impressive windmill and a clever device for raising water from a well.

Seeing that place brought home to us for the first time how difficult it must have been, and what a major culture shock for our Latvian ancestors to be uprooted and transported to England where
they did not know the language, and the way of life was urban and so totally different. We who are descended from those people have probably never stopped to think in those terms before. And yet, they survived, made a new life, learned English, sent their children to school and saw their grandchildren go to university.

On our way back through Riga we stopped and visited the ruins of the Choral Synagogue, the scene of mass murder when the packed building was set on fire. The ruins have been preserved as a memorial. We can only hope the people of Latvia understand its significance.

When we left Latvia this time, we felt we had no unfinished business. Although we were unable to find any of the buildings where our grandmother lived, we had gained an understanding of her homeland that we will never forget. Latvia is a very pleasant place to visit and we totally recommend it for anyone thinking of making the trip.

A Surprise at the Jewish Museum of Maryland
by Barry Shay

As a Maryland resident I've long thought of visiting the Jewish Museum of Maryland (JMM) in Baltimore, but until the JGSGW arranged for a group visit I had yet to visit. So, on September 10th I joined about 20 other JGSGW members and visited the museum. In addition to periodic exhibitions such as The Other Promised Land, Vacationing, Identity, and the Jewish-American Dream, a nostalgic view of Jewish vacations in the Catskills, Atlantic City, and Miami Beach - which I thoroughly enjoyed - the museum includes the Lloyd Street Synagogue, built in 1845 and now the nation’s third oldest surviving synagogue, as well as the B’nai Israel, built in 1876 and still supporting an active congregation.

In addition to substantial research facilities for Maryland and Baltimore Jewish genealogists, the JMM has a permanent exhibit entitled, The Golden Land: A Jewish Family Learning Place, which is housed in the old Lloyd Street Synagogue and depicts the Jewish immigrant experience in yesterday’s Baltimore. Originally intended as a Jewish children’s museum, the exhibit provides a learning experience for all ages. Upon entering the exhibit area the visitor is greeted by a life-sized photograph of a typical Jewish immigrant family that settled in Baltimore shortly after the turn of the last century. When I saw the photograph, I froze in disbelief! The family in the photograph was my family! There, right in front of me, stood my uncle Leiba, his wife Haya, and their children Feiga, Haim, Sarah, and Bluma. Not distant relatives, but my father’s brother, his wife and four first cousins. Unbelievable!

The original photograph was taken in about 1910 in Baltimore. Since visiting the museum, I’ve learned that Leibe Schaya (Leib Shey on the ship’s manifest), later Louis Saye, was the first family member - on both sides of my family - to immigrate to the United States. He arrived on August 4, 1904 in the Port of Baltimore aboard the S. S. Hanover, which sailed from Bremen, Germany on July 21st. His wife Haya (Ida Saye), along with Bluma (Bertha) and Feiga (Fay/ Fanny) joined him in Baltimore later in 1905. (I just learned that they arrived aboard the S.S Moltke that sailed from Hamburg and arrived in New York City on August 14, 1905.) Haim (Hymen) and Sara were both born in the U. S., as was Isadore who was born about two years after the photograph was taken.

Below the Saye family photograph, is the Schaya family photograph taken in Dvinsk towards the end of 1899. I believe the photograph was taken in anticipation of the likely break-up of the family, as they were, one-by-one, planning to emigrate from Dvinsk. I have been able to determine the fate of all of the Schaya siblings, except for
The Saye Family in Baltimore ca 1910
Fay Shay Gelfand, Hymen Saye, Ida Saye, Louis Saye, Sara Shay Schlossenberg, Bertha Shay Asrael

The Schaya Family in Dvinsk ca 1899
Haya Schaya (Ida Saye) standing 2nd from left
Leibe Schaya (Louis Saye), seated on the left, with Bluma (Bertha Asrael) on his lap
Sara Schaya and her husband Hirsch Joffe and their two children. It is rumored that she and her family immigrated to China, based solely on a family member’s recollection that someone had received a postcard from her from China in 1948.

An Interview with Cale Cukerman
Interviewer: Aina Antane, Center for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia, Riga
Date of Interview: May 10th 2000
Translation from Latvian to Russian: Aina Antane
Translation from Russian to English: Inga Long, Falls Church, Virginia

(Filling the form. On respondent’s request, he orally answered the questions on the form).

A. A. : So, your name is Cale Cukerman. Do you have only one name-Cale?
C. C. : One name.
A. A. : Do you know whom they named you after?
C. C. : Well, when I was born, my name wasn’t Cale, but Becalel. There was an artist with by-with that name and my father thought that I would be an artist too so he gave me that name.

But in Russian times (Soviet times-edit.) when the Russians came, it was hard to pronounce the name “Becalel” and so I was called “Cale”. But when I was born I was Becalel.

