

History of one branch of the Billitzer family *
by Morton (Miksa) Fuchs, December 1996

For a long time I have considered the thought of writing down the history of my late mother's side of the family, as much as I can remember. I knew the members of our family who perished during the Holocaust or who died before it. The older facts I gathered from the book Bér Jichok, The Well of Yitschak, which was written by one of the members of the Billitzer family, and it is partly about one part of the family's history. Some information I also gathered from the Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 8, under the name Horovitz.

The original name of the Billitzer family was Horovitz. The oldest date which I found in the books goes back to 1565 in Prague where one of our ancestors was born that year; Isaiah ben Abraham Hálévi Horovitz. It was a very wealthy family, and they were highly respected Talmud scholars. The young Isaiah had studied at many famous rabbi yeshivas when he was selected at a fairly young age to the Bet-Din, the rabbinical court, for life, in the city of Dubno in Poland. Later he returned to Prague where he served as rabbi until 1621 when he emigrated to Jerusalem in the land of Palestine. In Jerusalem the Ashkenazi community elected him rabbi. He died in Tiberias in the year 1660 and was buried there near the famous Maimonides grave.

One branch of the Horovitz family, Pinches Háléve Horovitz, resided in Germany in the city of Úncdorf where Jichok Eizik ben Pinches Hálévi was born in the year 1801. Some time later, the family, for reasons unknown, wandered to Hungary and took the name of Billitzer. Jichok Eizik ben Pinches Hálévi Billitzer was my great grandfather. His son, Ire Lipman Hálévi Billitzer, was my grandfather. My grandmother's name was Chane. The history books don't talk about her, but I know that she came from a family with the name of Baruch.

My grandfather, Ire Lipman Hálévi Billitzer, was rabbi in Szepesófalú. They had seven children, six girls and one boy.

The oldest daughter was Aunt Róza. Her husband was Adolf Schaffer. They lived in Sátoraljajújhely, Hungary. They had no children. My uncle was a leather merchant and had a store with a partner. Later he made a living in buying and selling produce. When they got old and were no longer capable of working, they took a young Jewish couple to live with them who took care of their needs. At the end of the 1930's, they died within two to three years of each other. My uncle was a highly respected, very religious man and a great Talmud scholar. They attained a nice old age, and after their death the young couple inherited their house and all of their belongings.

The second daughter was Aunt Rezsi. She was an angel from heaven. Her husband was Uncle Samu, Samuel Lieberman. He was an exceptionally ambitious, hardworking man. He was the director of the Jewish elementary school in Tokaj. He was the manager of the Tokaj branch of the Borsod Miskolc Credit Bank. He was the editor-in -chief of the Tokaj and Province weekly newspaper. He also maintained a private higher elementary school where he taught every day. In addition, he also had time to be involved in the Jewish Community matters. For a time, he was even the President of the Jewish Community. When ht retired, he founded the Association of National Hungarian Businessmen (Országos Magyar Kereskedők Egyesületét, OMKE) and was the President of it until he died. Shopkeepers and craftsmen were its members. The OMKE was open every night. Men gathered together, they played cards and billiards, read newspapers, or talked. They held meetings and conventions, and often there also were dances. Uncle Samu died in 1938. He was diabetic and also had prostate problems. Aunt Rezsi died in 1940. I remember that she suffered a lot in the last years because she felt a ringing in her head continuously, which could not be treated. They had five children, three boys and two girls: Sáríka, Erzsike, Ernő, Lajos (Luci), and Gyula.

Sáríka — her husband was Artur Novák, a high positioned railway employee. They lived in the city of Ózd. Later they were transferred to the city of Eger. They were deported in 1944 and they didn't come back. They had three children, two girls and one boy: Magda, Kati, and Imre.

Magda — the oldest, was newly married and pregnant when they deported her in 1944, and she didn't come back. Her husband, Dr. Imre Englender, perished as a labor battalion worker.

Kati — her husband was Gyula Propper. They lived in Tolcsva. He was a wine grower. During the time of deportation they escaped to Budapest. The nyilas [Hungarian nazis, the Arrow Cross] captured him and deported him. Kati, with the baby Elizabeth, lived through the war years in a "safe" house until liberation. After the liberation of Budapest she returned to Tolcsva. Gyula also survived the concentration camps and returned to Tolcsva and continued the wine growing and wine selling. In March 1949 they too left the country and emigrated to Canada. They settled in Toronto. Like everyone, they too worked hard f or a living. Many years later Gyula died and Kati married again. Her husband, Tibor Lukás, is a retired businessman. Kati has one daughter, Elizabeth, and one son, János. They also live in Toronto. Tibor has one daughter, likewise in Toronto. A doctor is her husband.

Imre — was a labor battalion worker amidst terrible conditions. When his squadron made it up to Budapest after a lot of wandering, ht escaped and hid in Budapest. During the siege of Budapest shorty before liberation he was injured and ended up in the hospital. After liberation he learned that his sister Kati had hid in Budapest during the war, and he later re-united with her. For a period of time they were together. Afterwards,

Kati went down to Tolcsva with the baby. Imre, after he regained his strength somewhat, went down to Eger. There he relapsed and ended up in the hospital again. He was in the hospital for some weeks. When he recovered completely, he went down to Kati in Tolcsva. He was in Tolcsva for about a year. Then he went up to Budapest and resumed his studies at the Budapest Technical University where he received his engineering diploma. In 1949, with the Zionist movement a chance opened to illegally emigrate to Israel, and after a second attempt, with adventurous circumstances indeed, he succeeded. In Israel he first worked in road construction, with his own truck carried water and building materials. Later then in Beer-Sheva he worked as an engineer in a big chemical factory. His wife, Incike, was from Hajduszoboszló. Incike emigrated on the same boat, at the same time, as Imre, but they only became acquainted in Israel. They have three children, two boys and one girl: Cvi, Gád, and Óra. They live near Beer-Sheva in the small town of Omer.

