UNAUTHENTICATED

INTERVIEW WITH FANNY LEBOVITS
TELEPHONE-TONY YOUNG

Okay, we're ready. Let me ask you a few questions. Why don't we start with your parents? That will be the easiest thing, I think.

Tony, I better go into another room now.

Okay, that's fine.

No, it's okay now, he closed the door.

It's alright? Okay. Let me ask you about your parents first. Why don't you just state for the tape, their names, their full names and where, if you can remember, where and when they born?

My father's name was Herman Judelowitz and I don't need to tell you the spelling.

Right, I have the spelling.

He was born in Latvia, I think, in Aizpute or Hazenpot.

Can you spell that for me?

Do you want the spelling as they write it now or the way I—we were very Germanized.

Why don't you give them both to me? Both spellings.

Well Aizpute is A-i-z-p-u-t-e and then you could write down, maybe in parentheses, Hazenpot, H-a-z-e-n-p-o-t. That was a small town near Liepaja, L-i-e-p-a-j-a, Latvia which is _____ (21) in German. He was born there, I think in 1896.

Do you remember the birthdate?

No.

Okay. How about your mother?

My mother was born in Liepaja in Latvia and I think my mother must have been born in 1899 or 1900 but I think more like 1899. Her name was Sarah Gamper, G-a-m-p-e-r.

Let me start with your father. Did he tell you anything about him growing up, about things he used to do before the war and before he got married? Things like that about his childhood, do you remember anything that he might have told you?

Yeah. He was one of nine children. In fact his mother had ten children but the first-born died and then my father was born. So he was the oldest of nine.

His parents, what did they do for a living?

His parents had, I think they had a bakery in this small town, in Hazenpot. They had a bakery.

They both ran it, as far as you remember?

My grandmother baked and I think they had a bakery and a grocery store.

Do you know if they ran it out of the house or if they had a store?

I think it was more like—not out of the house—but the store was there and then maybe in the back was a house. But I'm not too sure about that. It was, they had a bakery and it was a small town, more like a village. At that time when my father was born and I think it was a grocery shop and their living quarters were in the back.

Was your father—let's see. He would have been probably an age to be involved in World War I?

Yeah.

Was he a veteran?

Yes, he went to war once, enlisted I suppose, and was captured by the Germans. In fact, I brought you a picture of him.

In the uniform?

In the uniform, remember it? At the back was his writing.

That's right. I remember that.

So he was captured in WWI.

He was in the Czarist's army, right? In the Russian army?

Wait a minute, yes he must have been in the Russian army, of course. He was captured by the Germans and he was a captive until the war ended, 1918. In fact, because he spoke German so well, he was in charge of farms, for the baron in Germany. That's what he says here on the

card, on his picture he writes. When he came back in 1918, he fought for the liberation of Latvia.

He did?

Yes, he was a liberation fighter, what we call in German, I don't know how you would call it in English, Freiheikamster (62). Frei____ means liberty and Kam_____ means fighter. He used to, every year, they used to have a parade in our city. They used to celebrate liberation of Latvia.

Do you remember what the date of that was, the liberation?

I know it was in 1918 but the date I don't remember. I should know because I'm in school and it shows you it's 50 or whatever, more than 50, 60 years ago.

That's definitely something we can look up, that's no problem. Since he was in a German camp in WWI—?

Well, I wouldn't call it a camp.

But he was captured?

Oh, yeah. He was captured, he couldn't leave.

But he wasn't in a camp or anything?

Oh, no. He was working, he was in charge of a baron's farm. One of those big farms that the barons had. He was in charge of those laborers and I supposed those laborers must have been prisoners-of-war. He was a prisoner-of-war.

Did he ever say anything to you or do you remember anything about him talking about the Germans, what kind of people they may have been?

I know that that particular baron was very good to him. When he came out, of course he was rather thin. But then he was a young man and very tall. My father was six-foot, just over six-foot. But he said at the time that this baron was very kind to him. He was very lucky to have—to do that. He was in charge of a little—I'm sure he didn't have it that bad. In those days they adhered to International Red Cross rules.

Right, the conventions, sure.

But I didn't hear him say anything, I don't remember anyway hearing that he said anything bad at the time about the Germans. I know that he said that he was lucky at the time he was captured, because of his language and because he spoke such perfect German that he was in charge of the _____ (90).

Did your family speak German at home?

Yeah.

That was the main form of communication that you had at home, German?