A. A. : Tell me, please, what was your mother’s name?
C. C. : Dvaire.
A. A. : And father’s?
C. C. : Meyer.
A. A. : To which tribe of Israel do you belong?
C. C. : Israelite.
A. A. : Tell me, please, do you know anybody else who would have the same name as you - Cale Cukermans?
C. C. : No.
A. A. : Have you ever changed your last name?
C. C. : No, no.
A. A. : Date of your birth?
C. C. : July 15th 1921.
A. A. : Place of your birth?
C. C. : I was born in Riga, 7 Elizabetes Street, apt. # 9.
A. A. : Do you remember the date of your wedding?
C. C. : When I’ve got married?
A. A. : Yes!
A. A. : And where?
C. C. : In Riga.
A. A. : What is your wife’s name?
C. C. : Marga.
A. A. : What is her maiden name?
C. C. : I don’t remember that. She is from Gulbene.

A. A. : When was she born?
C. C. : She was born in 1930.
A. A. : Where?
C. C. : In Gulbene.
A. A. : What is your wife’s profession?
C. C. : She is a hair dresser. Always has been.
A. A. : What was your wife’s mother’s name?
C. C. : I don’t remember.
A. A. : And father’s?
C. C. : Don’t remember.
A. A. : You have been married before Marga. What was your first wife’s name?
C. C. : Sonya.
A. A. : What do you remember about her- her maiden name?
C. C. : Don’t remember. It was long time ago…
A. A. : What about your education - where and when did you study?
C. C. : I started to go to school in 1928. It was a Jewish school. It was on a street they call Upes Street now. I studied there until 1933, and then I switched to a school on 141 Lachplesha Street. I studied there until 1937. After that I started to work for the master on 43 Maskavas Street - his name was Shif. Before the war I worked there.
A. A. : What were you doing?
C. C. : I cut leather.
A. A. : What happened in your life afterwards?
C. C. : When the war started, we left for Russia. And then I joined the Army - the Latvian division. I was in the Army until 1945 (in the division-edit.).

A. A. : And after the war? If we are talking about your profession - what did you do after the war?
C. C. : I cut leather in a “Somdaris” (leather goods factory-edit.).
A. A. : As leather cutter?
C. C. : Yes. That was my job until 1987.
A. A. : Let’s move to the geography of your life. Do you remember the addresses where you lived? C. C. : I was lived on Matisa Street for a while. It was after the war.

A. A. : What about before the war?
C. C. : Before the war I lived on 7-9 Jezusbaznicas Street. We arrived from Russia to Riga in 1947. We lived on 42 Matisa Street. And then we moved from Matisa Street to the corner of Brivibas and Stabu Street. It was the fifth floor of 76 Brivibas Street, with the entrance from Stabu Street. And then I got married. And I was living on Skolas Street.
A. A. : What is your current address?
C. C. : 81 Tallinas Street, apt.# 17.
A. A. : Do you have a phone?
C. C. : Yes. 7702254
A. A. : Thank you. And now let’s move to questions about your children.
C. C. : I have a daughter.
A. A. : What is her name?
C. C. : Her name is Dina. She is my only child.
A. A. : When she was born?
C. C. : She is 42 years old. It means she was born in 1958.
A. A. : Was she born in Riga?
C. C. : Yes, in Riga.
A. A. : Is she married?
C. C. : Yes.
A. A. : When did she get married?
C. C. : 22 years ago.
A. A. : That means in 1978, is it right?
C. C. : Yes. And she has a child, Ieva. She is my granddaughter.
A. A. : How old is your granddaughter?
C. C. : She is 18.
A. A. : Was she born in Riga?
C. C. : Yes, in Riga. She lived on Artilerijas Street.
A. A. : What is your granddaughter’s last name now?
C. C. : Bruka.
A. A. : Did your daughter get married in Riga?
C. C. : Yes, in Riga.
A. A. : Does she still live in Riga?
C. C. : Yes, she lives in the same place as I do. On Tallinas Street. As I said before - 81 Tallinas Street.
A. A. : Tell me, please, do you have only one granddaughter?
C. C. : Only one.
A. A. : So, on the questions about your children and grandchildren we already answered. What is your daughter’s husband’s name?
C. C. : Martins.
A. A. : Martins Bruks?
C. C. : Bruks.
A. A. : How old is he?
C. C. : 45
A. A. : That means, he was born in 1955. Was he born in Riga?
C. C. : Yes, in Riga.
A. A. : Do you have any brothers or sisters?
C. C. : Not here, but in Israel.
A. A. : Please name them in birth order.
C. C. : There are several of them in Israel. My sister Dveira - her last name is Schneiderman. She was born in Jelgava. She is 82 years old.
A. A. : Do you have any more brothers or sisters?
C. C. : One sister stayed here. And the Germans killed her. Her name was Leya Cukerman.
A. A. : When was she born?
C. C. : In 1923.
A. A. : And she died in 1941?
C. C. : I don’t know. When the Germans came to Riga.
A. A. : Do you have any more sisters or brothers?
C. C. : Brothers? One died during the war. When exactly - I don’t know.
A. A. : Was he born in Riga?
C. C. : Yes, in Riga.
A. A. : Do you have any more brothers?
C. C. : One more brother lives in Israel.
A. A. : What is his name?
C. C. : Herman.
A. A. : When was he born?
C. C. : In 1914.
A. A. : Was he born in Riga?
C. C. : Yes.
A. A. : And so you have answered the questions in the form. Now, tell me, please, do you remember anything about your great grandmothers and great grandfathers? What were their names?

