

Latvia SIG

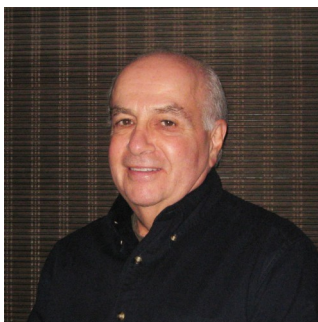
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President's Report



As the membership year draws to a close, we look forward to the annual meeting of the Latvia SIG at the DC 2011 IAJGS conference this coming August in Washington, DC. As is customary, we solicit

volunteers to take on more responsibility by becoming board members. All board positions are open and I am asking each of you to consider volunteering for such a position. Over the years too few members have volunteered, and much of the work is being done by the same few individuals year after year. Please contact me if you'd like to serve on the board and please indicate which position you would like to assume. Even if you are not interested in serving, I welcome your suggestions concerning the SIG and how you think we can improve the services we try to provide to all of you.

In this newsletter is the announcement from JewishGen about a meeting with SIG leaders to discuss how JewishGen and the SIGs can be better supported by JewishGen. This is a new initiative from JewishGen and it is certainly a move in the right direction. Over the years a recurrent issue has been whether the SIG should become an independent entity or whether it should continue to fall under the auspices of JewishGen. This has become a bigger issue since the merger of JewishGen with the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City and the database sharing agreement that JewishGen has negotiated with Ancestry.com. We will report back to you the results of this important meeting.

We cannot give enough credit to Christine Usdin for her continuing efforts in transliterating the Raduraksti records. However, as useful as these records are, they will become even more useful once they become part of the JewishGen Latvia database. A major project of the SIG is to make this happen. As of now we have not been very successful in this endeavor. We need volunteers who are somewhat proficient in MS Excel to help

convert Christine's database to JewishGen compatible format and to verify the correctness of the data to some degree. Please contact me if you think you can help in this effort.

As you know June 30th marks the end of the membership year and I'd like to remind you to renew your membership for the 2011/2012 membership year if you have not so already. Instructions for payment can be found on page 22 of the newsletter.

Have a wonderful summer and if you travel to Latvia for genealogical reasons or to just stand on the same ground that your ancestors stood on, please consider writing an article about your trip or simply convey your thoughts to us.

Barry Shay, bbshay@starpower.net

Editor's Comments

In less than a month a number of important events will be taking place in Latvia to commemorate both the 450th anniversary of the first arrival of Jews to Latvia and, sadly, the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the end of Jewish life in Latvia. The forthcoming events have not been well publicized and we are lucky that Henry Blumberg has been following the planning and scheduling of the events. The upcoming events are scheduled from June 27th through July 4th and I'd like to thank Henry for providing the detailed information.

Some of you may have received an e-mail from Lois Rosen, a long-time member of the SIG, about a business she is starting that will be of interest to all genealogists and family researchers. After reading the e-mail I asked Lois if she'd like to write something for the newsletter, and I am glad she did. Those of you who have been to Lois's presentations or have seen the charts she has created can attest to her expertise.

Yehudi Gaffen has been leading the project to build a memorial to the Jews who were killed in Bauska during the Holocaust. Many of his relatives were killed there and the difficulty in convincing the authorities in Bauska to allow a memorial to be built has been a long and arduous task. The prospects do not look good, but Yehudi

continues the struggle and will again meet with the authorities in August.

John Wilkens and I briefly talked about Yehudi's efforts to build the memorial and I am happy that the San Diego Union Tribune has agreed to allow his article to be re-printed in the SIG newsletter.

We are all aware of the incredible work that Christine Usdin continues to do in transliterating the BMD records that have been made available by the State Historical Archives in Riga. On a post on the Latvia SIG listserv, Christine wondered why more people have not written about what they have found and where their ancestors came from and where they have gone. As Christine says, "I can not believe that all our ancestors have disappeared in the Holocaust."

I know exactly how she feels, since it has been very difficult for me to solicit articles from our members describing their genealogical research and the results of their endeavors. But Christine's comments seemed to hit a chord and many subscribers volunteered information along with more questions. I have taken the liberty of re-printing some of these responses and I hope that even more interest will be generated resulting in more comments, articles and questions.

The testimony of Itzik Margolis tells of his life in Dvinsk before 1941, the evacuation after the Nazis invaded, his time in Kazakhstan and then in Tashkent and finally back to Riga. While Mr. Margolis' testimony jumps back and forth in time, his narrative highlights the tragedies faced by the evacuation as well as Jewish life in Latvia before and after the war.

IAJGS 2011 Conference

The Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Washington (JGSGW) will host the 31st IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Presentations by renowned scholars, archivists and genealogists from around the world are included in the conference program.

David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, will speak at the conference Gala on Thursday evening, August 18. As the presidentially ap-

pointed Archivist, he is head of the National Archives and Records Administration, which has about 3,000 employees in 36 facilities across the country. He maintains his own "Collector in Chief" blog on NARA's Web site. Mr. Ferriero was sworn in as the nation's 10th Archivist on November 13, 2009.

"The Moscows of Nantucket," which premiered May 11 at Washington's highly regarded Theater J, earned a 3½-star (out of four) rating from Leslie Milk, a widely read reviewer for Washingtonian Magazine. Theater J will present Sam Forman's "laugh-out-loud comedy with bittersweet moments about a Jewish family's struggle to connect" especially for our conference. Permanently housed in the Washington, D.C., Jewish Community Center, Theater J is bringing the play to the Grand Hyatt Hotel on Monday, August 15, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$12 apiece and can be purchased on line at the conference registration site. For details, go to <http://dc2011.org/> and click the **Special Events** link under **Conference Program**.

Sara Bloomfield, the director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, will deliver the keynote address at the conference on the opening night, Sunday, August 14. Her talk is titled, "Honoring the Victims: It Takes A Village" and will be followed by a Welcome Dessert Reception

The preliminary schedule has been posted for pre-conference Shabbat and Havdalah dinners with Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, a SIG breakfast, several SIG luncheons, the Thursday Gala (previously called the Conference Banquet) and computer workshops for both PC and Mac users. The pre-conference dinners cost \$72 each per person; the breakfast, \$36; luncheons, \$42; the Gala, \$65; and workshops, \$25. For details, go to the Special events and SIG & BOF pages on the website.

If you have already registered for the conference and want to sign up for these events, follow the instructions in your confirmation email and look for a "Modify" tab, link or icons.

Author, TV & radio host and adviser to celebrities, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach will be the Shabbat Scholar for events leading up to the conference.

He will speak after the Shabbat dinner on Friday, August 12, lead a discussion on Saturday afternoon and lecture again after Havdalah services and dinner Saturday evening. You'll want to arrive early in Washington to hear Rabbi Shmuley Boteach before DC2011 officially opens Sunday, August 14. For more information, go to the Special Events section on the conference website..

For the latest news, updates and important announcements about the conference, join the discussion group mailing list for DC2011. You can reply to messages and post your own questions and comments. Subscribe to it through the JewishGen Discussion groups service by going to: http://www.jewishgen.org/ListManager/members_add.asp.

Complete details about fees for attending the conference, refund policies, and much more information can be found in the registration pages: <http://dc2011.org/index.php/register/170-fees-summary>

From May 1 to July 31, on-line fees are \$310 and \$210 for a companion. On-site registration fees beginning August 13 are \$340 and \$240, respectively.

Latvia SIG Events at IAJGS 2011

Please mark your calendars for Thursday, 18 August 2011. On that day the Latvia SIG will hold its annual luncheon and business meeting at the IAJGS conference in Washington.

Mitchell Lieber will be the guest speaker at the luncheon and will also be making a presentation at the general session.

Mitch's presentation for the general session was selected from a record number of submissions and the SIG is honored that he accepted our invitation to speak at the luncheon.

The luncheon will be held from 12:30 PM until 2 PM and will be followed by the business meeting from 2:15 PM until 3:30 PM. Mitch's presentation at the general session, also on the 18th, will begin at 3:45 PM and end at approximately 5:00 PM.