We spoke German and Yiddish and we spoke Latvian. My parents spoke Russian.

Multi-lingual family. When did your parents get married, do you remember?

I think I was born maybe two years after they were married but I'm not too sure about that. Maybe they were married in 1920 or in '21, maybe '21.

What was your father doing after he came back and fought for the liberation in Latvia? What did he settle down to work as, what was he doing for a living?

He was designing, making patterns for the tops of shoes. Like you make a pattern for a dress, make a pattern for the part of the leather of the shoe, not the soles but a pattern for a shoe, which is then cut out of leather. So he learned to be a pattern-maker.

He hadn't studied to do that, he just apprenticed or something like that?

I really don't know, maybe before the war he learned it already, he was apprenticing to do that. But I know that that was his, that's what he was doing when I was growing up.

Do you remember, did your parents ever tell you when you said in your testimony that your father owned, well your parents owned a factory and also a workshop? A shoe factory and workshop?

In the workshop, what I meant by the workshop was mostly that there the patterns were made and the leather got to the workshop first. It was cut out and like shoes are made now of lots of fancy leather and all different colors and things, that's what they did in the workshop first and then it went when it was all cut out and all kind of put in packages together or whatever, then it went to the factory to be sold to together on lasts. What you call it, a last, right? And the l_____ (123) we call it in German. Then you do make the sole, the sole when you make boots. First, you have the pattern, then you cut the leather and then you sew it. Then it will be then, the bottom is done. Part of the bottom is done. You know it wasn't the kind of a factory like on American standards, not such a one. We had quite a number of people working there but it wasn't a huge, big factory. But in our instance, it was a factory. It wasn't one of those modern, huge, big ones with thousands of people. We had also a shoe shop.

A shoe shop, outside?

Yeah, we call it a store. My mother was in it and when we were kids sometimes after school we used to go there.

Was that attached to the workshop, also?

Yeah, all like in one place. But my father also produced things for other people, for other shoe shops. That's why we called it a _____ (141) you put your things for other people. So he produced for other shoes shops, certain models, certain things that they wanted.

Your parents had the factory and also the shoe shop as long as you can remember?

Oh, year, until the Russians came in.

During the thirties, when you were a young girl, what were your parents doing? Was there anything of note that you remember going on at that time. Do you remember being frightened of what was going on in Germany at the time, your parents maybe?

Well, we got to be—. I remember when we got our first radio which was a telephone crystal radio. I think it was German or Polish, I think it was German. We were then very much more in touch and antisemitism wasn't anything really that great news, new for us in Latvia because the Latvians too were great anti-Semites. They always had something bad to say about the Jews. The Jews gave their lives to fight for their country, for our country, because we considered it our country. Like the Americans consider their country no matter where they come from and no matter what their religious beliefs are. But many of the Latvians didn't think that way because that's why—they were terrible collaborators with the Germans. But even before in my childhood, I want to tell you that I, myself, in my childhood when I was small, I can't really remember that anybody was hurting me or—. They did say, you Jew, you Jew, or Zhid or detrimental things about the Jews. But physically I was never hurt. I heard it but that was nothing that made such a great impression on me. Only when I started going to a Zionist organization, it made me more realize it. Then I really understood the difference, it's not that I didn't understand the difference before but I didn't understand how detrimental it was and how degrading they meant it. The name Jew is not a—is just a description of some people but the way they meant it, Zhid or whatever, they used to say it. I'm sure you heard this from others.

Very derogatory way.

Yes, derogatory is right. The thing is that I did, as a very young girl, I did have some little Latvian friends that were neighbors. Because they lived in the same apartment house that I did which belonged to my grandfather, my maternal grandfather, and we were little friends. But I never went to a Latvian school, I went to Jewish school. I went to a Jewish high school and the only

time I really mixed with Jewish and non-Jewish teenagers or older a little bit teenagers is when I went to university and nursing school.

Do you remember, we were talking about anti-Semitism, do you remember any anti-Semitism directed against your parents?

No, I can't remember.

Nothing overt that you remember?

Not really that I remember. We were, my parents were Zionists too. I was brought up in that atmosphere when I started to understand after I was five, six years, seven years old. Well, they did talk about it I suppose, how nasty some of the Latvians are. But I can't, myself I can't think any particular incident. That's going too far back.

Now you said your parents were also Zionist? Were they part of any groups or specific groups of Zionists?