C. C. : I know about one aunt.

A. A. : From father’s or mother’s side?

C. C. : Father’s. My father’s sister.

A. A. : What was her name?

C. C. : Hannah Levit. Address: 12 Blaumana Street.

A. A. : When was she born?

C. C. : I don’t know that. Maybe in 1918 or 1916. Probably in 1918.

A. A. : What did she do?

C. C. : She - almost nothing. Her husband was working - he was a cobbler.

A. A. : What were the names of your father’s parents - your grandfather and your grandmother?

C. C. : I don’t know. I know one more aunt - Sarah Davidson. My father’s sister. She was a doctor. She stayed abroad. And Hannah Levit, too.

A. A. : Do you know about other relatives?

C. C. : No, those are all my relatives.

A. A. : But from your mother’s side? Do you know anything about her relatives?

C. C. : No, no.

A. A. : Then tell me, please, what do you remember about your childhood, your family?

C. C. : What do I remember? We were very religious, orthodox school and at home. Every day we went to the synagogue. Every day, when father was alive, and brother. All of us were keeping holidays as it is supposed to be. If it had to be - that means we had it. We were living like that all the time; we were very faithful.

A. A. : At that time, did you go to the Big Choral synagogue on Gogola Street?

C. C. : Yes, on Gogola Street. My father had a seat over there and we went there every time. And when my father died, I went to the synagogue on Elias Street - it doesn’t exist anymore.

A. A. : When did your father die?

C. C. : In 1935.

A. A. : When was he born?

C. C. : He was born somewhere in eighteen hundred and ninety’s. In 1890.

A. A. : And when did your mother die?

C. C. : She died in 1947. We returned from Russia and she died here.

A. A. : And when was she born? Approximately - compare her age with the age of your father.

C. C. : Well, approximately - she was a little bit younger than my father - five years or so.

A. A. : So, that means she was born in 1895.

C. C. : I will show you a picture - in our religion - I was 13 years old.

A. A. : Bar Mitzvah?

C. C. : Yes. I was 13 years old. My parents were very religious, and so were we. Only my brother wasn’t religious.

A. A. : It is very interesting - in such a family…

C. C. : He was always bringing home papers, manifests. We had a stove at home. He was putting them in the stove, but my mother - if she saw them - she would tear them in pieces. But my brother didn’t say anything so there wouldn’t be any fights at home; he understood everything. That’s what he was doing. He wasn’t going to the synagogue. Only once he has been in the synagogue - when he was in Israel. We were visiting there. We were visiting our relatives - a cousin. Our cousin’s husband was very reli-
gious - he took us to the synagogue. Me - yes, but my brother - for the first time. He (cousin’s husband-edit.) introduced us to the rabbi. When the rabbi approached, our relative told him that we were from Riga. The rabbi approached us and shook my hand and my brother’s, too. It was for the first time in a lifetime. Very interesting.

A. A.: Tell me, please, what else can you remember from the life of your family during your childhood? For example - what was the quality of your family’s life compared to the families around you. What your parents were doing for a living?

C. C.: My mother was a tailor – very famous, a very good one. She was born in Jelgava and lived in Jelgava. And the first president of Latvia - Chakste - when my father died-Chakste’s family attended the funeral in 1935. Chakste himself wasn’t alive at that time anymore, but his son or daughter was at the funeral - I don’t remember. My mother was a very good tailor for the Chakste family.

A. A.: So your mother is from Jelgava. What about your father?

C. C.: My father’s roots were from Warsaw. But he lived in Latvia all his life.

A. A.: Your mother was sewing. Was she working at home or was there a shop?

C. C.: No, she was working at home - there was a room. I don’t know how it was in Jelgava - I haven’t been there, but in Riga she had a room, and there was a sewing machine. My sister, who lives in Israel now, learned from our mother and also became a tailor. When I have the time, I go to Jezusbaznicas Street, where I used to live. Once, when I went there last summer, one woman asked me: “Whom are you looking for?” And later: “You are Cukerman!” - she recognized me. They were living on the upper floor, we were very good friends and she recognized me. She asked me in. So that’s how I got to see where we were living. When we returned from Russia, my sister and I, we went there (to the house on Jezus-baznicas Street-edit.) and then the caretaker, who was there, gave us our sewing machine. My mother was crying from joy…

A. A.: Tell me, please, what your father was doing?

C. C.: My father was - I will tell you where he was working. He was working on Marstalu Street - there was a factory where they were making suitcases, leather suitcases. He was sewing - some parts were sewn. And that’s where he was working. On Marstalu Street - I don’t remember the number - there was such a factory.

