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President’s Report

At the outset I wish you all a Shana Tovah, peace and good health for the coming year. As the New Year unfolds we will continue to strive to expand the role of the SIG to assist members with their genealogical research.

Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting held at the IAJGS Conference in Salt Lake City on the 19th July 2007, I presented my report, which dealt with the wide range of SIG activities in the past year.

I thanked the following people:

Our Vice-President, Don Hirschhorn, for his dedication, innovative ideas and constructive suggestions and also for attending to the SIG conference arrangements.

Barry Shay, our Past President, for maintaining a very high standard of editorship for the newsletter and for his invaluable work as Web Editor.

Mike Getz, our Treasurer, not only for his work as Treasurer, but also his guidance and leadership since the inception of this SIG.

Arlene Beare, our Data Base Coordinator, for her invaluable work and meaningful endeavors and success in bringing on-line a number of very important data bases.

Elsebeth Paikin, our List serve Moderator, for her continued and very necessary work in managing and growing the Listserve.

Last, but not least. Bruce Dumes our new Webmaster, was thanked for creating and redesigning our new website.

Membership Dues

We decided that the SIG would accept membership dues for a two or more year basis in addition to the usual one year basis because of the inconvenience of annual payments.

Treasurer’s Report

Mike Getz’s report was presented in absentia, but he has provided a written version for the newsletter. Under Mike’s stewardship the finances of the SIG continue to be in good shape.

Board and Office Bearers

The board members for the next year are:

President Henry Blumberg
Vice President Don Hirschhorn
Treasurer Mike Getz
Newsletter Editor Barry Shay
Web Page Editor Barry Shay
Webmaster Bruce Dumes
Data Base Coordinator Arlene Beare
List Serve Moderator Elsebeth Paikin
Domestic Data Base Coordinator Lois Ogilby-Rosen
Dvinsk and Rezekne Shtetlink Coordinator Dave Howard

Database Acquisition

Arlene Beare continued with her efforts to bring on line the 1st All Russian Census for 1897 for Dvinsk. For many years she has made invaluable contributions in bringing on-line a number of very important data bases including the Marriage Lists for Riga, the Family Lists for Rezekne, the All Russian Census of 1897 for Riga, Rezekne, Krustpils, etc.

List Serve

The list serve continues to grow and I was pleased to report that there are in excess of 700 subscribers for the mailing list. Elsebeth Paikin, our list serve moderator, has diligently been attending to sending out the messages. Every month in the last year has yielded additional subscribers and the last year the subscriber list increased to more than 100 members.
Grobina Memorial. For many years the authorities have been asked to allow a memorial to the Jews who were murdered in Grobina. All this to no avail. Last year we were successful with the help of Vladimir Bahns of Liepaja in getting the Grobina Municipality to allow a memorial to be placed at the site of the mass grave with the names of those who perished there. A moving tribute took place with the Mayor of the Town of Grobina and other dignitaries to unveil the memorial.

We are very grateful to Rita Bogdanova, of the Latvian State Historical Archives, for conducting the research and compiling the names of those who perished.

We are all especially grateful to Vladimir Bahns for his persistence and commitment to seeing this project to its conclusion.

Latvian Holocaust Survivors

These testimonies, which provide very valuable insight into Jewish life in Latvia before and immediately after the Holocaust continue to be translated and appear in the newsletter.

Website

A major highlight of our year has been the redesign of the Latvia SIG website. For this we have to thank Bruce Dumes, our new Webmaster, and Barry Shay, our Web Page Editor. We are delighted that Bruce has joined our SIG board. He has made a splendid contribution in a short time.

The website is more aesthetically and visually appealing and has also improved navigational abilities.

Bruce indicated to me some of the changes. For example, the use of “Style Sheets” or CSS for the design of the page provides flexibility, which allows updates to be made much more easily. He pointed out that when printing, only the content will be printed without the extraneous navigation information.

Users will also notice the "slide show" on the main page. You are invited to send in your own pictures of Latvia, new or old, places and/or family, and each month the webmaster hopes to change the pictures in the slide show. Photos from members will help personalize the home page.

We are now able to track and gather usage statistics, which will allow us to better understand who accesses the site and what their experience might be.

The website also provides a Google search option, which helps users find the page containing the keywords of interest.

Estonia

We are pleased to include information regarding Estonia on the site and are grateful to Mark Rybak for allowing us to use information from his site http://eja.pri.ee/, and which can be directly accessed from the SIG site.

Life Time Achievement Awards.

In view of the considerable work done by Mike Getz and Arlene Beare, both past presidents of the SIG, I proposed, and it was unanimously accepted at the meeting that at next year’s conference in Chicago they will both be presented with Life Time Achievement Awards. Frankly, I can think of none more deserving than Mike Getz and Arlene Beare for such an award.
A question I was asked by non genealogists at the IAJGS conference, was why the conference was held in Salt Lake City. The reason is mainly Family History Library. It was founded in 1894 to gather genealogical records and assist members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is the largest library of its kind in the world and is open to the general public at no charge. Many of us spent many hours researching our ancestry with the assistance of the very helpful library staff.

Family History Museum – Salt Lake City.

According to their website, they have a collection that includes over 2.4 million rolls of microfilmed genealogical records; 742,000 microfiche; 310,000 books, serials, and other formats; 4,500 periodicals; 700 electronic resources with the ancestral file database contains more than 36 million names that are linked to families.

Meeting extended family.

One of the joys of a JGS Conference is the possibility of meeting new family members and finding the key to opening the door to another branch of the extended family. Last year this happened quite fortuitously to me at the conference in New York when I discovered a distant cousin, Anne Getlan.

At this year’s conference, it happened again after I gave a presentation and Barry Levene of Aurora, Colorado introduced himself to me. In passing, he mentioned that he was researching the Lochowitz family of Grobina. It struck an immediate resonance with me. My grandmother was a Lochowitz from Grobina! Barry kindly sent me a Lochowitz family tree and it showed the Blumberg relationship to the Lockowitz family and even more significantly held the key to a link that I have been trying to establish for a number of years; the Gabbe family in South Africa, Canada and U.S.A Discoveries such as this add to the excitement of the JGS conferences.

Before closing, if you have not yet sent your membership fees please renew as soon as possible by sending your check to Mike Getz or by paying using PayPal as described on our website and later in the newsletter.

Henry Blumberg
henry@blumbergs.ca

Editor’s Comments

As we begin the new membership year, we also begin the New Year and I’d like to wish each and every one of you a Shanah Tovah for 5768 and beyond.

As you know, the Latvia SIG holds its annual meeting at the IAJGS conference and this meeting also marks the beginning of the new membership year. About twenty six people attended the luncheon and meeting that was held at this year’s conference in Salt Lake City. While this number was about half the number who attended the previous meeting in New York, it was a relatively good turnout. At next year’s meeting in Chicago we expect to, at least, match the attendance of the NY meeting. I will have more to say about both meetings later.

I am happy to include an update of the events associated with the possible restoration of the Kuldiga synagogue. As discussed in the last issue, a controversy ensued because there was talk of restoring the synagogue as a concert hall, with some area set aside as a memorial to the Jews murdered in Kuldiga during the Shoah. Since then, the focus has shifted and now it is envisioned that the synagogue will be converted into a library, with an appropriate memorial to the Jews murdered in Kuldiga.

In the last issue, I included a list of Kuldiga residents murdered by the Nazis and Latvian collaborators, which included fewer Jews than I had thought and I added the correction and some commentary in this issue.

Somewhat related to the events concerning the memorial in Kuldiga, are two news releases that describe other memorials to Jewish Holocaust victims in Aizpute and Riga. I have included those announcements as well.

Janet Lobred’s touching story of her family’s life in Courland in the late 19th century and their
emigration is similar to many in its tragic and happy results.

The article by Jacob Gorfinkel represents an historical journey that many of us are familiar with. In stirring detail, Jacob chronicles the events that led to the annihilation of the Jewish population of Daugavpils. Following the article is a list of sources that Jacob used in his research. Since many are web-based, you can explore some of these sources in more detail.