No, not at the time. By saying Zionist, they—.

That was just a particular viewpoint they had?

It was a viewpoint they had. We collected money for karen ayem (205) and we had one of those little cans that we collected money for Israel at the time, to buy the land. Those boxes where we collected money so that the pioneers that went to Israel could buy land. They didn't have money so the Jewish people all over the world had these little tins and one of them had that viewpoint. Put constantly pennies or whatever else they had into the tins. Those were emptied out and that money was sent to Israel to buy land.

Is this how that you got involved in the Zionist movement? Through your parents or was it more from your own?

I don't know if they really pushed me but I was always in a Jewish circle and you know how boys and girls get together and you hear about different ideas. Time went on and Israel was more in our focus constantly. That's when I joined. Our parents encouraged us because for us there was no, really no other outlet. We couldn't join the, shall we say, the Scouts or something like those. We had to be on our own. In those time it was already kind of like a ghetto. They didn't force into a ghetto but they didn't accept us.

They didn't associate with you?

Yeah, so we liked to be with our own.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about what your parents had to go through when the Russians came in, in 1940?

Well, the only thing what happened was, I was at the time in Riga. I was studying but they took away my parents' factory and the shop. My father had to give them the keys. They insisted that he runs the place.

He had to continue to run it even though they had taken it away?

Yeah, continue running the place but it wasn't his place anymore. He had superiors to answer to.

Right. I know that in some places, in Poland especially, the Russians, when they came in, seized many people, especially intellectuals and what they termed enemies of the state and deported them. Did that happen in Latvia also?

It did happen in Latvia, I'll tell you. It happened in Latvia a lot just before the Germans came in, in 1941. They deported a lot of people to Siberia and they started with the very, very wealthy ones. I don't know if they went down by alphabet, I don't think so because I know some of my friends, they were sent out. We were packed to go.

That's right. I remember you said something about that.

We were all packed to go but they didn't send us out.

They never came for you?

Not yet, we were packed and I was working in the hospital. My parents didn't want to go without me. If the Russians would have come and forced them to go onto the trains and send them out and I wouldn't have been there, then they would have had to go. But to go on their own, a lot of people were fleeing because the bombs were coming, the war was on. They were going all east. But when I wanted to go, I wasn't allowed to go because I was working in the hospital. They said if they find you on the way, you are a deserter and they'll shoot you on sight. Because being in the hospital, you were mobilized, you were like a soldier so I couldn't leave. My parents didn't go east and the Russians, at the time, didn't get to them to send them out. In fact, I had an aunt that was living with us at the time. She was rather wealthy, very wealthy too and she had packed her bags with her children and her husband. They didn't get to her either, the Germans killed her but they were all waiting to be sent out. Where they were going, they didn't know but they knew that they were being sent out to some kind of work camps or whatever because they were considered the enemies of the state. But I want to tell you that they didn't send them out that early. It was just before the Germans occupied Latvia.

Just before the war started?

Yeah, just before it. They came in, in June and I think they sent them out in about May or April, I don't know when they started sending them out. I'm really not familiar because I was working at the time. I don't know when it started but around that time. It was just before the Germans occupied Liepaja.

I forgot to ask you a little bit earlier when we were talking. After your parents got married, when did they moved to Liepaja?

Lia-pá-yah. Well they married in Liepaja, they didn't really move, I suppose my father must have lived in Liepaja before they got married.

So they just decided to settle in her hometown?

Yeah but my mother during the Second World War was in Russia.

During the Second World War?

Yeah. No, the First World War, the First World War. No, the Second World War, she was unfortunately—.

She was in Russia?

Yeah and she went to—she used to play the piano . . .

And that was in Russia?

Yeah, but she came back afterwards. I don't know if she came back still during the war or she came back when the war was over, I'm not sure about that.

Can you describe to me what happened to your parents when the war with—when Germany invaded the Soviet Union and occupied Latvia? What happened then?

At Liepaja?

Right.

Well, they came in, in June and as soon as they in, they gave an order for all men at the age that can work, to come to a _____platz (306), the huge big, you know what the platz is?

Um-hm.

The place, the plaza. We used to have parades on that plaza, that place. All the men had to go there and they rounded them up and they said that they would be sending them to work. But

of course we know that they never sent them. It was one month after the Germans came in that my father went there and never came back. He was killed, they took them all to the forest and killed them. Made them dig their own graves and killed them. But we, at the time of this leaving, didn't know about that. We were hoping that they were sent to a labor camp; that's what the Germans kept on saying, they sent all the able men to work. That was the last time that I saw my father.