A. A.: How would you describe your standard of living back then? Were you wealthy?

C. C.: Well, I’ll tell you - when my father was alive, it was fine. And when my father died, I went to work on Maskavas Street. To the shop - to improve our standard of living. And soon after that the war started.

A. A.: Your sister learned and was working with your mother?

C. C.: Yes, yes.

A. A.: And all that happened at home, customers came [to your tr.] home, ordered cloth, your mother made the clothes and your sister was helping her - did I understand you correctly?

C. C.: Yes, yes.

A. A.: Do you remember any special traditions in your family at that time?

C. C.: Well, on Saturdays... I mean - Fridays, my mother prepared the food - in Yiddish it is called cong - it’s potatoes, carrots, meat - all that goes into the stove, in a special stove - she was taking that to a special bakery on Kungu Street. There was a bakery. And there they put all that in the stove and then it stays there until the Saturday. Then our maid - we had a German maid - very good person. She went to the bakery and brought (baked cong - edit.) And that was our best and the most tasty food on Saturdays. And now my daughter is making it for Saturdays, but it isn’t the same. And stuffed fish - we usually had it, very good… Now it has been made, too - it has been taught.
A. A.: Tell me, please, did your mother have any helpers for work or did she manage it with her daughter’s - your sister’s help?

C. C.: Only her daughter - my sister and her. My mother was only taking the jobs she could manage to do with the help of her daughter. Her daughter learned very well - when she went to Israel, she was working in some French company. She was working very well for 30 years.

A. A.: And so, before the war you were working and studying. What else can you tell about the pre-war time?

C. C.: I felt very bad because my father wasn’t there anymore. He was a very sincere person. And when I was working - in the beginning I was learning, and it was very hard. And then four and a half years later the war started. The war took us to the Yaroslavsk region.

A. A.: How did you manage to flee?

C. C.: By train. There was my sister, my brother with my mother and me. And mother didn’t want to leave - she spoke German very well and didn’t believe that it would turn out the way it did. But when we were waiting for the train, I left the train and went back to Jezusbaznicas Street to get my mother. Then we fled to the Yaroslavsk region. When we arrived at Yaroslavsk, they treated us very badly, they didn’t want to talk to us, didn’t let us in any house. Because we were Jews. And my brother and I, we joined the Army.

A. A.: And what did your mother do?

C. C.: My mother and my sister left for the Saratov region - where Germans were living after they have been deported to it. Karl Marx - Marx city - that’s where the Germans were living. When the war started, almost all the inhabitants there were the new arrivals - from Poland, from - from everywhere. They came to Russia and lived there. And that’s where they (my mother with my sister - edit.) stayed. My mother was working as a tailor.

A. A.: And you volunteered to join the Latvian division?

C. C.: Yes, and they accepted me.

A. A.: Where did you start to fight?

C. C.: Near Moscow.

A. A.: When did you get injured?

C. C.: In 1942. I was injured in 1942 and I was in the hospital. It was in Zlatoust, in the Chelabinsk region. And then I went to the Saratovsk region. They released me - I wasn’t useful to them in the army anymore. They gave me my documents and let me go.

A. A.: And then you went to your mother?

C. C.: Yes. I will tell you - at first I came to Saratov - there I had to travel by the steam boat - and then I asked on the street - is there a synagogue here? He asked me - why do you need to know? It wasn’t allowed back then… Then he was asking: Where are you from? – From Riga.

A. A.: Pardon me – did you meet Jews? Were you asking Jews?

C. C.: Yes, Jews - I heard him speaking to his wife in Yiddish. He said – go there, there is somebody from Riga, too. I asked - Who? He said – Dubin. The American government was requesting his release (M. Dubin was imprisoned – edit.), and so he was there, in Saratov. He wasn’t there for long because soon after he was arrested again. And then I met Dubin there. That synagogue there was very, very small… It wasn’t allowed back then – at that time they operated in that synagogue almost in underground, actually not almost, but… And then I went to Marx.

A. A.: To your mother?

C. C.: Yes.

A. A.: How was your life there?

C. C.: Handicapped, I didn’t work in the beginning. I had no strength. Then I went to work at one shop. I was a guard – I couldn’t do anything else with my bad arm. I was guarding there. I was working mostly in the evenings, at nights. Then once, I saw in the warehouse there was leather. The leather was lying there on the
ground and going bad. And then one of my friends and I - we started to make the leather cases for the documents. I was only showing him how to do that, I was cutting and cleaning the leather with the knife, and we were making these cases. They were a little bit bigger than this (showing his purse – edit.) And then the boss thanked me for my help because I managed to use some of the leather. I made the cases and they sold them. So.

A. A. : What kind factory was it? Something to do with leather?

C. C. : Yes, with leather – a shoe factory. A shoe repair shop. Well all kind of... And once I was walking – I was on duty – I was going to the storage, and saw that the leather is going bad, wasted. That store was there from German times. Maybe Germans would use that leather, too. And so that leather stayed and I used almost all of it, and made the covers.