Of particular interest to genealogists will be the database that Jacob has compiled from the list of inhabitants of the Daugavpils Jewish Ghetto on 5 December 1941. On that date, 962 residents remained and Jacob has submitted that database of names to JewishGen and it will be available online at some future date to be determined. Unfortunately, most, if not all, of those inhabitants later perished.

Finally, I am including the remainder of the testimony of Hannah Cherfas in this issue.

Please remember that the yearly membership has now ended so please rejoin or renew your membership in the SIG. Details are included later in this issue and can be found on the SIG website.

Barry Shay
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Treasurer’s Report
2006/2007

The opening bank balance as of July 1, 2006 was some $5,500. Our cash balance as of 6/30/07 should approximate $4,900. This does not reflect actual items of income and expense to be reflected in our June Bank Statement due in mid July. We also have close to $2,700 generously by donated by members to the SIG through JewishGen. The expenditure of these funds is governed by JewishGen and has not yet been utilized.

Our increased membership is reflected in the higher costs associated with the newsletter. Costs of postage have also markedly increased. The translation of the published Riga Survivor interviews from Russian added to our costs as well. There was no disbursement for archival data this year.

I remain grateful to Barry for his initiatives in maintaining and building membership contacts, as well as his help and support. The newsletter is itself remains a core responsibility under his leadership. Barry has also been involved in development of our website as well as updating and retaining core relationships in the US and Latvia.

I want to acknowledge with appreciation the past work of Rhea Plottel, during her role as membership co-coordinator.

The SIG needs to seriously consider raising SIG membership fees that are unchanged since 1996. To accommodate current cost trends and maintain the scope and quality of our activities, we need increase dues to ensure financial viability. My suggestion is that membership, which includes our quarterly newsletter, be increased to $25 for U.S. members and $35 for foreign members. (This proposal was considered, voted upon, and passed at the SIG meeting. Ed.)

I want to thank Henry and Don for their interest
and support. I regret being unable to attend the conference in Salt Lake City and wish the SIG well in its deliberations.

Please feel free to direct any questions or comment to me through the SIG meeting.

Mike Getz
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IAJGS Conference in Salt Lake City

The Latvia SIG members who attended the conference had a busy day on Thursday, July 19th. It started at 11:15 AM with the SIG’s annual meeting. Twenty six members attended the meeting and the luncheon that followed. Henry Blumberg, the SIG’s president, chaired the meeting and his detailed account of the meeting follows.

Two attendees at the meeting and luncheon who deserve special recognition are Rachel Kaplan and Elaine Miller, both members of the Latvia SIG as well as members of the JGS of Salt Lake City. Rachel and Elaine could be seen working diligently throughout the week supporting the wonderful conference put on by the JGSSLC, and they still made an effort to attend some of the SIG’s activities. Rachel also presented a paper to the general audience entitled, “Utah’s Early Jews,” on the last day of the conference.

The guest speaker at the luncheon was Lois Ogilby-Rosen, a Latvia SIG board member and an accomplished genealogist. Lois has done a remarkable job in researching the ROZINKO family in Latvia and has written about her work in the JGSLA and Latvia SIG newsletters. I was privileged to hear Lois present the results of her genealogy research this past April in Washington, DC, so I had an inkling as to what she would present and I knew she would be well received by the members. As it turned out, Lois’ presentation was inspirational with many members wiping tears from their eyes as they saw the incredible material Lois had collected and heard about the lives she has changed in the course of her research. Lois has discovered relatives thought to have been lost in the Holocaust and connected them with families they did not know existed.

During her presentation Lois expressed her appreciation to the Latvian State Historical Archives and particularly Rita Bogdanova for all the assistance she received in her research. It should be noted that a number of participants also commented on the invaluable assistance they had received from the Latvian State Historical Archives in furthering their research.

Following the luncheon, Henry Blumberg presented, “The Latvian Shtetls of our Ancestors at the Beginning of the 20th Century.” Henry, an amateur historian of Latvian shtetl life, provided commentary that enlightened and entertained the audience.

His Power Point presentation featuring his postcard collection has increased significantly since his presentation at the last conference in New York and he was able to present views of many more shtetls and illustrate, to some extent, the conditions under which their inhabitants lived.

Lois Holding the Rozinko Family Tree She Created
Anyone interested in organizing a family reunion would have learned a great deal from Don and Sandra Hirschhorn’s discussion of how they organized and conducted the Hirschhorn Family Reunion. It was attended by 141 descendants and spouses of Levin Hirschhorn (1798-1861) from Hasenpoth (Aizpute). Using JewishGen, Latvian Historical Archives, Yad Vashem, and oral histories from relatives, the reunion was a remarkable success with 75% of the attendees meeting relatives for the first time and the younger generation overwhelmed with enthusiasm. Wall displays and posters from the reunion were converted and shown as a Power Point presentation.

Don also displayed a personal letter written to him by Vaira Vike Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia. In the letter, Ms Freiberga wishes his large family success, prosperity and happiness and offers hope that the next Hirschhorn family reunion will be held in Aizpute, Latvia. A remarkable letter from a remarkable woman to a remarkable family.

**Award to Don Hirschhorn**

The IAJGS conference was the venue for the presentation to Don Hirschhorn, our Vice President and long-time member, of an award from Yad Vashem for his "activism, dedication and outstanding volunteerism as coordinator for the Shoah Victims Names Recovery Project."

Alexander Avraham, Director, Hall of Names, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, presented the Award, declaring: "On behalf of Yad Vashem I would like to take this to extend our heartfelt appreciation to Donald Hirschhorn for his activism, dedication and outstanding volunteerism as coordinator for the Shoah Victims Names Recovery Project. His tireless efforts to attempt to memorialize each individual Jew who perished during the Holocaust have served as a model for us all."

Don has been instrumental in recruiting over 25 Jewish Genealogical Societies that have registered with Yad Vashem and has been in contact with close to 100 additional Jewish Genealogical Societies to enlist their support of the project. In addition, he has established partnering relationships with Jewish community and survivor organizations throughout the U.S., including Na'Amat, B’nai B’rith, Hadassah ORT, and Brandeis. He has also developed a volunteer corps in South Florida to assist survivors interested in submitting Pages of Testimony.

Don has personally coordinated the submission of close to 1,000 Pages of Testimony, but many additional pages have been submitted as a result of his efforts either through the American Society for Yad Vashem, to Israel directly, or via the Internet.

**Latvian Jewish Soldiers**

While perusing the stacks at the Family History Library, Lois Rosen came across a book, printed in Russia, containing a list of Latvian Jewish soldiers who served and were killed as members of the Red Army in World War II. The list includes more than 2,000 names along with surname, given name, father’s name, birth year, where served, date of loss, and place of loss. Of course, the list is in Russian and I now have about 700 entries transliterated to English, thanks to Bruce Dumes, Nina Koosman, and Vladimir Salita—all volunteers.

Below is a sample taken from an already transliterated part of the database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample List of Latvian Jewish Soldiers in the Red Army Killed in World War II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATLAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHBAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHERIN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ized the list into about 20 PDF files of 100 names each. If you think you can help, please let me know and I will email one or more files to you to transcribe and return to me as an EXCEL file. When finished, we plan to include the database in the JewishGen Latvia database where it can be searched on-line.

**Mitau Business Directory**

While at the IAGJS Conference in SLC Lois also stumbled upon an old (1903) guidebook to Jelgava, Latvia in the stacks at the Family History Library. The book has one page on the synagogue among its many pages of churches and castles, but the back of the book is full of business ads from both Riga and Mitau (Jelgava), Latvia. Some of the ads were obviously of Jewish-owned businesses. The ads are beautiful, and include those for jewelers, brewers, shoe stores, musical instruments, book stores, pharmaceuticals, confectioners and a translator, to name a few. Below are surnames that Lois extracted from the ads, so if you see a name of interest please contact Lois or me and we will e-mail the ad to you.