That was one month after the Germans came and occupied Liepaja?

Yeah, the _____ (326) at that time was 1000 left.

Was that the first about—when your father was taken, was that the first time that people had been rounded up, that men had been rounded up or was that one of the—?

I think that was the beginning. I don't know if it was a month or three weeks, or exactly but that was the beginning. They gave an order, either in the newspaper or wherever, I don't remember even how the order came. But they knew that they had to, all the Latvian aisarte, the Latvians, they organized, the anti-Semites, they had a military group which was called aisarge. You want to know how to spell it? I think it's a-i-s-a-r-g-e. This was a group that collaborated with the Germans, particularly well. They did the job better than the Germans sometimes. I think they were the ones that came around to tell—to round up the people, to find them whatever, with the order of the Germans of course. But the ones that pushed and shoved at the time, to start off was the aisarge with one German overseeing. When they came to the platz, I understand, I wasn't there, there also were just several Germans, say like maybe ten Germans and maybe 100 aisarge. I'm just giving you an instance, a proportion. These aisarge were Latvians, right?

Right, I understood that. Was the aisarge like a military brigade or something?

Was like a military group. I don't even know what I can compare it to here now, neo-nazis, but much more _____ (364).

They were actually armed?

Yeah, much more visible. It was a big brigade. Have you heard of them before in any of your interview?

If I've heard of them?

Yeah.

I haven't heard of the actual, the name that you're telling me, the aisarge but I've definitely heard of Latvians who collaborated with the Germans when they came into Latvia and also in other places but Latvia was definitely the place where there were many collaborationists. Let

me go back and get a little bit of background information about your mother. We've talked a little bit about your mother, along with your father obviously, but let me ask you a few questions about her childhood, if you remember. Did she tell you anything about her childhood, about how many brothers and sisters she had?

Yeah, I knew my uncles and aunts. She was one of four. She had another sister, I even remember her name. Do you want the name?

Sure.

Her name was Yetta, Y-e-t-t-a. Elterman, E-l-t-e-r-m-a-n. That was her married name but she was Yetta Gamper but her married name was Yetta Elterman. One uncle's name was Julius Gamper and my other uncle's name was Willie Gamper, William, Willie in the German. My mother, I think, was the second one or the third one, I'm not sure, in the family—either the second or the third one. I know my aunt was the youngest. She had two boys.

Yetta did?

Yeah, well you know young children at the time the German occupation came. My other uncles didn't live in Liepaja. My Uncle Julius lived in Hazenpot (402) and he had three sons. My other uncle, Willie, lived in Riga and he had four children.

What did your mother's parents do for a living?

Well, my mother's parents also had a store, a shop. I really don't remember very well. I don't remember my maternal grandmother very well. I only remember her funeral somehow. I was about ten years old at the time but of course I remember my grandfather very well because he lived with us. They had, at the time, then, he was already retired, he didn't work any more. But I think they had like a second-hand clothing store or something like that. Maybe they had new things and second-hand things, I'm not sure. But what they had, the apartment house that we lived in, belonged to my grandfather and my grandmother. They had some income from that. It wasn't an apartment house that he visualized it but it had some apartments. We lived in it too. It was a two-story apartment house and we had our own apartment which was also a two-story. It went from the ground floor with a _____ (430) which means stairway, could go upstairs and we had rooms upstairs. But other people that lived had either ground—no first floor, what they call it here from first floor. There were about another, about eight apartments and our own.

You said that your parents got married probably about 1920 or '21?

Yeah, I think so.

Pretty much from there, your mother helped your father with the store?

No, not when we were small. My mother didn't go to work when we were small. I don't remember her going to work because at that time I also don't remember that we had somebody in the house to help. Maybe occasionally but not full-time help. But when we were bigger and my little sister was born, we had full-time help by then. My mother used to go to business. Maybe she helped him but I don't—.

She didn't do it full-time though?

When, afterwards?

No, when you were growing up, she didn't help full-time?

No, definitely not.

Can you explain to me what happened when your father left, he did not—, when he was taken and killed? After that what did your mother do?

Well, my mother was at home and she, everybody had to go to work. She also had to come to a certain place—this was German order, you had to come to a certain place and they made you work. She worked for the sch_____ (469) and my sister, Jennie, too.