As most of you know, Mitch founded and continues to run the Rumbula.org website and is also

the producer and director of the documentary film, *Rumbula's Echo*. The luncheon presentation, entitled, *Making Rumbula's Echo - What Happened in Latvia?* will focus on the discoveries, history lessons, surprises, problems and solutions that arose while shooting a film with Holocaust and genealogy story lines in Latvia. At the luncheon Mitch will talk about the discoveries, history lessons, surprises, problems and solutions that arise when shooting a documentary film with Holocaust and genealogy story lines in Latvia.

What motivated Mitchell Lieber to make a ground-breaking documentary film set in the country of his grandparents' youth, Latvia? Besides the personal connection, what made Latvia so suitable for the film? Mitchell will discuss this topic and tell about the surprises that occurred during production, including surprises about Jewish history and the Jewish community. Hear about the challenges of transporting an international crew and van load of equipment half way around the world, moving moments and funny ones. After five trips over eight years totaling 32 days, Lieber's view of the country and relationship with it is changing. He'll tell why and how, and show clips from *Rumbula's Echo* spanning the pre-WWII period, Shoah and modern times.

The presentation at the general session, entitled *Genealogy Surprise Becomes A Movie: Rumbula's Echo*, focuses on the inspiration and meaning one discovers from Jewish genealogy and how a person's search changed families' lives, spawned a leading web site and led to a new film.

Mitchell Lieber's genealogy research resulted in a surprise that changed the lives of thirty-five family members. It led to an educational web site utilized by more than 150,000 worldwide, and now to a documentary feature film, *Rumbula's Echo*. Using his genealogy search as a key part of the story, Lieber has produced the first documentary about a large mass shooting of the Shoah. With a surprise ending to his search for dead relatives, the film illustrates how we all have a great story waiting to be revealed in our own family tree. Producer-director Lieber discusses how one can find many levels of meaning in genealogy research, and shows genealogy related clips from the forthcoming movie, *Rumbula's Echo*.

In 1998, Mitchell began researching his new daughter's 19th century namesake, his great grandmother, beginning a journey through genealogy and history. In 2001 he discovered family believed murdered in the Shoah sixty years earlier, but had survived. This inspired him to develop and launch the leading web compendium about the Holocaust in Latvia, www.Rumbula.org. All that he learned moved him to produce a ground breaking documentary film about the genealogy search and historic, but overlooked, Holocaust events in Latvia.

Lieber's early career focused on documentaries and interviews, while he concentrated on management and marketing consulting later in his career. He returned to documentaries to produce *Rumbula's Echo*, which will be shown at public screenings, in classrooms and on television.

For more information about Rumbula and Rumbula's Echo, please visit <http://www.rumbula.org/> and <http://www.rumbulasecho.org/>.

Workshop for SIGs at IAJGS 2011

Avraham Groll, Director of Business Operations, who along with Karen Franklin – Co-Chair, Board of Governors, and Vivian Kahn – VP, SIG Affairs, are organizing a SIG Workshop at the conference. The following was sent by Avraham to all SIG leaders. Ed.

Dear SIG Leader,

It has been gratifying to witness the contribution that our Special Interest Groups have made to the broader Jewish Genealogical community over the past decade. It is safe to say that many familial connections would have been lost were it not for the effort of SIG leaders like you, who have worked so hard to obtain data and make it available online for anyone to access.

As JewishGen continues to improve, we would like to work more closely with your SIG and to

ensure that we are doing everything possible to help maximize its potential.

As such, we are planning to meet with all SIG leaders at this summer's IAJGS conference in Washington, DC, to share current news and information about JewishGen, develop database projects, answer questions, and learn what we can do better to support your work. (This will be in addition to the general SIG coordinators meeting).

We want to hear from you, and have scheduled five meetings during the conference in which SIG leaders can gather in small groups to meet with us.

We will contact you closer to the conference with specific meeting locations.

Note: Mike Getz, Michael Eliastam and I plan to attend a workshop on Wednesday, 17 August at 1 P.M. If you would like to attend, please contact me at: bbshay@starpower.net.

Summer Events in Latvia

Since this year is the 450th anniversary of the arrival of Jews in Latvia and sadly also the 70th anniversary of the massacre in 1941, a number of activities and events have been planned for this summer in Latvia. While all are welcome to attend these events, they are especially significant for all Latvian Jews and their descendants.

The activities include a full program for a reunion in Liepaja from the 27th of June to the 29th of June. Additionally, a conference related to the Jewish experience in Latvia, organized by the Judaic Department of Latvia University, will be held on the 30th of June and the 1st of July.

There will also be an excursion to Kurzeme (Courland) on July 3rd. Holocaust Memorial Day will also be observed on the July 4th with participants from Israel, the USA, Canada, and South Africa.

If you are interested in making arrangements to attend these events or if you need more detailed information, please contact Henry Blumberg at:

henry@blumbergs.ca. A schedule of events follows.

Monday, June 27th

10.30 - Pickup guests at Riga airport and transfer them to Liepaja

13.30 – Guests arriving in Liepaja will be accommodated in the hotel followed by a meeting at the Liepaja Jewish Community center.

A concert will mark the opening ceremony of the exhibition, which is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust beginning in Latvia

Tuesday, June 28th

Reception at the municipality

Sightseeing in Libau/Liepaja and environs

Visit to Jewish memorial sites

Ceremony of remembrance and Yizkor

Festive dinner

Wednesday, June 29th

Excursion to the museum of the only metallurgical company in the Baltic states - "Liepajas metalurģis"

Private interest in family research

Lunch

Leave for Riga at 14:00

Thursday, June 30th and Friday, July 1st

Conference in Riga followed a shabbaton, arranged by the Judaic Department of Latvia University in Riga

The following topics/subjects provided by the Judaic Department, Latvia University.

- a. Establishment of Jewish community in Latvia in 16th—18th centuries

- b. Jewish community in Latvia in the 19th and early 20th century

- c. Jews in Latvia between the wars

- d. Holocaust in Latvia

- e. Jews in Latvia and Soviet power

- f. Jewish community in Latvia at present time: problems and prospects

- g. Jewish culture in Latvia

- h. Great world-scale Jewish personalities with Latvian origin

- i. Jews of Latvia as part of world Jewry

Sunday, July 3rd

Excursion to Kurzeme (Courland)

Monday, July 4th

Holocaust Memorial Ceremony..

**A New Business:
Family History Unbound**

By
Lois Ogilby Rosen

When I began researching the ROZINKO relatives from Latvia eight years ago, my goals were clear and straight forward: Fill in the family tree and find as many documents and relatives as possible. I joined my local JGS here in Los Angeles, joined the Latvia SIG, learned how to research, and even traveled to Riga and Daugavpils.

I began speaking about my research and also about the passion and skill I developed for creating large printed family tree scrolls. My interest and excitement led me to greater involvement in my local society, and before I knew it, I somehow managed to volunteer to co-chair the IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy that was held in Los Angeles last July.

In preparation for the conference, I was invited to speak at various gatherings throughout southern California to introduce Jewish genealogical research and hopefully spark interest and encourage

conference attendance. To do that, I used a presentation I created with my Rozinko documents, photos and stories. I also brought my family scroll, which when unrolled, never failed to spark great interest and excited conversation.

For each talk I gave, I also tried something new. I asked in advance for a volunteer from the hosting organization, a guinea pig if you will, who wouldn't mind my doing some research into his/her family that would then become part of my presentation. It worked very well, and added some great excitement for all on the day of my talk.



**Lois Rosen with an Early Version
of the
Rozinko Family Tree**

What I did for that volunteer for each of the many talks I did in the six months before the conference motivated me to start my own business. I not only provided basic information about the family I was researching, but I created a binder of stories, photos, documents, and charts assembled as a per-

sonal tribute to the family whose lives I had come to know.