A. A. : And so you were working there until 1947?


A. A. : And what happened in 1947?

C. C. : We left for Riga. We would have gone earlier, but my mother got sick, she couldn’t travel. Then she went to the doctor - she had a very good doctor. When she got better, we took her on the sleigh pulled by the horse to the steamboat. That’s how we got to Saratov. There on the train – we had to put some cloth across the walkway they had no doors over there (it was a reserved cart- edit.) so it wouldn’t be visible, because she couldn’t walk and had to do everything there... That’s how we got to Riga. At the beginning we were staying at my sister’s friend’s place on Avotu Street. We lived there. There wasn’t any other place to stay...

A. A. : Before that did you correspond with your sister’s friend?

C. C. : Yes. In that apartment – my sister’s friend’s apartment – we were living in the kitchen, she herself was in the room. Then we moved to live to Matisa Street. That was a communal type apartment. That’s where our mother died.

A. A. : Tell me, please, before the war – when you were working, your neighbors were they mostly Jews or did you have some relationships with non-Jews as well? For example, non-Jewish neighbors: Latvians, Russians? What were the relationships before the war?

C. C. : In our house – where we were living – there were neighbors of different nationalities – Russians, Latvians and Poles. We had very good relationships, very good. I had friends my own age, we were going to the Daugava [river tr.] – we were getting along very well – we didn’t have any hatred. I never heard of that. Latvians or Russians – doesn’t matter. Russians or Latvians – we were boys, neighbors. We never had any hatred.

A. A. : Does it mean you don’t have any sour memory regarding the racism?

C. C. : No, no. After the war when I was working in “Somdaris” – “Somdaris” back then was on Kalku Street, there were mostly Jews and Latvians working. Then we moved to work on Brivibas Street – where the factory “Laima” is. We were working there. There also were mostly all Latvians and Jews. Then came the Russians (at the end of C. C’s. working years – edit.) Are you a Latvian?

A. A. : Me? Yes.

C. C. : Then I will tell you. There is a difference between immigrant Russians (came to Latvia – edit.) and the local Russians. A huge, big difference. I was working on the machine – I needed a helper. One Russian came to help me. He didn’t drink, didn’t smoke. We had a little room, where we were celebrating birthdays – when someone turned fifty, sixty years old. Our boss didn’t allow it, but we were quiet... And that man who was helping me, turned sixty years old. We congratulated him, he got drunk a little until he said: “How my father was stabbing Jews!” How he started to talk! I confronted him and told him to leave and that I would not work with him anymore. The next day he asked another worker, also
a Russian: “Why won’t Cukerman speak with me anymore?” “Your father didn’t stab enough Jews.” There was a difference, you see, a difference between new Russians and local ones. The master of our shop also was a Russian woman, well, from Riga. She was a very good person. Once I got into trouble in Russian (Soviet - edit.) times because of keeping Jewish holidays. We had a secretary of the Communist party organization. And the boss says: “Cukerman, the secretary is asking you to clean the hallway!” I said – I can’t. So I asked somebody else to do it – not me. Because of that they didn’t give me bonus money for three months. And once that master of the shop - that Russian woman - once in the morning she came to me and said: “ I will deal with it!” She felt sorry for me that I am not getting the bonus. She knew that I am working very hard – everybody felt sorry for me. And then they contributed the money. So she says: “I signed for you yesterday (for the salary – edit.) it is your bonus.” I told her – it can’t be, I was yesterday myself! And at that moment our boss comes in and sees that… he understood, but didn’t say anything and then left. I didn’t take that money because I knew that they are giving it from themselves. After this they started to pay me bonuses again. Because there – you know – sometimes it needs to be done- plan, plan, plan… we were working during Saturdays. After that I didn’t go to work on Saturdays. After that he anyways… they were paying good bonuses.

A. A. : How could say that you are not going to work on Saturdays? Or you just didn’t say anything and simply didn’t go and everybody just understood and respected that?

C. C. : I was talking. Because if I worked on Saturdays – it is against the law. Officially it wasn’t allowed. If officially working day was on Saturday – if working day was moved, then I went to work, otherwise – not. If a plan had to be done – they were working on Saturdays, but not me.

A. A. : At those times that was brave.

C. C. : Yes, yes. It was.

A. A. : As I said, we are mostly interested in times between the both wars. What could you tell us about the mood before the war – were there any conversations at home or at work about the danger of the war or about the danger to Jews?