What were they doing, do you remember?

She was sewing buttons and buttonholes and things like that. You know on uniforms, German uniforms. They had these workshops there and they sewed uniforms ad fixed uniforms and cleaned uniforms and all those sort of things. They found a job for each and every Jew that they didn't kill.

At this time was there a ghetto in Liepaja?

No. The ghetto came to be only later in 1942.

How long did your mother work at doing this, at the sewing? Or was forced to work?

All the time.

Up until—until how long?

Until the ghetto.

Until the ghetto, 1942?

Uh-huh.

Do you remember when the ghetto was set up, what month?

I think it is _____ (492).

Okay, I'll look it up.

I can't think of it right now. I think sometime in July but I'm not sure.

I can look that up. What was your mother doing in the ghetto?

I'm just thinking back. I'm absolutely taken back with myself that I don't remember. I don't know if she went out to work or not. I still had a little sister and I don't think she went out, I don't think so. I think she stayed home and did something inside the ghetto, maybe, I don't know what. Maybe she did something inside. Our ghetto wasn't that huge. You're talking about Lodz or Warsaw or anything like this—we were only 800 souls.

That's what was left after they took most of the people away?

Yeah, after the 15th of December, 1941. It's amazing how these dates, how you can even remember after all this time.

Can you describe to me a little bit about the ghetto, what it was like there?

Well, the ghetto was several blocks which was cordoned off in the middle of our city, in part of our city, shouldn't say the middle of our city; it's part of our city. I think it was like four blocks and was guarded by the sch_____ (521) but not by the ones that wore the black uniforms. What do they call them—I'll come to it. The people had to move in there. They had an order to move in there so we had to leave all our belongings there. In fact some of the belongings were taken away beforehand because the Germans came in and for instance, they took our pianos. We had two pianos that they took out, they took some of our light fixtures out, the carpets. Even before we left for the ghetto. We took only the necessities because each family had just one room and some didn't even have one room. Some of it was one big room, they had to take some other people in.

Do you remember about how long you were in the ghetto?

Yeah, till 1943. In October, it was Yom Kippur when they took us out.

Where were you sent?

We were sent to—we were put into cattle cars and sent to Riga-Kaiserwald (580).

Now you were all still together?

Yeah.

Can you tell me a little bit about Kaiserwald, what it was like getting off the trains there?

Well, we got off the trains and there were the Germans and their dogs. Not only the Germans in uniforms but they had those kapos. They wore like black jackets and britches, you call them britches when you go riding?

Oh, the riding pants?

Yeah, the riding pants and the Russians put them _____ (576). Of course the Germans in the uniforms and the kapos and they separated us, to the one side, to the other side. My little sister had to—because she was only eight years old at that time. Yah, she had just turned eight, when the Germans came in, she was six—no, what was she? She was born—.

She was born in 1935 so yes she would have been—.

Six years, she was 6 years old. So she was 8 years old and they took her to, they told her to go to the one side, that she had to go to one side. Of course, my mother wouldn't let her go by herself. My mother went with her, wouldn't let her little girl go by herself. They said that they're going to send them to another place, where they don't have to work. They said sure because they were children and they were going to send them to another place. The ones that could work, to one side, the ones that—the elderly and the children and the parents with the children, that wouldn't let their children go went on that other side. They were sent, I understand that they were sent to the ghetto but I can't be sure.

To the Riga Ghetto?

To the Riga Ghetto but how can I be sure, I never heard from my mother and I never heard from my little sister. I think this is a phone for me, could you hold a moment?

Sure, no problem.

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. . . told me anything about my mother or myself.

Why don't I ask you about your grandfather, your mother's father who lived with you?

It was Jacob?

Yeah.

Gamper. I think he must have been born in Liepaja but I'm not sure, I can't tell you. I should think so because they were all very different, Latvia-related. We, of course, lived under the Germans, under the Russians and under all kinds of different regimes because Latvia was constantly occupied but his mother tongue was German. Just for the record, the only newspaper he read was a German newspaper.

Do you remember what it was called?

De Lei_____ _____ (13).

Is that all one word or Lei_____ (15)?

Do you remember when he was born? No? Do you remember about how old he was when you—?

When he was killed?

Yeah.

I think he was in his seventies.

You don't know for sure though?

No, but I should think his early seventies because my mother was alive. I think it was in 1943. She was like 44 years old, 44 or 45 years old. I think he was at least in his early seventies.