There are many companies that will create family history books, or that will allow you to put together one of your own. Ancestry.com's MyCanvas is an excellent example of this. My focus is quite different. I have joined forces with an excellent writer and businesswoman, Jennifer Lidar, and together we work very closely with clients to format a finished product that is not a bound book, but a beautiful cross between a photo album, a scrapbook and a binder. Information can be added, augmented, or changed as time goes on—as that is what we ALWAYS need to do! We interview clients to obtain information for personal stories, we collect photos and documents, we explore all avenues of genealogical research, and we create trees that can be included in the book in the form of charts or ordered as large scrolls. Finally, we prepare a list of sources and suggestions for further research.

Hopefully our clients will catch the bug and venture out with this list to make some discoveries of their own. If not, then we will be there to continue the quest if need be! Our business is very new, but we are already busy with clients. We have yet to complete our brochure and our website, but in the meantime, feel free contact us with questions!

Lois Ogilby Rosen, logilby@mac.com
Jennifer Lidar, lidar2000@yahoo.com

Bauska Update

San Diegan looks to build Holocaust memorial in Latvia: Businessman's family roots go back generations in town that was site of atrocities. By John Wilkens

(see: <http://web.signonsandiego.com/staff/john-wilkens/> for bio and recent articles)

(Originally published by the San Diego Union-Tribune on Sunday, February 27, 2011 and reprinted here with permission.)



Yehudi Gaffen

The Holocaust didn't happen in the United States, but it is widely remembered here — taught in schools, featured in books and movies, documented in major museums from coast to coast.

In Europe, where the systematic extermination of 6 million Jews took place seven decades ago, the remembering is sometimes a struggle. Yehudi Gaffen knows.

For the past nine years, the 58-year-old San Diego businessman has been working to have a Holocaust memorial built in Bauska, a town in southern Latvia where his family's roots stretch back to the 1750s. His grandparents, great-grandparents and a handful of other relatives were killed there in the summer of 1941.

Not just killed but marched into the woods and forced to dig their own graves before they were shot. Such were the horrors of the "Final Solution."

Gaffen's campaign is one of several under way in the former Soviet Union, where towns are being asked to acknowledge a troubling past — to admit not just that the Holocaust happened there, but that some of their own residents participated in the killing.

"The reality is that many people don't want to be reminded of their complicity, that their father or grandfather may have been engaged in the slaughter of innocents," said Warren Miller,

chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, a federal agency established in 1985 that helps with Holocaust memorials overseas.

"But each generation needs to be constantly reminded because that is the best defense against future genocide."

Barry Shay, president of the Latvia SIG, a group focused on Jewish genealogy, said there is a push now for more memorials because the number of Holocaust survivors is dwindling. "There is an urgency to it," he said.

That is one of Gaffen's concerns. His partner on the project, Jehuda Feitelson, a retired chemistry professor who grew up in Bauska and spent time in Nazi death camps during the war, is 88.

"I remember my mom telling me stories, but many kids don't have that firsthand knowledge," Gaffen said. "If my generation doesn't do something to make sure these events are remembered, I don't think it will ever happen."

Latvia, a country of about 2.2 million people, sits on the Baltic Sea, bordered by Estonia, Russia, Belarus and Lithuania. Its history is one of invasion and occupation, so Hitler's army wasn't the first to roll through, or the last. But it was among the deadliest.

There were an estimated 93,000 Jews in the country before World War II started. About 95 percent of them were wiped out in the Holocaust. Today only a few thousand live there, most of them in the capital city of Riga.

In Bauska, the first Jews were killed in July 1941 when five were publicly executed on a bridge in town. A couple of weeks later, more than 50 men were castrated. Many Jews fled, and those who remained were herded into a ghetto. In August, some 600 people were marched to the woods and shot.

Bauska was among the first towns in Latvia to be declared "Judenfrei" by the Germans — free of Jews.

Gaffen's mother was married and living in South Africa when all this happened. He was born there. In the late 1970s, he and his now-wife moved to San Diego, where his construction-management company, Gafcon, is among the largest in the state.

He grew up hearing stories about the Holocaust, learned that he had a cousin in Latvia who had survived the atrocities. In September 2001, he flew there for a visit. They went to Bauska, saw the house where Gaffen's ancestors had lived, walked in the woods where they were killed.

Through his cousin he met Feitelson, the retired professor. They started working together on a memorial. They got a lease for vacant land in the town square where a synagogue, destroyed during the war, once stood. They hired an architect to design the memorial, which features pointed arches that look like a broken Star of David. (Estimated cost to build it: \$75,000 to \$100,000.) They set up a website to raise funds.

Gaffen, who said he and Feitelson have spent about \$10,000 on the project, has traveled four times to Bauska. He said initial reaction there to the memorial was favorable, but recently concerns have been raised about its scale and appropriateness for the site.

"They told us it looked too much like a cemetery," Feitelson said in a phone interview from Jerusalem, where he lives. Project organizers are working on a redesign.

Feitelson's family roots go seven generations deep in the town. His parents died in the Holocaust; they fled the extermination squads in Bauska, only to be rounded up in Riga and killed with more than 20,000 others in the nearby Rumbula forest. (A memorial there was dedicated in 2002.)

He said he is concerned resistance to the memorial in Bauska is based on more than aesthetics. "I just think some people don't want the story of the Jews there remembered or talked about," he said. "They may want us to build it somewhere else, but somewhere else is not where all this happened. It should be there."

Miller, the preservation commission chairman, is not involved with the Bauska project, but he said Latvia has been generally receptive to memorials. Attempts to seek comment from the Latvian embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Honorary Consulate in Los Angeles were unsuccessful.

"I think local populations are not as opposed to it as they may have been, when there was still a lot of denial about what happened and a fear of being charged with complicity," Miller said. "Now they are confronting their past, some more willingly and openly than others."

Gaffen hopes Bauska is among the willing. Either way, he said, he's not going away. Not when there is so much to be remembered.

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Latvian Jewish Ancestors (Why Latvia?)

From Christine Usdin, uzdine@orange.fr
22 May 2011
Paris, France

Since I have been translating the Raduraksti records, I found many names and I am very surprised to find that very few people write to me or write to the Latvia SIG to say they have found ancestors, compared to the number of names.

I am also surprised by the fact that when I find a rabbi, a cantor, a shochet, I find nothing on the internet. Neither text nor image.

I can not believe that all our ancestors have disappeared in the Holocaust. Many have emigrated before the Holocaust and others, like my grandfather, ended up in France or elsewhere in Europe or in the world during World War I or at least before or after the 1917 revolution.

I understand very well that for many, the roots are not important, but soon there will be no more witnesses about the lives of our ancestors and as the Talmud says: "One is not dead until truly one's name is forgotten."

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From Ann Lapedus Brest, digitalphoto@icon.co.za
24 May 2011
Johannesburg, South Africa

When I first started tracing my family tree, I discounted people who were not from the various shtetls my family was from. But not anymore. Since reading Christine Usdin's records, I can see so clearly that a person was born in one shtetl, died in another, and how there was a wave of emigration from Lithuania to Latvia. I have heard people say they are from Poland, but meantime, they originated in Lithuania or Latvia. So now I read Christine Usdin's reports daily, every shtetl, looking for familiar family names.

What Christine Usdin is saying is true, that for many, roots are not important but they are because those who went before us live on through us. We carry their genes, even though we never met them and for some we've never heard of them. I can't understand people not wanting to know more about the very souls whose blood runs through our veins.

Why Latvia and why Lithuania?

I have always had a theory that a huge proportion of the Jews in Latvia and Lithuania were from the Spanish Inquisition. I know many Lapidoth (Lapidus) who came from Spain, ended up in Holland are all Christians today. One family I know, via e-mail, is aware of their Jewish origins.

For how many generations would the Jews have been in Latvia? I have found many people with my own family names, but to know if they are related or not, is another story. I am sure the same is true for many subscribers to the Latvia SIG listserve, and possibly this is why Christine has not heard from all that many? Many they see the names, but are not sure if these are their own family members or not. The chances are that they are, which is why I am keeping records of all names that I am searching, but so hard to get prove this.