Surnames from 1903 businesses in Jelgava (Mitau) and Riga, Latvia ARTEMJEWS, BLUMCHEN, BRAUER, BUTTNER, CAHN, CASAREWITSCH, DANNENBERG, DUMPF, EINFELD, FELDMANN, FINKENSTEIN, GOTZE, GRASSMANN, HAASE, HEERDT, HERTEL, HUBNER, KLACZKO, KOMEN, KROITZSCH, LANKOWSKY & LICCOP, LINDBOM, LUTHER, MAULWURFF, MILWIDZKI, MESLIN, NIKLAS, REDLICH, ROSENTHAL, SCHLOTZER, SCHWARZ, SEMMEL, SIESSLACK, STELLMACHER, STRECKER, WASSERMANN, WEISSMANN, WEITERMANN, ZIMMERMANN

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**Typical Advertisement from the Mitau Business Directory**

**IAJGS Conference in Chicago**

On the conference's last day, attendees were treated to a sneak preview of the 28th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, set for August 17-22, 2008, at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Hotel.

The preview indicated the program may include several mini-themes (Midwest/Upper Midwest, Central/South America and Canada), as well as a diverse list of more than 20 topic categories (including Eastern Europe, technology and much more). Some eastern European archivists sponsored by the various SIGs are expected to be present.

The call for papers will be forthcoming, so if you have an interesting program or topic you think would be of interest to a wide audience, please begin preparing now.

Mike Karsen, JGS of Illinois president, offered a quick look at the many resources on Jewish Chicago, including his Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Chicagoland. The two local societies - JGS of Illinois and the Illiana JGS - will be handling the resource room and hospitality.

Co-chair Mike Posnick indicated that tours are planned, including cemetery visits, architectural sites, Jewish Chicago and a "gangster" tour. The
committee is investigating bringing various resources to the hotel as small repositories will have difficulty handling large numbers of onsite researchers.

According to the committee, the Chicago 2008 website may come on-line in early November with registration beginning in early January.

Extraordinary Commission List for Kuldiga

In the last issue of this newsletter, Mike Getz provided a list of Kuldiga residents who were murdered during the Shoah. The list was compiled by the Extraordinary State Commission of the USSR and Mike obtained the records from the USHMM in Washington. The records received were in Russian and we presented a translated version. In the introduction to the list, I stated that most of the victims in this list were Jewish and that there were probably a few non-Jews listed as well. That statement was called into question by a number of people, and I’d like to correct it. In fact, most of the victims listed were non-Jewish while a small number, perhaps about five or six, were Jewish.

In general, the Extraordinary Commission lists cover all those who were killed and persecuted by the Nazis and their collaborators, including communists, gypsies, Latvians, Russians and, of course, Jews. Typically, Jews are identified on those lists simply by whether the names appear to be Jewish, certainly not a fool-proof method. In this case, however, most of the Jews in Kuldiga were murdered by the end of 1941. In July and August of that year, the Arajs Commandos (Latvians) entered Kuldiga on a series of trucks from Liepaja and took all the Jews to the forest outside the city and shot them. Their action was as complete as they could make it and they posted a sign outside the city immediately afterwards that said “Judenfrei.” The only Jews that might have survived were those who were able to hide, or were sent to Riga or Liepaja where ghettos were established for a time.

I’d like to thank Arlene Beare, Rita Bogdanova, and Eric Benjaminson for helping set the record straight.

Green Synagogue in Rezekne

I contacted Gita Umanovska, who is Vice Director of the Council of Jewish Communities and Religious Organizations, based in Riga, since she was listed as a participant in the program for the Kuldiga conference that was recently held, and was going to talk about the reconstruction of the Green Synagogue. I asked her what the status was and, according to Gita, the Rezekne Art Secondary School together with the Latvian Jewish community have begun a project entitled, “Learning by doing – development of timber restoration in the Latgale region.” The project is funded by a European Union Norwegian financial agreement and the Latvian government, and is estimated to cost approximately 620,000 euros. The project is scheduled for 18 months beginning in August 2008 and ending in February 2010.

According to Gita, one goal of the project is to teach restoration techniques by actually restoring the synagogue. After the restoration, she says, the synagogue can be used for important holidays and function as a museum at other times.

Since both Eric Benjaminson and Martha Levison were going to attend the conference in Kuldiga, I asked them to question Gita about the project in Rezekne and get back to me. I will keep you posted.

Barry Shay, Ed.

Symposium for the Reconstruction of the Kuldiga Synagogue

Conveyed by Eric Benjaminson

While the symposium did not result in a final, carved-in-stone decision, I feel it was very positive. The downside was that for much of the time we and the German architects/sociologists and Agnese Kusmane (the Kuldiga landscape architect) were talking to ourselves with only small participation from townspeople or the City Council. That being said, we did have several meetings with the Deputy Mayor and had a good lecture/discussion with the city’s Cultural Director who seems to be largely behind the library project. My read of where it was left is as follows:
• the City has decided to convert the synagogue into a library, citing both the needs of the town and the availability of EU library-related money;

• they had a meeting 3 weeks ago with the Latvian Jewish Community organization which appeared to endorse that idea and which stressed the need to memorialize the synagogue and the former Jewish population;

• those of us representing "Courlanders" also stressed the need for education about the Shoah and the population of Kuldiga that is no more, and for what is a synagogue. In that respect, we helped them make a linkage between the element of a synagogue of a "House or Learning" and the modern concept of a library and hope that will lead to a dual-use building that moves from one concept to the other.

My sense was that the city knows they need to memorialize and grapple with the Shoah, and there were a few voices from elderly Christian townspeople supporting that concept, especially as some of them had witnessed the Shoah in Kuldiga first hand. (It's worth noting that all the killings in Kuldiga were done by Latvian police and civilians under somewhat distant orders of the Nazi SD in Liepaja and that adds to the sensitivities.) But there was no argument about the need to address these issues, and Gita Umanskova from the Jewish Community seemed comfortable with where things stand.

I had to leave before the group presented their findings to the City, and as of now all I know of that presentation is on the Buro Schwimmer website I listed below. As I hear more, I'll keep you informed.

In addition to the symposium, it was a memorable few days as I met elderly people who knew my great-grandfather and his business partner and knew where they had lived. The town is doing very well economically besides and we had a friendly reception and good Latvian press coverage.

Memorial Plaque Unveiled in Aizpute in Memory of Jews Murdered in 1941

On 13 May 2007, a memorial plaque was unveiled at the site of the former synagogue, now the community arts centre in Aizpute in the district of Liepaja, to remember the more than 300 individuals who departed on their final journey from this house in the late autumn of 1941. They were murdered only because they were Jews.

The Aizpute regional research museum - tourist information centre - in co-operation with Vladimir Bane, a representative of the Liepaja Jewish community, and David Jacobson, a descendant of an Aizpute Jewish family -the Feldmans - realized the idea of creating the plaque. It was financed by the City Council of Aizpute and by Mr. Jacobson.

At present two "open books" are being created which will contain the names, surnames, ages, and last known places of residence of members of the Jewish families that perished.

One copy of the book will be retained by the community centre, the other by the town's regional research museum. These memorial books will contain supplemental pages where descendants of families who survived the Holocaust will be able to record previously unknown information about those who perished.

Taking part in the ceremony of unveiling the plaque were representatives of the Liepaja Jewish community, David Jacobson and his wife, and Ivars Silars, the former Latvian Ambassador to Israel.

Laivia Opens Memorial Honoring Saviors of Jews

In Riga, on 4 July 2007, politicians and Jewish leaders have inaugurated a memorial honoring Latvians who tried to save Jews during World War II. The Baltic country's president Vaira Vike-Freiberga unveiled the monument, a large white wall tilting on short legs that are inscribed with the names of those who saved Jews. "These people, 269 in all if I am not mistaken, put their lives to risk. This was a special kind of heroism,"
Vike-Freiberga told the 200 people gathered at the ceremony in downtown Riga. The memorial, designed by local artist Elina Lazdina, is located on the site of a synagogue that was burned down on 4 July 1941, killing an unidentified number of Jews who had hidden inside. 70,000 Jews were killed in Latvia during the war.