Do you remember—? I'm trying to figure out because the date of birth is one of the important things for the ID and I'm trying just to figure it anyway that we might be able to deduce how old he was.

I think he was about 70 or 71,

You said your mother was 44 or 45, do you remember how old your grandfather was when your mother was born?

Well, she was the second one. I think they were about two years apart, the children, my uncles and aunts. They weren't every year like. Even my father's parents too were like I think every two years they had a child. I think with my grandfather, I think also two or three years difference. So—can figure that out.

What was your grandfather doing before the war?

I told you.

He was living with you?

What do you mean by before the war? Before the second war?

He was living with you?

With my mother, yah. Or we were living with him because it was his apartment house, you know.

Was he too old to fight in WWI or did he fight?

I don't know. I don't think he was in WWI. Neither was my other grandfather. I think only my father was.

You said that your mother's parents owned a second-hand clothing store? When the Russians came in, was that also seized or was he already retired at that point?

He was retired long before that. I think that at first maybe it was a regular clothing store. But they got older and maybe they—I really don't know too much about that. I know more my grandfather from the time when he was with us, retired, than before that.

You said that your grandfather read exclusively from this German language paper. Did that have, in the thirties and things when you were a young girl, did that have stories about what was going on in Germany at the time?

Well, - likely.

Do you ever remember him telling you about things that were going on in Germany or talking about them? What was going on there?

Not in the early thirties. I remember like for instance, my late husband left South Africa in 1937. He left Liepaja not so much because of the German, if the Germans _____ (55) time, I don't think. Also he wasn't prepared to go and be in the Latvian army. He wanted to make a better life for himself. I don't think there was much of a future. Maybe at the time he also thought about Hitler becoming stronger. Who knew about that they would run over Latvia, we never thought that. Because at the time, some German people came to Liepaja to escape Hitler, like in 1936, 1937. There were some German Jews that came from Germany to Latvia to escape him. Who was thinking that he would overrun the whole world.

When the Russians came in, in 1940, did they also seize your grandfather's apartment building? Nationalize it or—?

We still lived there. I don't know who got the rent, I really can't say.

What happened to your grandfather after the war started? When the Germans invaded?

Well he was at home, most of the time, until the 13th of December. The 13th of December we all had to get out of our house and march to the prison. We all marched to the prison that night and they took him away. They took away my aunt and the two little boys and my grandfather. I only and my mother and my little sister, Jennie, they were standing on the side but when I came out after speaking to that guy and I said, I'm not going out till my mother and my sister come. That's how they came out, otherwise they would have gone with the same batch. I couldn't ask, not that I wasn't concerned about the others but that was my first thought, my mother and my sister, that I wanted to be together.

Sure. Then you never heard from him again or about him?

No. They were killed, they were killed. They put them on sleighs and they took them to Sc_____. That's a place near _____ (88).

That was in the forests?

Yah, outside of the city. Sc_____. I think it was Sc_____. I don't know where they took them because I wasn't there but I had a friend. She's not alive any more but she jumped from the sleigh and she could only jump because the aisarge or the German whoever it was on that particular sleigh, kind of allowed her to do that. He kind of encouraged her.

When you say "slates", is that like trucks or —?

No, you know a big sleigh like in winter?

Oh, a sled, I'm sorry, I misunderstood you.

Well it's sled and not slate, sled. She said that they were going to Sc_____. She jumped from that but where my grandfather and my aunt and the two boys went, I can't say but it must have been Sc_____ because that's where they did it.

Let me ask you about your father's parents. Can you give me their names also? I think we've got Daniel Judelowitz and Bella.

Yeah, born Hirshorn.

Now, when we spoke about a month ago, a month and a half ago, you said that her married name was Bookbinder?

No, it was Hirshorn.

Hirshorn, okay.

She had lots of family by the name of Bookbinder but she was born Hirshorn not Bookbinder.

Do you have another call, you want to get off?

Just a moment. No Bookbinder was a—actually the Bookbinders are there in Israel and they were cousins of my grandmother because her cousin, Estelle, was married to _____ (114) Bookbinder, to _____.

I see. Can you spell Hirshorn for me?

Like they spell the museum.

Okay, it's the same way, okay.

Yeah, it's exactly the same way.

Now the tough questions. Do you remember where and when they were born?