Once again, as I have done before, I thank you for everything you are doing, and for the wonderful photos which accompany your postings daily. It gives us that wonderful insight and allows me to picture my ancestors walking on those streets and buying at the marketplace, because although I

know the names of my Ancestors going back about 10 generations, it's only a name and it is difficult to imagine them as real living people. To my children, my grandparents are just sepia photographs on the wall.

My little great-niece laughed in utter disbelief when I once showed her some old family photos. She found it totally unbelievable that her grandpa had a father of his own, and even a grandfather of his own. Her great-grandmother (my mother) is 90 years of age and when I tried to explain to her that her great-grandmother also had a mom and a grandma and so on, the child thought I was crazy. Now she is interested in learning more and is starting to believe it! It's good to show children photos and it does make them curious about their roots.

Genealogy and the search for our families should ideally start in childhood, while grandparents and great-grandparents are still alive. Do I regret not asking all my grandparents some questions when they were alive? Of course I do, and I am sure many of you feel the same way.

From Sue Levy, slevy@jalcomputer.com.au
24 May 2011
Perth, Australia

In response to Christine Usdin's question, I think it's worth noting that Latvia is a fairly modern name for a piece of territory that was formerly divided into regions that transcended today's borders.

My grandmother, Hinde-Gite Gutman, was born in Friedrichstadt (Jaunjelgava) in the 1880s. Her country was then known as Courland and from the maps I have seen Courland extended across the southern part of Latvia into the northern part of Lithuania. So when her grandmother married Abram Weiner, a man from Birzhai, which lies across today's border in Lithuania, she really married a man from her own region of Courland and he came to live in Friedrichstadt. While the two towns are not far apart, they would have been a real journey in the mid 1880s.

I imagine many young men travelled in search of a wife, as well as for other reasons such as trade.

From Shelley K. Pollero, rkpollero@comcast.net
24 May 2011
Severna Park, Maryland, USA

My grandmother, Schifre Kagan, was born in 1883 in Vitebsk, Russia. Her parents, Chaim Aron Kagan and Malka Lekherzak, were living in Yanovich (Vitebsk Gubernia) in 1905. She had three sisters; Sarah Lechersack-Kagan, age 25, immigrated to New York in 1909. I don't know anything about the other sisters.

According to my aunt, Schifre had been working with an anti-tsarist 'underground' newspaper and was put in jail. Her uncle from Riga bailed her out and took her to his home. She immigrated to New York in December 1905 with a pillow and two candlesticks. On the passenger arrival list, she was listed as Schifre Lechersak, dressmaker, age 22, resident of Janowitz. She traveled alone going to an uncle Max Yenkin, Monroe Street, NYC. I have not found this uncle by this name. Was he from Latvia? Vitebsk?

I have seen Kagan-Lekherzak (sp) in Latvian indexes, but have not sent for further information - yet.

Thanks for your work.

From Howard Margol, homargol@aol.com
24 May 2011
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

I am certainly no expert on this but can offer one suggestion. All of Latvia, from Liepaja on the Baltic coast to Jekabpils on the east, were outside the Pale of Settlement. The area east and south-east of Jekabpils was included in the Pale. Generally, Jews living in the Pale wanted to live in the part of Latvia that was outside the Pale, but were prevented from doing so by the authorities. Some Jews were allowed to move to parts of Latvia that were outside the Pale but only for special reasons - to attend a University, a doctor, or someone with a special skill.

From Angie Elfassi, aelfassi51@yahoo.com
24 May 2011
Israel

My family Kassimoff has several records registered including birth records from Rezekne, but there are also references in those records to places in Lithuania not far from today's modern border. Maybe one has to look at the borders that existed more than 100 years ago when Russia was a large place (the Russian Empire). I believe that many of the "secrets" of where our ancestors came from is "hidden" in their surname. Usually then, as now, people migrated because of work opportunities.

Jews were often traders and had "mobile" occupations, where they could move quickly and run, if necessary. Taken from Wikipedia: "For centuries under Hanseatic and German influence and then during its war of independence, Latvia used its geographic location as an important East-West commercial and trading center. Industry served local markets, while timber, paper and agricultural products were Latvia's main exports.

Conversely, the years of Russian and Soviet occupation tended to integrate Latvia's economy to serve those empires' large internal industrial needs."

Christine, thanks for your wonderful on-going translations.

From Judy Simon, heyjude0701@gmail.com
25 May 2011
Stony Brook, New York, USA

I agree with Anne Brest's theory, that a huge proportion of the Jews in Latvia and Lithuania were from the Spanish Inquisition, and have some evidence to support it. I administer a DNA project through Family Tree DNA with Schelly Talalay Dardashti for Ashkenazi Jews with an oral Sephardic history or any other indicator possible of Sephardic roots, such as a Spanish/Portuguese surname or an inherited Mediterranean disease. We have many Ashkenazi Jews in the project with ancestry from Latvia and Lithuania whose DNA matches that of descendants of known Sephardim and conversos.

You might be surprised to find out that some conversos and crypto-Jews fleeing Iberia migrated to Latvia not only through northern European cities like Amsterdam and Hamburg, but apparently also from the Ottoman Empire. Based on oral histories of members of at least one cluster of Ashkenazi Jews with matching Y-DNA, it is likely that their ancestors arrived in Latvia by the late 18th century after fleeing Spain to the Ottoman Empire, possibly the Balkans.

From Debbie Lifshitz, debilif@gmail.com
25 May 2011
Jerusalem, Israel

Although I have been following the Latvia SIG Digest for three years I have not been an active participant. However, Christine Usdin's question opens an opportunity I don't want to miss.

According to family myth - which I have not researched yet (working on the other side of the family at the moment) - my grandfather's family originated in Metz (Alsace-Lorraine, then Germany), with the name Treves. His grandmother (or perhaps great-grandmother) a widow with three sons, took the offer of Catherine the Great (Has anyone heard anything similar?) for professionals to help colonize Courland or Latvia.

The family, known as a rabbinic family, took the name Rabinovitz. My grandfather, born in 1882, was born in Dankere, near Dvinsk—today Dauvagpils.

The family immigrated to the U.S. in 1891. In the U.S. they re-instated their original name, Americanizing it to Travis. All the sons kept the R for Rabinovitz as a middle initial.

I would be happy to hear any reactions to the above "history."

From: Naomi Ogin, ndogin@bigpond.com
26 May 2011
Brisbane, Australia

I have wondered about this as well. My ggm, Rosa Davidovitz and her siblings were born in Riga. Their parents were Hatzkel-Jankel

(Ezechiel-Jacob) son of Abram-David Davidowitsch (Davidowitz) in his marriage record, Davidoff, born around 1845/1846 and passed away in Riga, 1880, place of origin was Kelme, Rossien District, Lithuania, and Glika a.k.a Clara, daughter of Schraiga Faibusch Schapire H'Cohen from Schaulen (Siauliai) born c.1852, passed away in the East End of London, 1927.

Their marriage was registered on February 26th, 1871, in Riga.

Interestingly, Rosa's husband, Aaron Rabinovitz (Raphel ArieH son of Todros HenoCh) says he came from Dvinsk/Dauvagpils in the 1911 UK Census. The Latvian Archives could find no record.

I was told that many also came to Riga from elsewhere because of the Port. It was easier to get away.

From Howard Margol, homargol@aol.com
27 May 2011
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

I do not know the exact years but sometime between 1850 - 1880, many Jews in Lithuania developed a scheme to move from the Pale of Settlement in Lithuania to Riga, Latvia which was outside the Pale.

The family in Lithuania got a Jew in Riga to adopt them. Once they became part of the family, they were allowed to move to Riga. This worked for a number of years until the Russian authorities realized what was going on. When a 30 year old, in Riga, adopted a 70 year old and his entire family in Lithuania, it was pretty evident as to what was going on. The Russian authorities then put a stop to the adoption process.

From: Delight Nasatir, LightDe@aol.com
27 May 2011
Los Angeles, California, USA

Has anyone else in the group had the experience of reverse migration? The Nasatirs went from Latvia to Lithuania and from there in the late

1800's to South Africa, USA and the British Isles. Just curious - the oral history in our immediate family is that the Nasatirs were expelled from Spain in 1492. We are trying to find DNA evidence of this through family tree DNA.