My Family’s Life in Courland, 1896 to 1900

by

Janet K. Lobred

Mike Getz suggested that Janet write about her family's life in Courland before they came to the U.S. during the years 1896 to 1900. This is her response. Ed.

With information furnished by the Latvian government augmented by information told me by my mother, Sara Hodes Kasdon, who was born in Durben, I am now able to trace my family in Courland back to 1790. According to my mother, the family went to Courland from Poland since Courland had been established by German knights and the family spoke only German or Yiddish and didn’t speak Russian.

Courland was a separate province of the Russian Empire from 1797 to 1918. Czar Paul I had allowed Jews to live in Courland from about 1797 to 1801.

The first member of the family of whom the Latvian government has a record was Hannah Heymann, who was born in Grobin (now Grobina) about 1790. Her daughter, Minnie Effenbuch, was my great grandmother. Her daughter, Rose Effenbach, married Isser Hodes and they moved to Durben (now Durbe). He owned a tannery there and they had nine children, two of whom died.

They lived in a log cabin as shown in the picture, which was taken about 1930 by a cousin, Phillip Hodes, who had stayed behind in Durben. Although the family in the U.S. urged him to move to the United States, he seemed content to stay in Latvia. His son was attending the university and life seemed good. Phillip was not heard from after the start of WWII.

As in the play, "Fiddler on the Roof," the family in Durben also took in an itinerant Hebrew teacher who taught all of the children Hebrew. In fact, after my mother saw "Fiddler" she said that was just how the family lived. About 1890 there was a pogrom and the soldiers chased the family out of their home and took all of their meager possessions. While fleeing, my grandmother, Rose Hodes, lost her ninth child and my grandfather.

The family fled to Libau (now Liepaja) where other Effenbachs lived. Economic conditions were better there. My grandmother ran a small store and with the help of relatives they managed to live.

The only son in the family, Leopold Hodes, was of military age. He managed to escape by using a dead man's passport and hiding under the hay in a wagon. He came to the U.S. via Bremen in about 1896. He lived with relatives in Washington, DC, and managed to save enough money to bring over the rest of the family by 1900.

My mother remembered that as they were leaving many members of the Hodes family were preparing to leave Latvia for Johannesburg, South Africa. Unfortunately, many Hodeses did not leave Latvia and are listed on a memorial to those who died during the Holocaust.
Jews in Daugavpils
by
Jacob Gorfinkel

In August 2005 Jacob and his wife, who is of Latvian origin, traveled to Riga, Daugavpils and Subate. On that trip he learned what the Latvians had done to their Jewish neighbors. This work is a result of that trip. Ed.

In 1275, German knights built the Dunaburg fortress near today’s city of Daugavpils in the part of Latvia known as Latgale. During 300 years of their rule, it was forbidden for Jews to settle in this part of Latvia. In 1561, Latgale became a part of Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom and for the next 200 years Jews were allowed to settle in this territory.

In 1583, the Polish king Stefan Batory gave Dunaburg special privileges and the town became an administrative center of Latgale.

Jews began to arrive in Latgale in the early 17th century after severe pogroms in Poland that lasted from 1605 to 1639, and in the Ukraine and Belarus from 1648 to 1653. Toward the end of the Polish rule, in 1766, some 2,996 Jews lived in Latgale. Latgale came under Russian control after the First Partition of Poland in 1772. At the time, 5,000 Jews lived there, but by 1784, the number had been reduced to 3,700.

The traditional Yiddish Jewish community, along with the rest of Latgale, was very poor, owing to its location in the interior of Latvia and bordering Russia.

This situation changed when the Saint Petersburg - Warsaw railroad was built at the end of the 19th century. The number of Jews in Daugavpils grew rapidly and close to 55,686 lived there by the year 1913. With that Jewish population growth came a growth in Jewish businesses, industries and commerce, as well as Jewish schools, and religious institutions. Indeed, the Jewish community life in Daugavpils thrived, as it did in other areas of Latvia.

During World War I many Jews were exiled to the Russian interior and others fled the country.

Holocaust in Daugavpils 1941-1943

22 June 1941 – With the beginning of the war between Germany and USSR thousands of Lithuanian Jewish refugees fled from the advancing German army and were stuck in many small towns of Latvia desperately trying to escape to Soviet Union territories to possible safety. During the first days of the war, thousands of Latvian Jews joined the Lithuanian Jewish refugees in attempting to cross the former Soviet border. However, the Soviet border guards forced the fleeing Jews to return to Latvia and thus approximately 30,000 Jews found themselves trapped in the Daugavpils region of Latvia.

25 – 26 June 1941 – After the Soviet authorities left Daugavpils, chaos in the city ensued. The Aizsargi (Home Guard) and former Latvian policemen started patrolling the city. After the first units of the German Army entered the city, fires obliterated 1,912 houses and the city infrastructure was destroyed. Germans blamed the Jews for setting the fires and the first group of Jews was shot to death that first day.

The cruelties of the Latvians grew from day to day as they hunted and beat the Jewish residents of the city. Terrorizing the local population of Jews became a daily fact of life. Latvians started hunting the Jews in workplaces, markets, shops and on the streets and beat them horribly, some of them to death. Captured Jews was gathered in synagogues and later transferred to the city prison.

28 June 1941 - When Einsatzkomando EK-1 arrived in the city they found a group of 240 Latvians (former police, army officers and Aizsargi members ready to collaborate.

Roberts Blūzmanis became a chief of the Latvian auxiliary police in Nazi-occupied Daugavpils. His first order was that all Jewish men between the ages of 16 and 60 years report to Market Square on the next day.

The second order was to impose heavy restriction on Jewish population in Daugavpils – 2 weeks before German occupation authorities issued their orders concerning Jews in Latvia.
Jews were strictly forbidden to leave their homes in the evening, at night and in the morning. They had to wear the mark of recognition – the yellow Star of David on their clothes. It was forbidden for them to attend places where public events took place, including cinemas, athletic fields and parks. They were not allowed to use public transport, to go to bath-houses, use pavements, or to go to schools, and they had to hand over bicycles and radios. All jewelry, securities, gold and silver coins were subject to confiscation and had to be handed over without delay. Jewish doctors were only allowed to advise and treat Jews, and they were forbidden to run pharmacies.

29 June 1941 - More than a thousand Jewish men appeared on Market Square. They were rounded up by Latvian police and forced to march to the city prison. On the next day, Latvian police began shooting Jewish men in groups of five in a nearby park. After one month, a group of 300 highly needed professionals was transferred to the Daugavpils Ghetto. All others perished and it is not certain whether their deaths were included in the German Einsatzkommando EK-1 statistics or the Jaeger Report of Einsatzkommando EK-3. Examples of the of the bestial behavior of Latvians in the Daugavpils prison can be found in Sidney Iwen’s book, How Dark the Heavens. (http://www.remember.org/sidney/howdark1.html)

Events in Daugavpils (Dünaburg), concerning the collaboration of Latvian auxiliaries, are described in Einsatzgruppen Operational Situation Report No.24:

“The auxiliary police force consists of former police constables, members of the former Latvian Army, and members of the former Atzsargi organization (Organization for Self Defense). By 7 July the Latvians arrested 1,125 Jews, 32 political prisoners, 85 Russian workers, and 2 women criminals, the greater part during the last days. This is due to the EK backing the Latvians. Actions against the Jews are going on in an ever-increasing number. Conforming to a suggestion of the EK, the Jews are being evacuated by the auxiliary police force from all houses still standing. The apartments are being allocated to non-Jewish inhabitants. The Jewish families are being driven out of town by the Latvians; most of the men have been arrested. The arrested Jewish men are shot without ceremony and interred in previously prepared graves. Until now the EK 1b has shot 1,150 Jews in Daugavpils.”