No. But I know that my grandfather must have been also over seventy, maybe about 75, 74, my grandmother maybe a few years younger. Maybe he was 76. I'm not sure.

Were the born in Liepaja? Do you know?

No, I think my grandmother was born in Kuldiga (128), K-u-l-d-i-g-a, Kuldiga. In German it's called Goldingen, you know gold, like gold, ingen i-n-g-e-n. I think my grandfather, I don't know where he was born, but I think in Aizpute or in Liepaja but I'm no sure.

But it was definitely in Latvia?

Oh, yes, definitely Latvia. They were all what they call from our province, our province was called Kurland, K-u-r-l-a-n-d, Kurland in German, they called it Kurland. In Latvian it's called Kurzent, K-u-r-z-e-n-t. But we all called it Kurland and it's still a joke that the people from Latvia, if you said you are a Kurlander, it gives you a certain kind of a status in western culture because we were so close to Germany.

People from Kurland are more western than the others? I see.

Uh-hun and almost more stupid.

Is that true or—?

No, the Kurlanders were very—they are described as very straight. Not over-smart, they tell the truth in business on a level which some people kind of think they're stupid because they do that.

They're just very upstanding?

Pardon?

Very upstanding citizens then?

Well, they were very-they are known to be very on the level. Some people considered that stupid.

What did your grandparents do for a living? Do you remember?

Well, I told you they had this bakery shop and grocery shop. When they came to live in Liepaja, they had a—you call it here a dry goods store. What's a dry goods—does that mean you sell buttons and cottons and embroidery stuff? They had all kinds. They sold those shirts and stockings and underwear and bras and things like that and ties. We called it a haberdashery store but I don't know if that's the description, you know what it means. Haberdasher and underwear and scarves and that kind of things. Not dresses but stockings, underwear and shirts for men and ties. They had a big store.

You said that that was after they moved to Liepaja?

Yeah. That was actually—I never knew my grandparents when they lived in Aizpute.

But that's where they lived before you were born?

I think so, yah. When my father was a child, that's when they lived in Aizpute, in Hazenpot. But when I was growing up, when I was a child, I don't remember them ever living in Hazenpot. They always lived in Liepaja.

How far away from where you lived in Liepaja did they live?

About ten minutes or 15 minutes to go. We didn't have cars, we walked. They lived in Bodastrasse (173) which means Boss Street.

Which street did you live on, do you remember?

I lived on Birkenstrasse, B-e-r-z- with a little accent on top like a triangle _____ (176).

When the Russians came in in 1940, did they seize the dry goods store, the haberdashery?

I'm sure it must be. I really don't know. I'll tell you I don't know all these very great details because I was in Riga studying so I wasn't there for so many things. But I'm sure they took it. My aunts had to run it. You see my grandfather and my grandmother were at the time already kind of retired. My aunts, their daughters, ran it. One daughter was married and the other one wasn't married and they ran it. Actually three daughters ran it and a son-in-law.

Can you tell me what happened to them when the Germans came?

Yah. They were around the docks also Yom Kippur.

In October, 1941?

Uh-huh. I think it was if I said it in my oral, I don't know which date it was exactly but it was Yom Kippur in 1941 before the big _____. (195) Everybody was killed on the 15th of December but I think beforehand because they rounded up all the older people in the homes, that were at home. They just got them out of their homes, they went from house to house, Jewish houses. Because you know you had to register, now I remember. When the Germans came, you had to register. You had to go to the polezai (198) and register.

When the Germans came in?

Yah and register and tell them where you live and your name and bring all your jewelry. You had to come to the police station and bring all that. Give all these things, all valuables, let's put it that way. First, I think jewelry they wanted. They knew where all the people lived.

That's how they knew how to find people?

That's how they went to the houses. They took my grandparents out and I said also in my testimony that I had an aunt who lived in Kharkiv (210).

Yeah, in Russia.

In Russia and she came with her daughter and she went also because she said that—she put on a yellow star even though she didn't have to. I don't know if she registered in the first place. She just said she's a Russian but she said no, if her brothers and sisters are wearing the yellow stars, she is too. She paid with her life. She went with my grandparents but her daughter did not. Her daughter did not; she opted not to go. She opted not to put on a yellow star. She, I don't know, if she survived or not but she, I understand, was working as a laborer somewhere on a Latvian farm. She looked very Aryan, she had blonde hair—.

She could pass as a non-Jew then?