From Michael Eliastam, Eliastamm@aol.com
28 May 2011
Marlborough, Massachusetts, USA

Howard Margol offered a fascinating explanation of adoption of people from the Pale to enable them to come to Latvia.

Are there other examples like this or is there more academic research around this issue or the bigger question--how did our ancestors get to Latvia?.

Surely someone has studied this in detail?

From Angie Elfassi, aelfassi51@yahoo.com
28 May 2011
Israel

I refer to Howard Margol's interesting email about many Lithuania Jews being adopted by a family in Latvia. Does anyone know how this system was done? I have my Kassemoff family with many records from Rezekne with indications on these records that the senior family member was registered in Antolepti (now known as Zarsai).

There is a family from Latvia - Mulvidson - who my Kassemoff family are supposed to be related to. I got records from the Latvian archives and, from what could be seen, nothing matched up to be family.

So I wondered if maybe anyone knew how this "adoption" system was carried out.

From Yitzhak Gal, iygal@netvision.net.il
28 May 2011
Israel

Are there any references for this information ?

From: Howard Margol, homargol@aol.com
29 May 2011
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

I have spent time during my many trips to Lithuania with Vitalija Gircyte, Chief Archivist of the Kaunas Archive. My previous message was based on information provided to me by Vitalija. I am not aware of any particular record that is the source for this information. If I am able to learn of any specific records that pertain to adoptions, I will post a message on the digest.

I can say this, however. Adoptions would be considered as part of court records. The Kaunas archive has documents pertaining to hundreds of thousands of court records. The court records are filed by date. In order for the archive to find a specific court record, you must provide the exact date of the event, the place, and what the event was. Without that information, it could take several years of examining thousands of court records before the exact record is found.

From: Eric Benjaminson, oregon81@yahoo.com
29 May 2011
U.S. Embassy, Libreville, GABON, Central Africa

On my family's side, we seem to have gone in both directions. My Nuricks came from the Siaulai area of Lithuania through Daugavpils to Tukums and Goldingen in Latvia. My Benjaminsons were early residents of Aizpute/Piltene, and then Goldingen, and then emigrated to England, South Africa and the U.S.

The interesting aspect to me is that when we did DNA testing of my paternal Benjaminson line, our Y-chromosome DNA is the haplogroup R1A1, which is linked to peoples with their geographical orientation in the steppes of Central Asia. About 14% of Ashkenazi Jews have this haplotype, which has no genetic connection to the Middle East in Biblical times. One of the theories is that this represents a derivation from the Khazars, who lived in what is now Ukraine and the Crimea, made a mass conversion to Judaism in the 2nd Century AD, and then gradually moved to the west under pressure from the Mongols. There also seems to be a correlation with

Cohanim and Levites (we are Levites) who have higher-than-average admixtures of R1A1 DNA.

So, it's intriguing to think that part of my family originated in the steppes, came through Belarus, Lithuania and up to Latvia from that direction. There is, interestingly enough, no oral history of my family ever living in Western Europe, but there is such regarding Poland and Lithuania... We have always wondered why one of the defining physical features of male Benjaminsons is an oriental cast to our eyelids. Could the Central Asian origin be an answer?

From Elaine Bush, erbush@phch.org
Mon, 30 May 2011
Pleasant Hill, California, USA

Re: Delight Nasatir's comments

My great grandfather, David Rest, was born in Plunge, Lithuania. By 1880 he and his family were living in Libau, Latvia. They are listed as "living in the house of Notma". In 1897, David went to South Africa along with a cousin/brother. The brother stayed, David returned to Latvia. When my great grandfather's family came to America in 1900, their "last place of residence" is listed as Kretinga

(Lithuania) on the ship manifest. Given that his married sister was living in Kretinga at the time, I'm guessing they visited/stayed with her before leaving the country.

Interestingly, this Rest family also has an oral history of Sephardic origins. Through DNA testing (Iberian/Ashkenazi project...thank you Judy Simon), we were able to confirm this piece of family lore.

An Interview with Itzik Margolis

Recorded 17 July 2001

Conducted by Aina Antane and Svetlana Kovalchuk
Centre for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia
Translated by Agniya Dremach

About my grandmother? I don't know, I don't remember anything. My grandfather was Kopelovich Mot'l, I don't remember his year of

birth. I know that near the end of his life he was completely blind. He died as soon as the Germans came in 1941. He died during this time. But the Germans had already killed my grandmother. My grandmother was Yenta (Enta). You can figure out the year of her birth like this, her eldest son Haikel was 60 and she was at that time about 80, approximately. My grandfather worked as a joiner. He had a joiner's bench, he was a cabinet maker. Sometimes he did some kind of work at home. This grandfather – he was completely blind. They lived in Dvinsk. I don't remember the address, but it was on Imanta Street – also called Zeleonaya (Green) Street. That's what it was called, but I don't remember the number. In what year – it was probably 1937. I don't remember too well. There was a fire and their house burned down, completely. It burned to the ground. Afterwards they moved to a different apartment. I think that it was the landlord's house, that they didn't own a house. The landlord's house – I don't really remember. I remember them [the grandparents] very well. I was with them all the time. My dad worked, my mother worked. I was mostly at my grandmother's. They were very religious. Very. My grandfather was very religious and my grandmother also. At their place everything was kosher. They always observed the Sabbath. I remember how my grandfather was already blind and I took him to synagogue for some holiday. Language? Yiddish was the only language. Yiddish was our language at home, we all spoke it – mother, dad, grandmother, grandfather – all of us! Everyone spoke Yiddish. My mother's brother Kop'l, he was a loader. He worked, as I remember, delivering flour to stores.

There were ten children that I've counted. It's possible I missed someone. Their names? Aunt Fanya got married and moved away to Vileyka [now in Belarus]. Maybe in documents she was named something else but we called her Fanya. Then there was my mother Riva, then Sonya (Sara) who was the youngest of the children. Then there was Moisey, Moisha Kopelovich. Then there was Kop'l Kopelovich. There were also Grisha, Lev, and Isaac who was the father of Abram Kopelovich. Haikel Kopelovich was the eldest.

My father, from what I can remember, was born in 1890. He was born in Dvinsk. My mother was also born in Dvinsk, the year of birth was 1897. My father was called Abram Margolis. It's difficult to say what year they married. My sister was born in 1924 and I in 1927. I hope that my parents had a chuppah. I don't know for sure but I do think that they had a chuppah. My father was also not very religious. Just so-so, half-way. But nevertheless, they did somewhat observe (traditions – ed.). My father's occupation? You could say he was a house-painter and decorator. But mostly he put up wall-paper. In Yiddish it was called a klepper [ed. note: I don't know Yiddish and can't source this word but I assume it's a wall-paper man]. (according to Mike Getz, "klep" is to paste)

At this time there was no private firm but, I think, he didn't work for anyone else. He had a partner and they did repairs for whoever needed them. In winter business was poor. My mother worked at a workshop – what you'd now call an atelier. A sewing atelier. There was a firm called 'Markon' and that's who they sewed for. It was very high quality. One coat [long coat] took a week to sew. They worked with some kind of processes there. But then they didn't share something with the tailor's cutter at 'Makron'. This tailor's cutter worked there, Rutenberg. I think he was a Jew. And they were separated. They moved to working at the flat. There was a separate room, and there they worked. Right up until the war she [mother] worked there.

Their education was minimal. In 1941 my father worked as a house manager. That's the year he worked there, 1940 – 1941. He was a book-keeper, they were writing some things there. It's possible he finished a school in Dvinsk. Mama? Maybe she had four to five years of schooling, or maybe she didn't even have that. I don't know about this. During the First World War they lived in Daugavpils. They didn't leave. I think – actually, I'm quite sure there were about four brothers that didn't leave anywhere. Later the Soviet authority came and took the guys into the army – the four brothers I mean. And they ended up in Belarus. Where did they go? To the provincial capital – to Vitebsk. They all had 'higher education' - four to five years.