C. C. : Before the war, when sometimes we were talking – me, and not only me, but my friends, too – we were listening to America, France, Germany (radio – edit.) We heard the difference of how Germany is informing and how America is. It’s a huge difference. At that moment we understood that it was not going to be good. And I can tell, I had an aunt – my father’s sister – she was living in Germany, in Berlin. I don’t remember what her name was. And I remember that in 1938 she sent a letter to my mother. My father was already dead. She wrote: “I don’t know what to do, I can’t go anywhere. I have a very good neighbor – nice German lady – she is bringing me the products and necessities. That’s how I live. I don’t know what will happen in the future.” And then in the beginning of 1940s, we received a letter from her from Switzerland. Good German people helped 10 Jews to flee to Switzerland by boat. It was a long journey – because of the boats. They left at night so they wouldn’t be seen (by others – edit.) And that’s how they got to Switzerland. And thanks to that they survived. Because Germans took her to Switzerland, she survived. All of her family – three of them. They were among those ten saved Jews. Neighbors saved them. That’s how she survived. She survived because she fled to Switzerland. That was a unique event.

A. A. : So you had some information? But your mother was ignoring this information and didn’t want to leave?

C. C. : She had very good relationship with Germans – with local Germans. She didn’t believe, that something like that could happen. Before the war she was working together with Germans for 17 or 18 years. Well – she didn’t believe it. That’s why I had to run, return back (home – edit.) and bring her with me. And when we returned (to the train terminal – edit.) there were no Germans yet in Riga (German Army – edit.), but there was shooting from the roofs. I was happy they didn’t shoot us. That was lucky. We were walking, but they were shooting from the apartment windows. I was walking together with my
mother… There were shooting from behind the church. Then we walked a little, you know, where there is a police building now (on Gogola Street – edit.), so we walked in that building and waited in the hallway for a little while. We were afraid to miss the train. So we stayed in that building for just five minutes. We were in a hurry – we were running…

A. A.: How did you know that there was a train?

C. C.: We didn’t know – we just went there. Just a guess. We didn’t know what was going to be there. There were a lot of people. Then the train came and everybody was trying to get on the train. They were hurrying. There were Latvians, too.

A. A.: Tell me, please, how was your Russian back then? Did you speak any Russian during the war?

C. C.: I will tell you. There were mostly Jews and Latvians in the Army.

A. A.: But before that – at the beginning of the war? How much Russian did you speak when your mother and you left Riga? Did you speak Russian well back then?

C. C.: My mother didn’t speak Russian at all – she spoke German and Latvian. My sister knew (Russian – edit.) But we were living there for a very short time – in the Yaroslavsk region. We just arrived there and left for the Army (with his brother – edit.), but in Marx City there were newcomers – they were from Lithuania, Estonia, Poland. There were speaking in every language. Well, there were Russians, too…

For example, when I was in the hospital in Maloyaroslavsk, I almost didn’t speak any Russian at all, very little. And the others thought that I was German. I couldn’t speak Russian so they thought I was German. When they approached me I told them I was from Riga. And there on the upper level, there was one injured person who also was from Riga, from Latvia. Then all of us went there and I spoke with him in Latvian. And then I learned a little Russian, on the way home, when I went from the hospital. Back then there weren’t any big conversations…Then I went by train to Saratov… And there I met that person (Dubin – edit.) And then I went to Marx City.

The 1897 All-Russian Census for Dvinsk

One of the major initiatives of the Latvia SIG over the past year has been to obtain the 1897 All-Russian Census data for Dvinsk. This project, as has most of our database projects, been headed by Arlene Beare who is in close contact with the archivists at the Latvian Historical Archives in Riga. In a communications with Arlene, the director of the Archives has offered the Latvia SIG the complete 1897 census for Daugavpils, which is composed of 24 rolls of micro-film. Since the census is categorized by street names, the Jewish residents will have to be abstracted, computerized, and formatted in accordance with JewishGen requirements. The database will then become a part of the JewishGen Latvia Database. This addition to the existing database will improve the “hit” rate substantially for all of us and will certainly improve one’s chances of obtaining positive research results.

The Latvia SIG does not have the financial resources to completely fund this project, so we are asking the membership and other interested parties for donations to offset the cost. Contributions can be made either directly to the Latvia SIG or to JewishGen in support of the Latvia SIG. It is not often that the SIG requests additional funds from its members, but this project requires such a request and deserves your support.

Latvian Jewish Intelligentsia Victims of the Holocaust

Communication from Arlene Beare

Aleksandrs Feigmanis has written a small booklet entitled, “Latvian Jewish Intelligentsia Victims of the Holocaust,” which has been published through the kind support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France and the French Cultural Centre in Riga, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

The publication is 120 pages with brief biogra-
Membership Fees are Past Due

This is a reminder to kindly renew your subscription to the Latvia SIG and Newsletter. Our subscription year runs from July 2006 through June 2007. Please mail your check, payable to Latvia SIG, for US $20 for the US and Canada, and $30 (bankable in the US) from elsewhere, to:

Latvia SIG
5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901
Bethesda, MD 20814
USA

You can also remit your payment through PayPal to: mikegetz005@comcast.net. We look forward to your participation and support.

In an effort to simplify the process of submitting membership dues, especially for people who reside outside the United States and Canada, the Latvia SIG accepts payment via PayPal. PayPal is a web-based service that facilitates paying bills and fees via email.