Not that— _____ (225) said that Jews have a certain look, I don't think so but anyway she looked very Aryan, blonde hair.

She didn't fit the stereotype?

They went on Yom Kippur in 1941. That was the last time we heard of them.

And they were taken away on sleds like the others?

I don't know if they were taken away with sleds or trucks. No, I think trucks, or sleds or whatever. I don't remember seeing any sleds in the prison. I think there were more trucks. But maybe they took them by truck and coming first as closer to the woods, the trucks couldn't go, they put them on sleds. I don't know but I know that some of them went on sleds for sure because of my girlfriend, she was telling me that.

One more, your cousin. Can I ask about him?

His name was Solly Izikowitz and he was a year older than I was. He also had finished high school and studying.

Do you remember his birthday, what month?

Not exactly but I think he was born in 1921.

And he was born in Liepaja?

Yah.

This is a cousin on your father's side or your mother's side?

No, on my father's side.

On your father's side?

Yah. It was my father's sister's son. I think that his mother was the second one in the family. My father was the oldest of nine and she was the second one.

What did his parents do for a living, do you remember?

Yah, they had a—actually he was born in Liepaja but they lived in Aizpute. When the Russians occupied Latvia, they came back to Liepaja because his parents had a material store, what do you call it here?

Like a cloth store, I know what you're talking about.

Quite a big store. They had it with a partner also a Hirshorn.

Did they have the store in __?

Aizpute.

Aizpute, okay.

But his father, my cousin, Solly's father, was a leftist. He was very left.

Like a communist?

I don't know if he was a communist, he had very liberal ideas. I think that when they closed the store, or they gave the store away, or they took the store away from them; they came to Liepaja. I know that my uncle, I understand left to go to Russia. But you know at the time it wasn't easy but I supposed he left Liepaja and he went to another town and another town to get closer to Russia. I don't know if he survived, no idea. I've never heard of him. He left home before everybody else, apparently.

He left his family?

I think he left his family but I'm not too sure. Again, I'm telling you at the time I wasn't home, I was very absorbed in my studies. Eventually when I came home and I worked in the Kendrall (289) Hospital, I too, it was during the war. Things were going on and I just didn't have much contact. I do know that they lived in Liepaja; he was my favorite cousin, in fact, because we were so close in age. Here it tells you—on the picture it says Liepaja, 1940. It must be during the summer vacation.

That was the swimsuit? The one where you're in the swimming suits?

Yah, that must have been—. Except it wasn't a swim suit, they were shorts and a top. No, it's not, it doesn't say Liepaja, it says Aizpute, 1940. It says Aizpute, 1940 and it was vasara (302) and vasara means in the summer. That's what it says and my cousin must have written it. You know the cousins that lived in Israel gave me that picture and it says Aizpute in 1940, vasara, which means summer. So that was in Aizpute so he must have come just before the Germans came in.

Come to Liepaja, you mean?

To Liepaja, they must have come to visit, maybe my grandparents or something and he was in Liepaja when he was killed. In fact, he was with a friend and he was crossing the street and they caught him in the street and they shot him.

This was in Liepaja?

Yah, he was going across to my other aunt.

When did this happen?

That was right in the beginning of 1941, in June. That was even before my father was killed. Right when the war broke, when they occupied Liepaja and he came out of the apartment where he was. He wanted to cross the street, to go across the street and they caught him in the street and shot him right off. But he was still in Aizpute in 1940.

Do you remember, did he go to Jewish school, or did he go to public school?

First when they lived in Liepaja, they lived for some time in Liepaja. I think my uncle was employed in one of those material stores. Then afterwards when he was already growing up, they went to Aizpute which they opened their own store in partnership with somebody, with a cousin. He went to a Jewish school. He went to a school, to a Jewish school, where the main language, all the subjects were taught in German, German-speaking and I think the high school maybe he went to in Aizpute. That's possible but I'm not sure, I think so. I think when he was in high school, he definitely finished in Aizpute.

You said that he finished high school before the war started?

Oh, yah. He's a year older than me.

Was he planning on going to university anywhere?

Yah, I think he did want to go to university. I think he did study something but I'm not sure. Maybe he was with his father in business, I can't really say, I don't remember.

You said that he was killed right as the war was starting in 1941?

Well, the war was starting—as the Germans occupied Liepaja, that was in June, 1941. First they bombed Liepaja and then they came in. As he was crossing the road, so they shot him.

I think that's all the questions I have.

Okay.