I don't remember anything about the revolution, I only remember that my dad was in the army. He was in the army. In what year? I don't remember. During the revolution or up until the revolution. I remember that he was wounded. As I remember, he touched his shoulder just here – that's where he was wounded.

I can read and write in Yiddish. In Dvinsk there were two Yiddish schools. At first we studied near the Dvina, it was a pre-school. There we moulded some kind of things out of clay. A preparatory school. Maybe for a year, I don't remember any more. I don't remember the teachers there. We weren't there for long, and we were moved to Dvoryanskaya street, the school was near the crossing. I don't remember too well, it was either Blyaha or Dobrin school. I don't remember this too well. In the first year at school there was a teacher named Maimin. She came into the class, I remember this as it was happening right now, she came in, and we stood up. 'Sit down! My name is Maimin Haya. You will call me lern Haya, teacher Haya'. That's how I studied until the 4th grade. This was already on Dvoryanskaya street. We had this one teacher, I don't remember too well, he taught Yiddish, named Levin.

We were evacuating and met him on our way. He was extremely upset. Maybe he stayed, didn't want to walk any more. We went by foot from Daugavpils. When we were evacuating, we went on foot. The majority were Jewish children, there was a few Russian children too. I remember this, there was this guy Medler, but his name – I've forgotten. His father owned a workshop, a tailor's workshop, three – four people worked for him, one was a Russian. But he spoke Russian perfectly. And the children also, they were taught. Their children went to a Jewish school. Or maybe their children didn't even go to a Jewish school, but they spoke Yiddish fluently. I finished five years, the rest was at a vocational school. Not right away. We were evacuated.

In Russia – first we were in Novosibirsk, we were undressed, we had nothing, no clothes. The way we were dressed when we fled, that's all we had. Either way, we couldn't stay there. And so we went to Novosibirsk, Toguchinskaya Oblast, to a kolhoz named after the 18th party conference.

[ed. note: Here the speaker/transcriber uses Toluchin throughout, but it is in fact Toguchin. There is no place called Toluchin, but there is a Toguchin in Novosibirsk. I will use Toguchin]. There, I remember, the bread was with wormwood, bitter bread. But it was bread. We ate. Then we went to Toguchin. Mama got a job there working in Toguchin. And to her profession – she was a pretty good specialist – they took her and she began working the way she had worked in Daugavpils. They told her that working the way she did, she would starve to death. She did her exact work, but they were sewed however they could. And dad, since we were all but naked, Siberia, it's cold there, we couldn't stay there – and he left. He left to go look for somewhere warmer. And he found a place. And we moved – to Taldykorgan oblast. Taldykorgan region [raion], not oblast. Now Talykorgan is a city, but then it was a region. Kolhoz Belokamenka. I think that the new name for the kolhoz was Volkova. Belokamenka was the traditional name. Ukrainians lived there. Very beautiful place. Tall mountains, as far as I remember it wasn't far from the Chinese border. Maybe 80 kilometres from the border. It was Kazakhstan. Alma-Ata oblast, Taldykorgan region, kolkhoz Volkova, I'm pretty sure. Very beautiful, especially in spring. And then mama fell ill with dysentery and died in the hospital. But my father they took before this, into the labour army. I don't know, but as my sister says, he said something he shouldn't have – that we lived better under an independent Latvia - and then, I don't know exactly how, they shot him [executed]. Mama died.

Then we got ready and packed out things, together with those from the nearby kolkhoz, with those who were also evacuated, and we went to Tashkent in 1942. But my father they took before this. I was still there when they took my father into the labour army. Then it was in 1942 – beginning of 1943. At that time. I don't remember exactly when I went but it was, I think, warm. I took my jacket so that it wouldn't be cold. And I went to Tashkent. But my sister stayed. My sister starved in Taldykorgan, there was nothing to eat, I don't even know, I don't really want to ask her now, don't want to bring that up again. She was bloated from hunger. And she somehow ended up in Taldykorgan where a Jewish family took her

in. She fell ill, was in the hospital, they took care of her. Then she came here from Russia, from Kazakhstan she arrived and lived with Sonya Kopolovich the whole time. They lived at first in Rezekne, then for a short time in Auce, and then they transferred him, Sonya's husband, further afield. I returned in 1944, she came back later.

We arrived in April, the war was still on. We had a Latvian group in Tashkent. From Novosibirsk, from Chelyabinsk they had come – it was gathering of youths 14, 15, 16 years old. In Tashkent I studied at a vocational school, there was no PTU yet *[ed. Vocational Technical School, a type of educational institution in the USSR]*. Manufacturing-Factory Education – FZO *[Fabrichno-Zavodzkoye Obucheniya, a type of vocational institution that existed in the USSR until the 1960s]*. My specialization was as a toolmaker. Then they took our whole group here to Riga. With the foremen, all of us, we all moved here to Riga. They brought us here, where we settled on Suvorova Street, as it was called then, number 4. Marijas 4. In this day there's some kind of school there. Some kind of educational institution. My daughter worked there. The cafeteria was at 8 Cesu iela. Far. We went there three times a day to eat. We lived for some time either here or on Cesu iela. I don't remember. Well, I finished school. Part of the students ended up working at VEF *[State Electrotechnical Factory, biggest factory in Latvia during Soviet times]*, maybe somewhere else too, I don't remember. They found them places. Some of us, we were transferred to Vocational School 15. We studied four years at this vocational school, and two years at Vocational School 15. It was on Gaizina iela. They fed us, naturally, after all we were studying! The education wasn't very strong but it was still education. Earned a bit, worked.

On my father's side, my grandfather with the surname Margolis. My grandfather in 1920 – he was walking home from synagogue and they killed him. He was named Itzik. I am named after my grandfather. But what my grandmother was called I don't remember. She lived before the war. In Daugavpils there's a neighbourhood called Gaek *[in Latvian, Gajoks]*. They lived in Gaek. They had their own house. She died in front of me. This was maybe in 1936, maybe 1937. My fa-

ther's sister Sonya was there. Her husband was also a joiner, like grandfather. He was named Gedalia. They had kids. It think the youngest was also named Itzik, Itzya. Then, I don't remember, there was Hara, another daughter, I don't remember her well. Then there was Manya. I think she even studied at a Latvian school.

Aunt Sonya, my mother's sister, and her husband lived in Pogulyanke, I don't remember for how long, near a lake (*then a suburb of Daugavpils, a resort area -ed.*). I don't remember what the lake was called. When I was little they would send me there for a week. They spoiled me, then I would come back. We didn't go away to a dacha, our finances were fairly tight. Too tight for us to go away.

My sister was calm but I was prone to fighting. When we played out in the courtyard and someone didn't get along with me... One time I got into a fight during a lesson because I was being called a name. It's uncomfortable to say, bitch. He didn't understand that I would hit him, right there in class. They beat me for that. The teacher came home and told my parents. I was always getting in trouble. They beat me, they punished me – because I kept getting myself into things. They beat me – because I always beat others. I was very restless. I tried to come home late so that they couldn't punish me. I would come home late and then it would be time for bed, and to school the next day. I would try to quickly undress and climb into bed. My mother wouldn't let my father punish me. He's sleeping, don't. We lived very close to my mother's grandmother and grandfather. 200-250 metres. Grandmother didn't spoil me. No. She did only one thing – complain about me. Their flat was circular – you could enter either through one door or through the other. She would chase me out one set of doors and I would go back in through the other. But my sister is very touchy and quick to take offence - oh Roza hasn't come by recently, someone must have offended her. With my sister he always had a very normal relationship. She was so weak, if someone treated me to something I would give it away to her. I was healthier. If someone bought her a pastry then I would somehow go without. Always if someone would give me something I would give it away to her.