With PayPal, you can send money to anyone with an email address by simply signing up for a PayPal account. To do this go to the PayPal web-site, http://www.paypal.com, and follow the directions provided to create an account. Once you have an account, log into your account and click the Send Money tab. Now enter the Latvia SIG email address, which is: mikegetz005@comcast.net, and enter the amount you would like to send. To fund the payment, add a credit card to your PayPal account by entering your credit card number as instructed. Money can also be deducted from your bank account, if you choose to do so.

After reviewing the details of your payment, click the Send Money button. The Latvia SIG will immediately receive an email explaining that it has received a payment from you through PayPal.

It is important that new members complete and mail the membership form on the following page — this form can also be found on the Latvia SIG web site — so that we can enter family names and locations on our Family Finder. Also, please include the other information requested on the form to help us make the Latvia SIG an even more effective resource for genealogical research.

Please note that the new membership year runs from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007 so dues are now due for the 2006/2007 membership year.

As a courtesy this issue of the newsletter is being sent to those subscribers who have paid for the 2005/2006 membership year, but have not yet subscribed for the 2006/2007 membership year. Future issues will only be sent to paid subscribers for the 2006/2007 membership year.

Donations to the Latvia SIG can also be sent to this address and can also be conveyed via PayPal. In either case, please indicate for what purpose the contribution is intended.
COMMMUNITY NUMBER: 10536
COMMMUNITY NAME: GULBENE

GULBENE
(AN ADDITIONAL LATVIAN NAME: Vecgulbene; IN GERMAN: SCHWANENBURG).

A TOWN IN THE MADONA DISTRICT, VIDZEME REGION, NORTH EAST LATVIA, U.S.S.R. DURING THE YEARS 1920-40 IT WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.

A SMALL JEWISH COMMUNITY WAS ORGANIZED IN GULBENE AFTER WORLD WAR I. THE MAJORITY OF THE JEWISH WERE ENGAGED IN COMMERCE. THEY WERE A PART OF THE PUBLIC LIFE OF LATVIAN JEWRY, AND CONTRIBUTED TO ZIONIST FUNDS AS WELL AS OTHER MONEY RAISING CAMPAIGNS.

IN 1935 THE JEWISH COMMUNITY NUMBERED 84, REPRESENTING 2% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD


A FEW DAYS AFTER THE GERMAN ATTACK ON RUSSIA (JUNE 22, 1941), AT THE BEGINNING OF JULY 1941, GERMAN FORCES CAPTURED GULBENE. IN AUGUST THE JEWS OF THE TOWN WERE DETAINED BY THE LATVIAN POLICE AND SENT, TOGETHER WITH THE JEWS OF THE SURROUNDINGS, TO THE NEARBY VILLAGE OF LITENE. THERE, AFTER THEIR MONEY AND VALUABLES HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM THEM, THEY WERE SHOT TO DEATH. ACCORDING TO ONE VERSION, A SINGLE JEWISH YOUTH SURVIVED.

COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10537
COMMUNITY NAME: IGENE

| I G E N E  
| (IN GERMAN: AGENHOF)  
| A SETTLEMENT IN THE TALSI DISTRICT IN THE KURZEME (FORMERLY KURLAND) REGION, LATVIA, U.S.S.R. DURING THE PERIOD 1920-40 IT WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.  
| THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CONSISTED OF ABOUT 40 FAMILIES, AND WAS IN EXISTENCE UNTIL WORLD WAR I. AFTER THE WAR THE SETTLEMENT WAS ABANDONED, AND FROM 1920 NO JEWS REMAINED IN THE PLACE.  

|
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10539
COMMUNITY NAME: ILUKSTE

ILUKSTE
(IN JEWISH AND GERMAN SOURCES: ILLUXT).

A SUB-DISTRICT TOWN IN THE ZEMGALE DISTRICT (FORMERLY KURLAND) SOUTH EASTERN LATVIA, U.S.S.R. DURING THE YEARS 1920-1940 IT WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.


THE FIRST JEWS TO SETTLE IN THE TOWN, TWO BROTHERS WHO WERE TAILORS, CAME UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A POLISH BARONESS, WIFE OF THE GOVERNOR OF THE PLACE. THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF THE BARONESS AND HER TWO BROTHERS, PERMISSION WAS GRANTED TO JEWS IN THE SURROUNDING VILLAGES TO ENTER THE TOWN. THEY RENTED A BUILDING FOR USE AS A SYNAGOGUE AND IN 1832 A SHOCHET (RITUAL SLAUGHTERER) WAS ENGAGED. A MIKVEH (RITUAL BATH) WAS BUILT. THERE WAS NEITHER A JEWISH CEMETERY NOR A HEVRA KADISHA, AND THE JEWS BURIED THEIR DEAD IN THE NEIGHBORING TOWNS, SUBAT AND GRIVA.