And in Latvia’s Jewish Community: History, Tragedy, Revival, by L. Dribins, A. Gütmanis, and M. Vestermanis,

“The chief of the local auxiliary police Roberts Blūzmanis had rendered active assistance by ensuring the moving of the Jews to the Grīva ghetto and transporting them to the killing places.”

2–3 July 1941 - A few hundred Jews were taken from prison to excavate the bodies of Latvians who perished under the Soviet regime. The citizens of Daugavpils were invited to identify the bodies. Pro-Nazi propaganda, using the fact that Moses Citrons, a CHEKA-NKVD Interior Security Commissar in Daugavpils, was a Jew and that a few other Jews worked in the NKVD, and that, in general, the Jewish population supported the Soviet regime in Latvia, blamed the Jews for all crimes of the NKVD. This succeeded in instilling hatred of the Jews.

During the excavation work by the Jews, an excited mob broke the fence and, using sticks with nails, killed almost all those Jews who worked on excavation site.

15 July 1941 - The Daugavpils Ghetto was set up in the Latvian Army barracks of the Grīva Fortress. All Jews in the city were requested to move there until the end of July. Jews from other towns and villages of Latgale and also refugees from Lithuania were also brought there. From a historical perspective, this order was the first practical step taken by the Nazis towards the total physical annihilation of the Daugavpils Jewish community. Thousands of tortured, exhausted victims were brought to the overcrowded ghetto, where they were cramped together, condemned to hunger, cold and disease, and where basic accommodations were generally lacking and sanitary conditions were dismal. During that period, 23,048 Jews lived in this enclosed and tightly guarded
place according to the local newspaper, *Dvinski Vestnik*. Most of the ghetto inhabitants lost all or most of their property when they left their homes. Death in all its shocking forms was their fate.

17-18 August 1941 – These were the big “action” days. The Germans said that a large number of healthy people were needed for sugar beet harvesting in the Krustpils region and promised increased food rations for them. All ghetto inhabitants were gathered for selection. The right column was for healthy people, and the left column was for children, the elderly, and ill persons and owners of “workers certificates,” who will remain in ghetto. People in left column had the feeling of doom when they saw healthy march out of the ghetto. Again, the Germans succeeded in covering their intentions while bringing the Jews to their killing places without resistance.

13 July to 21 August 1941 - From the Jaeger’s Report for Dunaburg in this period, 9,012 Jews, Jewesses and Jewish children were shot.

8-10 November 1941 – The next big action in the Daugavpils ghetto resulted in the killing of 11,034 people in the Mežciems forest. Obersturmbannführer (Lieutenant-Colonel) Günter Tabbert, who was then 25, headed the operation. All local Latvian auxiliary police sources were involved in this mass killing, and even the Arajs commandos arrived from Riga in blue municipal buses to help with the killing.

5 December 1941 – The Daugavpils ghetto had only 962 inhabitants remaining, according to the document signed by Zaube, commandant of the ghetto, and shown below.
19 February 1942 – Here is an example of the death penalty applied to a Jew who traded for food in the Daugavpils Ghetto. It is taken from the Report of the Commander of the Jewish Concentration Camp of Daugavpils to the Commander of Section No. 1 of the Police at Daugavpils

*Daugavpils - February 19, 1942*

On February 19th of this year the Jewess Chaya Mayerova, born 1893, was arrested in the Jewish Camp for exchanging a piece of material against approximately 2 kgs. of flour, with a maintenance laborer in the concentration camp. In accordance with the instructions of the German Security Police, the Jewess Mayerova was executed by shooting at ten o'clock today in the yard of the camp, in the presence of the other Jews of the camp. The laborer who exchanged the flour for the material was not found. Attached is the bag with the flour.

1 May 1942 - Day of the final liquidation of the ghetto

According to the June 1942 food distribution chart, 509 Jews remain in Daugavpils (245 men, 242 women, 22 children). It means that in the 1 May action, about 450 Jews were killed.

After the ghetto liquidation, the remaining Jews were concentrated in a few working factories, the biggest being “Unit 322” in the Daugavpils fortress.

October 1943 – The remaining Daugavpils Jews were transferred to the Kaiserwald Concentration Camp near Riga.

February 5, 1945 - According to the List of Jewish survivors in Dvinsk registered with the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow immediately after the war, only 39 Jewish survivors lived in Daugavpils on February 5, 1945. Later, a few hundred Jews returned from Russia where they stayed during war along with the few surviving Jews who returned from the German camps.

According to the Soviet Commission of Investigation of Nazi Crimes, about 30,000 Jews were killed in Daugavpils, while only a few hundred survived.
………..It’s better if I tell you a little bit about life in Ludza after the war, what I remember.

**An Interview with Hannah Cherfas, Part 2**

Recorded March 14th, 2000
Interviewed by Aina Antane
Typed by Raimonds Kaze
Checked by Aina Antane
Translated from Russian to English by Inga Long

In every house they kept the Sabbath. And for the Sabbath they were cooking special meal, a real Jewish one, and everything was very tasty. There always had to be a potter – do you know what that is? It was specially sautéed potatoes. Yes, they put the potatoes, meats, carrots and some other veggies, but the trick is that you have to sauté it in a Russian furnace. So it becomes dark brown. You won’t make such food in any other furnace, many already switched to an oven, before the war, of course, but anyway, an oven was something modern, not like a Russian furnace. But at that time I lived at my grandmother’s sister’s who had such a furnace. And before Sabbath women from all over the city came to her with their pots, to put into the furnace and, when ready, put them into quilted jackets and took them home.

And I was waking there or going from the school and now – yes I thought, carrying from aunt Basya. It was good, because not everybody was allowed to cook in their furnace. So, that aunt always lit candles, the table had a white table cloth, there was always Chalah, and the food served with good silver and china – whatever they could manage. Well they all took things with them. When they fled they took the good china, and what survived -- survived. Those who didn’t have any, bought some. My grandmother was praying without fail, she didn’t like to go to synagogue very much, because women have a separate place, like they weren’t human, she was a
young woman then, she was 45 years old. But for me she was grandma Basya. It is interesting, she was to me ... she was ... yes, my grand mother Lei Riva’s sister. Yes, she was her sister. But why can’t I remember her maiden name? I should write to one of my aunts, maybe she will remember. I can’t remember her (Basya – edit). The children were a little bit older than me. The youngest son was, probably, only 3 years older than me.

A.A. And that’s what happened – she replaced a grandmother for you?

H.C. Yes, that’s what happened. She fasted when needed, but she did not allow me to fast because I was little. But her son who was 3 years older than me, she made him fast. And he, poor thing, was very envious of me. They also almost had a natural household – she didn’t have a cow, but she had a goat. As a rule – if one goat died or had to be killed, immediately they got a new one as a replacement. They had a little garden near the house for vegetables. Well, they didn’t have a real garden, because they lived on a hill slope and the land wasn’t useful for the garden. Well, back then – until we left Ludza and even after – till 1955, when I was visiting then during summers, such a natural household was in almost every Jewish house.

A.A. Her name was Basya?

H.C. Her name as Basya, last name Manoim. Her husband’s name was Ruven Manoim and he was, as strange as it sounds, a supervisor of the city jail. He was a firm, strong man. He was almost twice her height.

A.A. Year of birth?

H.C. No, I don’t remember his birth date! I only know that I didn’t even call her grandma Basya — because though she was young then probably she was born in 1900 if she was 45 years old.

A.A. What were their children names?

H.C. She had a lot of children. She had a son Jacob who was a professional photographer. Then she had a son named Haim who was a jeweler. Almost right after the war they moved to Riga and lived there. Then there was a daughter Pesa and she was the only who stayed in Ludza. Later on from Ludza they immigrated to Israel. It was not long ago; well, relatively – 15 years ago, probably. No, even less some 10 years ago. Then the youngest son was Israil, he was working in the school and was a teacher of Russian language and later in Malnava agricultural technical school, therefore official name was Nicolay Yuryevich, otherwise kids would broke their tongues on Israel. Yes, she had four children. Before the war she was working – she owned a little bakery and baked such tasty rolls. And even after the war people were saying – such tasty rolls your aunt Basya was baking! She was baking also on Sundays. And so aromatic and tasty they were! And all that was baked in Russian furnace, incredibly tasty.