On Fridays we had challah. My father rarely went to synagogue. But we did have challah, and my mother would light candles. For us children they only very rarely bought candies or treats. I earned 2 santims – I would be sent somewhere and I would go there and bring something. But very rarely. Or my uncle would give me 2 santims. That way I could buy myself a toffee with those 2 santims. Or when I would get sick – and I was sick very rarely – someone might come over and bring me a small chocolate. We lived very humbly. But there was one thing: if we ever went anywhere and were offered anything, we should never take anything! Nothing! Not any treat, not any food. Nothing! Thank you but no! Our parents were very strict about this. I even got in trouble in 1940. From my father and my mother. From both of them. When the Reds came – then they organized a breakfast for the local children at the club. And I went there too. There was coffee there. I went alone. Then I got in trouble for having gone there. Because in my family we didn't consider ourselves to be poor. True, there were people so poor that they lived in cellars. I got in trouble for that. I very frequently got in trouble.

I stayed in Riga to live. In flats, in shared accommodations. I got married in 1961. I had a lot of trouble getting a flat, but somehow managed to receive a flat in the end – a room of 6.8 square meters and a 2.5 square meter kitchen, on the second floor. The courtyard was very pretty, greenery, apple trees, a garden, on Zvaigžņu street 7. We were even allotted a vegetable patch, I was given some patch, but nothing except grass would grow there. My wife is Leibe-Lea Hirschovna [**This is her patronymic – ed.**], Lyuba, her maiden name is Nagle. She's from Ludza. Born in 1936. Her profession? She worked in several different places.

I finished my education and went to work at the industrial combine [**Promkombinat - ed**] in the Moscow neighbourhood. I worked as a shoemaker. Then I worked in different places. I worked at a workshop, at an atelier, at a factory on Moscow street - that's where 'Rigas Apavi' [Riga Shoes] was. At 'Record', Brivibas 38. Almost all my life I worked at the same place. My work-book [service record] was at one place,

only one time I was fired when they were downsizing, an uninterrupted work record. I went on my pension at 60 but I still worked for 5 years. I didn't work at home. Now if there are repairs to be done, I work. If there's not, then I rest.

I have one daughter. Raya, born in 1963. She worked at the Popov factory as a secretary-typist. Then she left and worked at a cafe where I had once studied, on Marijas 4, first floor, that's where she worked. Now it's closed, also closed. Now she's unemployed. My granddaughter is named Lena. She'll be 18 in June. She'll go into the army, probably. No, it's too early, she still has a year of school left. She's in Israel - she moved there with a program. She went to the Jewish school in Jugla. Finished ten grades there. She moved to Israel and she had to finish 10th grade there. For the second time. Now she's finishing 11th grade. In June she's coming here for her holidays. Her full name is Lena, surname Druk. Her grandfather and grandmother live in Krustpils. They're Jews, purely Jews. In our family - my wife and I, and my daughter's husband and his parents - everyone is purely Jewish from time immemorial. We didn't have any 'friendship of the nations'! When we sent Lena we didn't have any problems. She still has to finish 12th grade. She already spent a week in the army, she shot with good aim. She's a girl - it seems my granddaughter took after me. A fighter. My daughter too. My wife is quiet. They even sent us a letter from there - she speaks Russian during her Hebrew classes. One time they were told off for it so the girls just took off without asking for permission. Got in trouble for that.

Lena lives on a kibbutz, in the Kinneret region. It's a calm place. Very beautiful, one of the most beautiful places in Israel. She says she doesn't want to come back here. Come to be here. I'm not scared, but I have the feeling that it's not calm in Israel. There's no end in sight. My son-in-law's parents want to go but their health won't let them. Come and visit as guests, she says. I'll take you in. She'll take us in! Well, she has a good character - she never tells lies, always tells the truth, that's just the way she is. If something happens - either with her friends, or she went somewhere with some boys, she always writes about it in her letters, absolutely everything. My daughter is

calm about the whole thing, her husband too. She writes letters, if she's upset with me then she doesn't. Last year I wrote frequently. I wrote in Russian, she doesn't know Yiddish. With my wife we talk in Russian, but my wife understands Yiddish perfectly. We communicate in Russian. My cousin that immigrated to America, named Itzak, his wife was called Pesya. His father was Sholom, he lived in Daugavpils. But after the war they moved to America. When they still lived here in Riga, in their house we never spoke a single word in Russian. Only in Yiddish. When they immigrated to America, we wrote to each other only in Yiddish. He was an invalid from the war. We only wrote in Yiddish.

We didn't have a chuppah. It just worked out to be too soon, only one father left, my wife's mother had already died. I always went to synagogue! Well, not always, but I always went on holidays! On special holidays - Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hannukah, Pesach. My cousin that went to America was a communist, but he still went to synagogue. That kind of patriot. We would go to synagogue together. On Fridays we try to keep up traditions. When could we have followed all the traditions here, when we worked on Saturdays? In the past I worked Saturdays and Sundays. But despite this we try to keep up traditions. Now I go to synagogue regularly. How regularly - every Saturday. Only once in a rare while I don't go. I pray, I have tallit. But I have a friend from synagogue named Matvey [Matthew - ed.], I don't know what he's called on his passport, he's a History teacher, we talk to each other only in Yiddish. He doesn't want to speak with me in Russian. He's a Belorussian Jew, but I'm local. We joke that the local Jews are good but the Belorussian ones - bad. Like that. If I say something in Russian he tells me off. It all depends on the family. In my case the language traditions are strong, my parents spoke Yiddish. In school I studied Yiddish for 5 years.

True, in every word there might be ten mistakes. But that's a different matter. As my cousin told me, when I was in America - he invited me and I spent three months there. He told me that his father worked as a joiner, but he didn't really want to work. His mother had some kind of work at the market - selling used belongings. They would buy

overcoats and then fix them somehow, sew them up. They sold footwear there too. Fix them, inspect, and then sell them on. They had a hard life. Then they moved to Riga. In Riga she opened it up again (*again opened the same business as before - ed.*). She had an uncle, I've forgotten his surname, he was this really resourceful guy, and things got easier for them. They started to live better. The Soviets came [**Soviet here refers to the political body/organisation, as opposed to a person or persons from the Soviet Union**]. It wasn't too bad under the Soviets either; they were working people, not any kind of rich. The goods were driven around by Latvians, but Jews drove the goods too. At that time the poor were resettled from basements to the flats of rich people who were removed to communal flats. That's what they were called.

Sara Kopelovich lived in Daugavpils, she was a communist. In 1935 she was sentenced to death, so Max Schatz-Anin organised protests in support of her. Moisey was an electrician. He wasn't married. He only married after the war. Was that his child? When asked he was always secretive. He was poor, but his wife was rich. They married right away. They went to their relatives. I had no one - no father, no mother. At first I went to Rezekne to Sonya, to Daugavpils I went on vacation. My relatives supported me - while I was on vacation. In Riga I was mostly at this cousin's place.

Sonya has three children, she raised them, she was a housewife. And then when they got a bit older she went to work. Lives in Riga now. They changed flats - in Madona they had an excellent flat but they sold it and bought one here. She has a good flat. My sister's surname is Margole, she never married. She stayed that way. She lived through a lot during the war. She's very weak, scares easily. And my Lyuba, she's also Margole. Actually, it's Margolis, but it changes in Latvian and we don't argue. Sonya's children are all here, they didn't emigrate, it's the grandchildren that the problems came up with. The age difference between me and Sonya's daughter is twenty two years. Her son was born before the war, then Grisha, then Bella. Bella's daughter Fanya is a good architect and lives in Israel. And the second daughter, with the surname Fisher, she works

with Russian programs in Israel. Very many relatives. They even live in Krasnodarsky krai. After the war, after participating in partisan actions they moved there.

We didn't have any toys. We weren't rich. I remember my grandmother sewed a ball for me, a red one, it was a red ball. We played football. Then we would collect candy wrappers. It was others that ate the candy, but we collected the candy wrappers. We played with them: you would take a wrapper, fold it, and throw it. Then you measure, if it went further than another one, then you take the winnings. Then we played with money: first we would lay out a metal line, you had a make a line, then we'd each lay down a santim, and then throw. If it went past the line, that meant you were last. Whoever was closest to the money, he was first. And if he hit the money, then he was definitely first. Then when you were first, you would take a piece of metal and hit the coins. If the coins turned over, then you took that money. If the coins didn't turn over then it was the next person's turn. Then we would play with this money. We would play lotto, we had no toys.