FROM 1847 A RABBI OFFICIATED IN THE TOWN. THE COMMUNITY, WHICH WAS MAINLY COMPOSED OF HASSIDIM, FOUNDED A TALMUD TORAH. THE FIRST BETH HAMIDRASH WAS BUILT IN 1845, AND TWO MORE WERE OPENED BY 1900. SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS INCLUDED A WELFARE SOCIETY AND A SOCIETY WHICH PROVIDED CLOTHING FOR THE NEEDY. A "Bikkur Cholim" (Sick Visiting Society) was established in 1865.

IN 1897 THE COMMUNITY NUMBERED 942, AND BY 1910 THE NUMBER HAD INCREASED TO 1,016.

DURING WORLD WAR I THE TOWN CHANGED HANDS SEVERAL TIMES, AND MOST OF THE INHABITANTS LEFT.

THE MAJORITY OF THE JEWS EARNED A LIVING AS SHOPKEEPERS OR FROM DIFFERENT TRADES.

IN 1933, IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE 18TH ZIONIST CONGRESS, SEVEN OF THE JEWS VOTED. THEY CAST THEIR VOTES FOR THE LABOR ERETZ ISRAEL LIST.

IN 1935 THERE WERE 71 JEWS IN THE TOWN, COMPRISING 5% OF THE POPULATION.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD


COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10539
COMMUNITY NAME: ILUKSTE

TOWN. ACCORDING TO TESTIMONY, A SHORT WHILE AFTER THE
OCCUPATION THE JEWS OF ILUKSTE WERE SENT TO THE GHETTO IN
DAUGAVPILS (PREVIOUSLY DVINSK), AND MURDERED IN THE
FORESTS.

THE TOWN WAS LIBERATED BY THE RED ARMY ON JULY 29, 1944.
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10540
COMMUNITY NAME: INDRA

I N D R A
(IN RUSSIAN KNOWN AS BOLBINOVA)

A SETTLEMENT IN THE LATGALE DISTRICT, LATVIA, U.S.S.R. DURING THE YEARS 1920-40 IT WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.

IN 1935 THE JEWISH COMMUNITY NUMBERED 46, COMPRISED 16% OF THE INHABITANTS.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD


AT THE END OF JULY THE REMAINING JEWS WERE TAKEN TO THE GHETTO IN DAUGAVPILS (FORMERLY DVINSK). A FEW DAYS LATER THEY WERE TRANSFERRED TO POGLIANKA FOREST, WHERE THEY WERE MURDERED IN THE "PROVINCES ACTION" (A PLAN TO LIQUIDATE THE JEWS IN THE RURAL TOWNS).
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10538
COMMUNITY NAME: IKSILE

IKSILE

A SETTLEMENT IN THE RIGA REGION, SITUATED ON THE RIGHT-HAND BANK OF THE DAUGAVA RIVER (FORMERLY DWINA), IN THE VIDZEME DISTRICT, LATVIA, U.S.S.R.

IKSILE HAD ITS ORIGINS IN THE VILLAGE NAMED UK KULL ('ONE VILLAGE'), WHICH WAS FOUNDED BY A GERMAN PRIEST ABOUT THE YEAR 1,000. DURING THE YEARS 1920-40 IKSILE WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.

IN 1930 THERE WERE FIVE JEWS IN THE PLACE. THERE WERE SUMMER HOMES OWNED BY JEWS IN THE VILLAGE.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD


Shortly after the outbreak of war between Germany and the U.S.S.R. (June 22, 1941), German forces captured the area. Two Jewish families - Meyerson and Katz - who were in Iksile at the time, were taken on September 18, 1941, and murdered in the forest in the vicinity of the river. According to the testimony of farmers, the Latvians who carried out the murders allowed one member of the Meyerson family to escape, but he attacked the murderers who then shot him. One of the girls of the family survived.
Latvia SIG Membership Questionnaire

NAME:.......................................................... PHONE:.............................................
ADDRESS:.......................................................... FAX:..........................................................
CITY:..........................................................STATE/PROVINCE:..........................
ZIP/POSTAL CODE:......................
COUNTRY (if other than U.S.):.................................
E-mail address:..............................

Whom are you researching? (Latvian cities only) Please use location names/spellings as found in Where Once We Walked. i.e. the modern names of the cities as used in Latvia today.

NAME:................................ LOCATION:..........................
NAME:................................ LOCATION:..........................
NAME:................................ LOCATION:..........................
NAME:................................ LOCATION:..........................
NAME:................................ LOCATION:..........................

Bibliographical or archival sources used in your Latvian genealogical research:

Information on Latvian Jewish communities, history of Jewish presence, current status, contacts:

Cemeteries, travel experiences, etc:

Suggested newsletter topics:

Translation skills: Hebrew, Latvian, Russian, Yiddish, Other (specify)

I would be willing to volunteer for the following activities:

Please return your completed questionnaire, along with a check for U.S. $20 (U.S. and Canada, $30 for overseas members) payable to Latvia SIG, to:

Latvia SIG
5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901
Bethesda, MD 20814-2061

Include contact information in the SIG FF?

_____Yes      _____No