Well, and later who moved to Riga, who immigrated to Israel with first emigration wave. And after one of my father’s cousin emigrated probably some 3 years ago, only a few were left. There was a very little Jewish community, founded after 1990’s about 20 people, no more. Who’s left now – I don’t know. Well, of course it wouldn’t be like that if not for the war, if people weren’t destroyed. A whole cultural level was destroyed, because Latgalian Jews were different from Kurland Jews even with the looks. By the way, my relatives from Vaispaps’ line – they looked different. Others, who lived in Ludza had completely different profile – they had dark, brown hair, not very tall and they even had some Eastern or South – Eastern facial features. They had high cheekbones and narrow eyes. And when you look at their picture, one can say – yes, those are people from the East, the South. But about Vaispaps’ ancestors I can’t say that. I already told you that.

My father’s last name was Cherfas. One of his great-grandfathers – I already said that – had eight sons. But one of them also had eight sons. Huge number of Cherfas lived in Ludza and Rezekne. Even after the war there were lots of them. My father wasn’t from such cultural and educated family as my mother. His father, my grandfather, was a retailer. He was a strong man. His name was Abraham. Abraham Cherfas. He dearly loved his first wife, and until his oldest son
got married, didn’t remarry. He married his name, whose name also was Hanna. Therefore my father has two step-brothers who live in America now. David Cherfas and Karsiel Cherfas. Well, Karsiel was called Kostya here, but in the documents he was Karsiel. They both look like my father. Well, the same look… When I was looking…

A.A. What happened with your grandfather’s first wife?

H.C. She died of tuberculosis. Back then it was lethal. She gave birth to a boy. Her name was Hannah and they named me after her. The son was probably two when she died. What I’ve heard she was beautiful, but kind of a hot, Italian beauty. And actually all Cherfas – when I was watching movies, where action takes place in Sicily or even in India – I have always said – hey, that’s my grandfather’s brother, they look alike. Such a gypsy-looking southern profile.

My father was an electrician. Before the war he was working on Ludza’s electric power station only because it was a private company. Because when Ulmanis came to power, Jews were fired from all government positions. He went to the war as a volunteer and, by the way, carried out a large amount of money that belonged to Ludza’s executive committee.

After 1940 he was working as a head of the department responsible for the land in Ludza’s executive committee. He was responsible for farmers’ household. And he took out a large amount of money, how did he manage that – alone or in group – I don’t know. We simply don’t know, since they were ambushed – after he joined the army. It was very tough for them. My uncles were telling that – they were all together there. They were boiling and eating footwear, and… well, everything they could. But he, even though he was from simple family, obviously had an aristocratic nature, since he couldn’t eat that.

He was injured and went into the hospital. Soon after he was well, he came down with tuberculosis. And all that starvation from the ambush times literally burned him in a few months. I only have the last letters he wrote to my mother in 1942. Of course I don’t remember him (my father – edit.), but there are some pictures left and mother was talking about him. He was an exquisite person with a delicate, spiritual character. If there was no war, I would have some brothers and sisters, probably, but… They had such a love, one could write a novel. Somehow he could stand out among other rivals for my mother’s attention, even they were more handsome and louder than he. He had a very quiet nature, very devoted, very peaceful. He was a very good person, and a good worker too. His stepbrother Daniel and David Cherfas was a head of Riga’s furniture factory, but Kasriel was working as a head mechanic in some car shop. Now they are living in America.

A.A. For how long time?

H.C. They left already somewhere in 1995. 1994 or 1995. Both with all their families. So except my cousin and another cousin with whom we don’t have any relationship, I don’t have any other close relative left here.

A.A. What else do you remember – from the household… any holidays, some of your family’s traditions? Maybe, for example, did you celebrate birthdays somehow differently, or something else?

H.C. No, we didn’t celebrate birthdays – it wasn’t a part of Jewish tradition. I don’t even know why. It was already some newer tradition. I think my first birthday we celebrated after the war. Because everybody around was celebrating and my mother felt uncomfortable. Well, but a Christmas tree and Christmas – we didn’t celebrate that either, on they weren’t Jewish holidays back then. Even though our relatives in Riga had a Christmas tree – my mother was telling me that. My uncle Isaak, since he lived in Riga, they had a tree for little Ilana. But usually we celebrated Sabbath and Sunday with special food, torshmaca were made from chicken liver and herring pieces. My grandmother was a very good cook, and my mother inherited that talent from her. But aunt Bella – no, absolutely not. Obviously, some are given. But as strange as it sounds, I inherited tailoring talent from my grandfather. Nobody taught me that but when I was nine I made a dress
for my doll. And I thought that I hadn’t done anything special. But when my mother and my aunt saw that it almost left them speechless. Because they didn’t even have any idea how to sew – they knew only the very basics.

Well, rolls, chicken and chicken soup were always made for the Sabbath. But, my mother told me, grandfather shared the chicken even though daughters always got the wings, since they had to fly away from home, but sons got something else. And there always were fights for dark and white meat. But I think either is tasty! I am afraid I won’t be able to remember anything more.

A.A. It is a lot.

H.C. No, it isn’t! So, I can tell something about how the situation changed for Jews when Ulmanis got into power. Now, when the president was Chakte, but after him something started to change. Well, in Ludza there was an excellent Jewish school, they were teaching so well that my mother even in old age knew Latin. She could translate common sayings and even some that weren’t so common. All of the teachers were highly professional, almost all of them were fugitives from Russia – as my mom was saying – white guards. They were teaching excellently and there weren’t any national differences. Latgalians are very peaceful people and the city was under the Vitebsk government back in Czarist times. And Poles, Russians, Latvians, Latgalians, and Jews were living there, well, everybody and there were no national misunderstandings or fights. But in 1934 it started – prohibition on professions.

My father continued to work only because it was a private company. But my mother was among two or three non-Latvians who was working for the state – the post office – and only because her older brother who was participating in the battles for Latvian independence and had friends in high positions. And my mother had a permit for that work. So, what else would I like to tell? In the University they imposed quotas. And a Jew, even if he scored very high on the tests but exceeded the quota, couldn’t study. That was why many of my mother’s schoolmates went to France, Switzerland and other European countries. They went there to study and stayed there and survived the war. Nobody was troubling and burning them there – anyway, those who left here to study got a winning ticket.

They wrote my mother from South Africa. Another thing, during the Stalin regime this correspondence was minimized – it wasn’t allowed. But after his death they visited us and then very many Jews left for Israel since there was huge propaganda for founding the Jewish country. And those who agreed with that idea left.

I met only one such woman, she worked all her life in Kibica. She was amazingly moral and honest. I think, such were the first real Bolshevists, convicted communists – all those who believed that it is possible to build a happy and just society. But she left a very unjust country back then. Of course, in Israel also many things changed and she was telling my mother with doubt that the youth do not want to live by principles of equality, which they had. They also had some extremes – everybody had to wear the same clothes and eat the same food.

At that time, when she was visiting us, probably it was 1970 or even 1975 – she was telling us that it was already allowed to have some household and when they were going to the city on vacation the could dress as they wished. Well, it was very interesting how she was telling in what harsh conditions the first settlers had to live, how worked and transformed the desert into a blooming garden. One could only admire her, an amazing woman. Very many left then.

And when one is looking at some encyclopedia about great people, well – for most people nowadays – you can notice that many were born in Latvia, graduated high school in Latvia, and then left because Latvia didn’t need them, didn’t need talented gifted and even people of genius.