We lived on Alleynaya street. My grandmother also lived not far off, some 300 metres. There was a cellar in my grandmother's house. One time my mother made cranberry mors [**a Russian berry drink**], poured it into bottles with long thin throats that were closed with rubber stoppers with a press. I was carrying them, walking, and would hit the bottles - on the backs, on the fronts. People walking by would say, don't do that! And the next moment I was left holding just the necks of the bottles with the stoppers. The trouble I got into! My teacher, she was the our class teacher in 1940, last year she holidayed here. Still alive, she's 90 years old. We called her by her surname lern Katz, teacher Katz, her name I've forgotten, she wrote it down for me, I have the note at home. We called all of our teachers like that - lern Katz. Lern Maimin lived in Daugavpils, she's died since. She was our class teacher, and she taught a subject, but unfortunately I don't remember what subject it was. In fact, I think she herself doesn't remember either.

The school was on Dvoryanskaya street, right next to the intersection, in Gaek. It was separated, like here in Riga. Moscow neighbourhood here,

and Griva there. Griva was across the bridge, you had to cross the bridge. Gaek was across the dyke, past newly built buildings, across the railway lines. The school was there. All our subjects were in Yiddish, we had Latvian classes, two lessons of Latvian history. Religion class - we had a class like that too. We called him Rebele, the one that taught us religion. We had it pretty frequently, I don't remember too well. I remember him a little, he was this small rabbi, we called him rebbe.

Mikhail Magid was at the seaside [the seaside in Latvia] with one of our teachers last year, they had both come from Israel. Zilberman, I don't remember his name, Kegezan, Makhilovskii, Itzik Kuritzkii moved to Israel, Ulmann, Nedler, Smiskovich, Tis. In school we had independent activity time. Teacher Katz was only my teacher for one year, for four years I had another teacher, Maimin. She played the piano and would teach us, we would set up a scene and dance. That's what we had. We didn't have any excursions to Latgale. I went to several organisations - we had these Jewish organisations then, Hashomer Hatzair, Trumpeldor, Herzelia. When I was little I went to Herzelia. So I went - we would go out in the summer, I was the youngest, maybe, they didn't always take me. There were excursions we would go on, especially in the summer. Interesting, we had table tennis.

We would meet, we had the goal of immigrating to Israel. After finishing Herzalia, we wouldn't join the party, we went into preparation for leaving for Israel, it was impossible to get to Israel legally. That meant you had to make use of an illegal route. But still, to go to Israel, to our own country, you had to pass all the preparations. You were given a plot of land, and you had to work on that plot of land. A year or two you would work that land, and then illegal, I don't know quite how, you would be sent to Israel. I was a child, I was 6-7 years old, but I already went - to be used to it. Everyone took care of me, I was the youngest there. And that's how it was, until we were under Soviet rule.

At first we met in a small house on the coast, I only very dimly remember this, near the Dvina [**Daugava**]. Then on Solnechnaya [**Sun**] street, on the second floor. Or no, maybe near the Co-

losseum cinema. I don't remember all that well. But I was very interested in it - a blue coat that my mother had sewn for me, with shoulder straps, the shoulder straps were back to front, there was a button was on the outside. As soon as the Soviets came, they immediately closed all of it. The same as the synagogue. The Soviets came, but they didn't close our school. We studied in pioneer scarves and badges. I was a pioneer. From the children's Jewish organisations we moved to being pioneers - it was as if the Jewish organisations hadn't existed. I was very scared - they'll just arrest me and that will be that! In my view I really did think that! All the synagogues were closed right away. In the synagogue, I remember, there was some kind of pioneer palace or club.

Very many children from my class died in German concentration camps. They stayed in Daugavpils. Many died.

In 1983 was my daughter's wedding. Raya's wedding was on Moscow street [**Maskavas iela**], where I worked. There was enough for everyone to drink and to eat! The watchmen got the leftovers. My daughter had a chuppah. Her husband's name is Boris Druk. The chuppah was separate from the wedding, at the synagogue, as it is done. Followed all the customs, there was a fiddler. He's local, from Krustpils. At the chuppah we drank more than at the wedding. I'm not a communist, what do I care. Communists were forbidden to go to synagogue. I was in Komso-mol and a young pioneer. My daughter resembles me physically and in her character. My granddaughter is also like me. Tough, a fighter.

Zelik and Bella's wedding - they had their chuppah in Riga, the year was 1958. In Russian it's called a canopy, four poles covered with material, the bride and groom are led to the service and stand under it, everyone walks around them with candles. There's music playing, sombre music, everyone is crying. Then wine is poured into a glass, a sip for the groom, the bride, the groom. Then that glass is put on the floor and he breaks it with his foot! And right away there's joyful music! And then there's the breaking of the glass. It's wrapped in a bit of fabric before breaking, so the glass doesn't fly everywhere. The chuppah

wasn't at the synagogue but at the wedding. It was like that at that time. They have a daughter.

Lyuba's father (*father of the wife of Itzik Margolis - ed*) - Hirsch Naglya or Nagle. After the evacuation he returned to Ludza, and later he moved to Riga. When he died, no one knew how to write the surname - not Lyuba's brother, who is in Israel, not my Lyuba. The brother, Yakov Naglya visited from Israel in 1995. His common law wife is from Israel - her name is Ita. I haven't been to Israel. I did go to America. My wife has been to Israel. Lyuba's brother in Israel calls if not every day, then every other day, worrying about my granddaughter Lenchka [**Lena**]. We had to tell her, unfortunately, not to go and visit them. He lives in the Gilo neighbourhood, where there's always shooting. We're scared. But he always pleads - I will come and pick you up. His family is in Israel - a daughter and her family.

In Ludza - a lot of Jews were shot and killed there, in August. There's a path leading to a memorial to the fallen, to the people who were shot down. Every year we go there on the third Sunday of August. I had a friend Arkadii (Jewish name - Abram) Kohnator, that would always write something for these memorial days. But recently he died. Who will organise it now?! The graves in Ludza, to give credit where credit is due, are preserved. There are no unkempt graves. There are many graves, those that died during the war, 70-80% Jews, there's a monument standing, everything is clean as it should be. There's a monument in the city near the lake. And in Pogulyanke (*in Daugavpils - ed*) there's a monument too. The graves are taken care of like nowhere else! The funds for it? They're distributed before the August memorial meeting, but even without that they're cared for. Pupils from local schools clean them. There are nine or ten Jews in Ludza.

Membership Fees

This is the third issue of the newsletter for the 2010/2011 membership year, so if you have not done so already, please renew your membership in the Latvia SIG. You can also take this opportunity to renew your membership for the 2011/2012 membership year, which begins on 1 July 2011. Dues may be paid for multiple years. Yearly fees are US \$25 for the US and Canada. If you live outside of North America (NA), the fee is \$35 (bankable in the US) if you prefer hard copy (HC) versions of the newsletter and \$25 if you prefer PDF versions via e-mail. If you wish to renew your membership for multiple years, the first year will be \$25 (\$35 for HC outside NA/\$25 for PDF) and \$20 (\$30 for HC outside NA/\$20 for PDF) for each additional year. Please make checks payable to Latvia SIG and mail 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 Latvia SIG website or from the directions below:

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 onto 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 e-mail 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) and include Family Finder information.

As always, the Latvia SIG is happy to accept additional payments to the SIG to help pay for expenses associated with projects and day-to-day activities, like testimony translations, reproduction and mailing costs, and database acquisitions. The SIG has now established two accounts on JewishGen to supplement the Latvia SIG general fund, also under JewishGen. Go to:

http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen-erosity/v_projectslist.asp?project_cat=16.

Donations to these accounts will be used to help fund the Dvinsk Census Project and the Speakers Bureau. Please note that you can also support these two worthy causes by contributing directly to the Latvia SIG as described above. Simply state which of the projects you wish to support along

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 outside of North America for hard copy and \$25 if you prefer PDF versions. Make checks payable to Latvia SIG and send to:

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Enter contact information in FF: Yes ___ No___

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