Later right before the curtain fell – it was 1939 or 1938, there was a disgusting campaign to boycott shopping in Jewish stores, apply for work in Jewish companies etc. My mother told me that, too. And I have even read something – if one would read newspapers of those days — how horrible it was. How else, if there was; buy butter from...
Kalninsh, but not at the Volson or somewhere else. Many people, of course, didn’t fall for that, but there were lots of scoundrels and dregs that did. Actually those kinds of things all started in Germany – the call for avoiding Jewish stores, not to hire Jews for work, not to apply for a job in Jewish companies, factories etc. So, here was a very ugly situation. And one shouldn’t be surprised that there were lot of people who greeted Germans and told them that here it is almost “Judenfrei.” And nothing was said against that.

And little things were done. For example, I collected books about the animals. Once I bought a book printed by a society of animal protectors in Latvia in 1936 or 1935, I don’t remember exactly. Then I started to read and with horror I discovered that, for example, the more than half of the book was not devoted to the protection of the animals, but to prove that Jews are torturing the animals. It was so wild, so stupid. At the beginning I couldn’t understand why is that, but at the end I discovered – they applied to the government with a request to forbid Jews to resell the cattle, because what they were saying they torture the animals. It was just a question of the competition – to eliminate from one more business circle.

There were many Jews who lived in suburbs – they were called prasol – who were buying the cattle and delivering to the slaughterhouses or somewhere else. It was a normal, simple job. They just wanted to eliminate them from that business circle. And if one looked into old newspapers, magazines then you would find a lot of such stuff. Of course, it was working depressively on normal people. For example, why my grandfather didn’t flee but stayed in Ludza? Because he was too smart to believe the newspapers. My mother told that he used to say: “It’s all lies. That is an exaggeration what they write in newspapers. Germans can’t be so anti-Semitic. I lived there. It is a cultured country. That’s all lies made up by newspapers.” That’s why he stayed.

Later when the wave of refugees came he couldn’t flee anymore and to leave his daughter with a son who was on the bed after the removal of appendix. He was 15 years old, or if that was the oldest, then 17 anyways. None of those innocent who were killed was a member of Cheka, as they love to present now. Like it was a justice nation’s anger to eliminate members of Cheka. Well, what else to remember? I don’t even know. Maybe again about the looks of Latgalian and Kurland Jews? In Ludza there were few more women who married men from Ludza, but themselves were from Riga. Among them there was my mother’s best friend – Gertrude Suer. She became famous after even newspaper “Pravda” (“The Truth”) wrote about her. Her children’s nanny was hiding them all the time when Germans were there. In her basement there was dug out some little compartment and she – Truda Suer, her husband – I think his name was Sema – and their little daughter Melitta spent all those years there. Melitta was the same age as me. Sometimes, during the night they came out to take a walk in the nearest woods. But the daylight they didn’t see at all. That nanny was bringing them food – she saved their lives. They left right after the war, I just don’t know where. Either to Israel or America – I don’t remember, really. Soon after the war when we went to Ludza, my mother and me, we lived there a few weeks in their house, until we got an apartment. Even then it seemed very scary, even though as a child I couldn’t say how scary it was.

She was pregnant at the beginning of the summer of 1941. When they were in the basement, she gave a birth to a child. The child, of course, died, because of lack of the sun and vitamins, it was cold in there etc. They buried it in the woods at night – they couldn’t even bury it humanly. It seemed to me so scary, I imagined a dark forest and foxes running around – probably because somebody said that they couldn’t even leave it under the bush because foxes would eat it. That would be sacrilegious – therefore they had to dig. They didn’t have a shovel, they dug with something. Anyway, it was scary – I don’t even want to remember that.

Well, after they left, I know that Gertruda remarried. Sema soon after died in America. Now I don’t know anything about them, except she is alive. We lived at their house, but probably I wouldn’t be able to find that house. There was asphalt, a walking path from the asphalt. After an evacuation it seemed very amazing to me – be-
cause we lived in a little town where there was no asphalt. During the spring the asphalt broke and through the crack the tulip came out. Simple, white tulip. I saw it for the first time in my life. That’s why the time spent there associates with that survival and the tulip in the asphalt’s crack. Very simple tulip, nothing fancy like black or purple, but the very simplest, primitive white with the blue center. Such flowers grow when one doesn’t cultivate the soil and doesn’t take care of them.

A.A. Could you tell – where did you go, where were you during the war and how did you manage?

H.C. We left like that. Since my father was working in the executive committee, they gave him a car. But my father told my mother not to take lot of stuff – just for a couple of weeks. At that time there was an official propaganda the victory will be ours with the minimum loses and the battle will not be on our turf. Long story short – we were leaving for two weeks. The only thing that he let my mother take with her was a suitcase with my things – nothing more. She didn’t even manage to go to her parents to say goodbye. She regretted that for the rest of her life.

As strange it sounds I do remember that evening when we left, because they woke me up and that was unusual. They dressed me quickly and took me to the street. Everything was dark. I remember that, because I was surprised why grownups were putting paper strips on the windows. I have good memory – my first memories were when I was a year and half. My mother checked that, it is not like I imagined that. Everything was dark, they put me in the truck, but over the horizon something was exploding and there were red lights. Now I understand that those were battles – the artillery was shooting. But then I was saying to my mother – how strange, it seems the thunder is coming, but it isn’t raining. She answered, yes it is thunder. But I was a very smart, developed girl and said – but it sounds like a giant is throwing blocks. Grownups remembered that for the rest of their lives, they told it later. I myself don’t remember saying that. But they were amazed how a little child is reacting. They put us on that truck which took us to the terminal. I don’t know what terminal it was. The train we got onto was bombed.

The next thing I remember – it is a day outside and we are in some strange place, some mud hut, everything around was a soil. My mother told me that airplanes were flying. Explosion, explosion, and explosion after every explosion the sand was falling down the wall. I was standing and looking on that sand and thinking – how interesting... when will it stop? Nothing else I understood there. But my mother told me that at the every explosion she hugged me and thought – if the bomb will fall, better on both of us at once. Because I wouldn’t survive without her, and she wouldn’t survive without me.

I remember there were a few military men, they were standing and sitting and their faces were stiff. Probably because they couldn’t swear in front of woman and child they were frustrated and felt helpless because planes were bombing the train and they couldn’t do anything, and had to be with everybody else down there in the hole. Was it a hole or some kind of mud hut; I have no idea. I have a complete blackout; I don’t remember anything.

Mother told me that later we were transported in open platforms. It was a long train from Latvia. They took us to the city where German planes couldn’t reach. I was amazed because people there were wearing white. As it turned out, those were waitresses from the terminal café. They came out with trays with lemonades on them. Were they selling it or giving for free, I don’t know.

Then we were crossing the forest and lot of children got sick. It was very hot – everybody is writing that, children wanted to drink but there was nothing to drink, so many children drunk from the puddles. They immediately got the typhoid. Mother told me not to drink in any circumstances! The fairytale about Ivanushka I didn’t know yet, but I listened to my mother and didn’t drink. Mother told me later my lips were broken and even bloody, but I didn’t drink or even ask for a drink – I knew there is nothing to drink. Later we got onto the ship. It was a Kirovsk area, now it is Vyatka.
On that ship they were giving children cereal with the cranberry cider. I still remember – it was white in the dark red and so tasty. It was for free. Mother said that children got food in special evacuation stations and it was free. How about the grownups – I just don’t know. They brought us to Kirovsk area in Molotovsk region and sent us all to the collective farm. We were working there on the hayfields. Among the women there were many that didn’t speak any Russian. They weren’t Latvians, but Jews from Kurland. The others were yelling – Germans, Germans! But my mother started to translate for them. There is one famous liberator, Roman Timenchik, probably you have heard of him. My mother met his mother there. She was very young girl back then – 20 or 21 years old and such a typical Kurland Jew – white skin, big blue eyes. She didn’t know a word in Russian. Her husband, he was her fiancé at that time, David Timenchik had joined the army. During the evacuation he found her, after the injuries he visited her and even stayed overnight in our room. She was very nice and polite woman. She had German accent that remained for the rest of her life. Even though she was much younger than my mother we were friends all the time. To my mother she was as the youngest sister.

Later on many refugees moved to the city. They all were given rooms in the apartments of locals – they were hosted very well. Rooms were with all furniture, some dishes since we didn’t take any with us. There were dishes in the stores. Mother said they were buying dishes. I had a glass ashtray that I was carrying with me so I could eat a soup out of it. My mother didn’t smoke at that time, but later it became an ashtray. Molotovsk was very nice trade city. There were lot of things from the old times, old believers were living there – very heartfelt people. It was very strange; old men were keeping old believer traditions and kept their dishes separately while the young ones were mixing them together.

What else can I tell? During the evacuation we were receiving Latvian newspapers, “Cina” (“The Struggle”) was sent from Moscow. It was printed on very terrible paper – there were even wooden chips in it. But once it was printed on very thin, almost papyrus alike paper. It seemed so strange to me. Later I was drawing on empty spaces – it was white and I could draw on it. My mother was teaching Latvian to me from the newspaper “Cina”. There was no ABC’s, but I am speaking, you are reading and I want to read. I learned to read in Russian when I was three and a half years old, probably. When we arrived there I spoke Russian very little. My nanny was Latgalian so I spoke Latgalian and Yiddish, of course. But since there were Russian songs on the radio and I liked them very much, so I learned them by heart. My mother told me I was mixing some words, but I thought I know better and nobody could tell me otherwise. So, she was teaching Latvian from the newspaper and my first words were “goat” and “hedgehog” (in Latvian there are long and soft accents – edit.) I remembered it for the rest of my life how to pronounce the accents. Later on I stopped to pronounce so precisely, but at the beginning my mother were teaching me very well.

Regularly there were some fiestas to celebrate for refugees from Latvia. What dates were they – I don’t remember. It wasn’t interesting to me; there were things in those fiestas that were more interesting to me. They were making layer food and since my mother was a good cook they were making the aspic for everybody and were cooking rolls for everybody. They were bringing huge amount of bones. They gathered at somebody who had a big room. All rolls were served, it was a precise amount, and those were the times when everything was on food stamps. Everybody was giving from themselves, from their food. I knew it very well, I couldn’t even touch the rolls, none of it. Imagine how it was for a little child to watch there on 30 or 40 rolls and to know that none of it is for me. I could only watch holding my arms behind my back. The same was with the aspic – it was put in the cups for everybody, depending on how many people were there, 20 or 30. But the boiled bones – those I could eat. Together with the apartment owner’s children – she had a boy and a girl, same age as I, there were some kids guests brought with them. So, we children had a pleasure to suck those bones.

Now nobody would believe that my father could carry out with him such a huge amount of money. Nobody even knew that he had that money. It
was some financial director’s negligence who left that money when he fled. My father gave the money to the bank – he didn’t hide or take any. Such morals were there and such people.

They celebrated those holidays very friendly. There were no Latvians separately, Jews separately or Russians separately. They all were celebrating together since they all were from Latvia. Everybody knew the address of Latvia’s representative in Moscow. Even I remember – Chapligina Street, but the number I don’t remember. Somebody was writing there, letters were sent from there, newsletters. Through them people were getting addresses – many people, lost each other and found. And a miracle happened, like how David Timenchik found his girl – they weren’t yet married then or just married. The mother’s brother found her (mother – edit) and even my father found us. And he spent with us around a week before he went to Gorohoveckie campus where the Latvian divisions were formed. But I don’t remember that, I don’t remember either how he looked or what he was doing, nothing.

After one injury my mother’s oldest brother was in the hospital in Kirov and they gave him three days to visit his sister – my mother. And as if to spite that, a blizzard started. It was near Ural and winters are harsh there the frost, -40° C. But the air is dry and he couldn’t hitchhike anybody who would take him to Molotovsk. What was worse – Vyatka city is in the mountains, he slipped somewhere and fell and just after the contusion he hit his head. Later we got the letter that he was very close but couldn’t visit. All the time he sent us his diploma because he was single, young and handsome. And some of his friends were also sending their diplomas – those who knew their relatives were killed there (in Latvia – edit).

There were people who simply didn’t know their fate. Even Latvians, not Jews were sending, so I was a regiment. At least three or four of his friends were sending their diplomas. That of course, helped very much. And there were holiday trees for refugee’s children. Now sometimes one can read – New Years Holyday trees were forbidden – well, it wasn’t true. During the war the government was organizing holiday trees for free for children. And they were giving us presents. Presents were, for example, black cake. Mandarins during the war I don’t remember, but I remember apples. Every apple was wrapped in silky paper. But such paper was a huge deficit, later I was making dresses for the doll from it. Sweets I don’t remember either, but cakes and apples were there. I don’t know. But those trees I remember. And Father Frost and Snow Maiden, too. But the tree ornaments were simply amazing, because Molotovsk was a trade city and there were a huge amount of pre-revolutionary toys saved. Well, for example, I remembered that for the rest of my life – from the mirror made something like the lake and cotton balls with shine and probably water colors – hills little house and there was a girl and on that lake there were swans swimming and children skating – like figurines. Those were the toys which nowadays would be priceless, antiques. There they were put on the tree. They let us watch. The owner of the apartment also had such toys.

I don’t remember anything more. Grownups were working, waiting for letters – waiting the mailman. Sometimes it is luck… Yes, sometimes they were waiting with a horror. Our apartment owner’s husband survived, he wrote from Vienna and sent some German cards at the end of the war. We children several times were playing on Victory Day – like some kind of rehearsal. But the victory I celebrated already in Ludza. We left in 1944 (from the evacuation – edit.) My mother got a personal call from the minister of communications – he was gathering previous postal personnel.

We came to Ludza before the war ended. Since then I hate blue color, because there were blue light bulbs to have at least some light. When I see something blue, I have a bad impression. But in Riga there were ruins where the Old City is, still since 1941. I still remember how Germans were working there, passing bricks by human chain, cleaning ruins. It wasn’t even in Old City, but where the hotel “Riga” is now. Otto Shvartz – in that place, there were huge amount of stones, bricks and Germans were cleaning that. I remember that, they brought me to Riga at the beginning of spring 1945. Something else?
A.A. If you can – whatever you wish.

H.C. I even wrote some key-notes. But it seems, that I have told everything I wanted.

A.A. Thank you very much!

**Membership Fees are Now Due**

At the annual meeting of Latvia SIG held at the IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City, a vote of the attending members of the SIG indicated that most members preferred to receive the Latvia SIG newsletter via email as a PDF file. I sent an email to the membership asking for their preferences, and, as of now, about twice as many members prefer to receive the newsletter as a PDF file. This will be the first issue of the newsletter that will be distributed to many members as a PDF file. However, I have not heard from many members, so please contact me and let me know whether you prefer to receive the newsletter in hard copy or as a PDF file. Since the PDF version contains color photographs and usually runs about 20 to 30 pages, I would only recommend this version to those of you who have wide-band (cable, DSL, fiber, etc.) access to the Internet.

This is a reminder to kindly renew your subscription to the Latvia SIG and Newsletter. Our subscription year runs from July 2007 through June 2008. As previously mentioned, dues may be paid for multiple years. Also, as previously discussed in the Treasurer’s Report, the yearly fees have been raised to US $25 for the US and Canada, and $35 (bankable in the US) from elsewhere. If you wish to renew your membership for multiple years, the first year will be $25 ($35 outside North America) and $20 ($30 outside North America) for each subsequent year. Please make your check payable to Latvia SIG and mail them to:

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

You can also remit your payment through PayPal to: MikeGetz005@comcast.net. Directions for using PayPal can be found on the SIG website or use the following directions.

To do this go to the PayPal web-site, [http://www.paypal.com](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**.
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.

NAME:.............................................................................. LOCATION:.........................................
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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 $25 (U.S. and Canada), $35 for overseas members payable to Latvia SIG, to:

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5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901
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Enter contact information in FF:  Yes ____ No____
Please circle newsletter preference:  PDF  Hard Copy

Note: If you prefer to join or renew your membership for multiple years, please submit $25 ($35 overseas) for the first year, and $20 ($30 overseas) for each subsequent year.