Erzsike — her husband was Dr. Aladár Glück, he was a doctor. They lived in Tiszapolgár. They had a daughter Marika. They were deported and Marika alone came back. She was in Budapest for a time. Then she went out to Canada with a kindertransport. Marika met her husband Joe Goldlust in Canada and they settled in Toronto. Joe, of Polish origin, had also been deported. They have a company in Toronto. They sell and repair vacuum cleaners and other household cleaning appliances. They have three children, one son and two daughters: Robert, Darlene, and Cheryl.

Ernö — Dr. Ernő Loránd, was a lawyer in Tokaj. His wife was Sáríka Gutlohn. They had two children, Gabika and Ivánka. They must have been 10-14 years old.

None of them came back.

*Lajos — Lajos Loránd (Luci) and his wife, Ilonka Heller, had a cosmetology laboratory and salon in Budapest. They had one daughter, Évike. Luci was deported. Ilonka was in a “safe” house with Évike, and from there they took Ilonka one day for work, and she never came back. Évike then ended up in an orphanage and was there until Luci came back from the Mauthausen concentration camp. Shortly thereafter, Luci again opened up the cosmetology laboratory and began to work. For years they waited and hoped that Ilonka escaped and would return. Anuska Szegő **, a trained cosmetologist, became partners in the cosmetology salon and shortly after, Luci took her as his wife. Anuska was so good to Évike, as if she were her real mother. In 1953 Luci died of leukemia. He is buried in Budapest. Évike became acquainted with Robert Verebes. Robi had finished a music academy, he was a violist, and after the Revolution, he got abroad with his orchestra. But before he left, Évike and he got married with the rabbi. Shortly after, Évike succeeded in illegally going out to Vienna where she met Robi. For a time they were in Vienna. Then they emigrated to Canada and settled in Montreal. Robi joined the Montreal Symphony orchestra, and to this day is there in a high position. He is a Professor at the Montreal University teaching music. Some years after they arrived in Canada, Anuska joined them*

and with Évike they opened the cosmetology salon. Anuska died some years ago after a long illness. Évike and Robi have one daughter Lucy and a son Tomi.

Gyula — Gyula Lórand, was the director of a bank in Tolcsva. His wife, Aranka Propper, was the daughter of a vineyard owner in Tolcsva. They had one daughter, Veronka. They were deported. Gyula perished in the concentration camp. Aranka and Veronka survived and came back. For a while they were in Tolcsva, then they went to Nyiregyháza where Aranka became partners in some store. In 1949, Veronka had the opportunity to illegally go out to Vienna. She met her first husband, a German Jew who had survived Auschwitz, in Enns where he was working for the Joint and with whom she emigrated to America. They settled in San Francisco. Meanwhile, Aranka remarried a Budapest doctor, Dr. Lajos Nemes, and she moved up to Budapest. Veronka's husband had wanted to go to medical school, but since they had two small children, Évike and Edward, he had to work. He couldn't adapt to life in America, so they separated and he went back to Germany.⁴ Veronka remained alone with the children. For years she worked very hard as a registered nurse. She raised the children and educated them. In 1968 she married Marc Berk, a physician, and he passed away in 1994. Meanwhile, Évike and Edward had married, and they made very nice careers. Veronka had changed to selling real estate, and in a few short years she became very successful. Aranka often visited Veronka in America. Aranka's husband, Lajos bácsi, died in the beginning of the 1980's. Aranka died in the fall of 1994 in Budapest.

⁴ After 43 years, Veronica contacted him in Berlin, "to let him know that the children have turned out to be decent, successful human beings. He is now in touch with the family."

The third Billitzer girl was Ida — she was my mother. My father, Henrik Fuchs, had a grocery store in Tokaj, a salt storehouse, and a flour consignment warehouse. My mother died in January of 1936. My father died in June of 1941. We were four siblings: Ilonka, Vilmos (Volvi), Márjemka, and me, Miksa.

Ilonka got married in Vásárosnamény. Her husband was Samu Katz, and they had a men and women's ready-to-wear clothing store. They had three children: Imre, 17; Márta, 14; and Lacika, 11 years old. They were deported. No one came back.

Vilmos — his wife was Ella Glattstein from Mezöcsát. In Tokaj they had a fishing goods store, a commercial bag and string business, and commercial bags lending for farmers. They had two little daughters: Noémi, 10, and Juditka must have been 8 years old. They were deported. No one survived.

Márjemka — her husband was Sándor Friedlender. They lived in Tiszaluc. His business was live animal exporting. He shipped beef cattle to Italy. They had a little boy, Palika,

who must have been 5-6 years old. Sándor disappeared as a labor battalion worker. Márjemka was deported with Palika. They didn't return.

Miksa, in the years before the war, was the representative for a Budapest chocolate and gourmet desserts company until April 1940 when he was called in for labor battalion service. After years of difficult and complicated forced labor, he survived and came back to Tokaj in January 1945. His wife, Ilonka Engel, likewise of Tokaj origin, had been deported with her parents and two sisters. The parents unfortunately perished in Auschwitz. Ilonka and her two sisters, Bözsike and Sáríka, after horrible, suffering returned to Tokaj in the summer of 1945. Ilonka and Miksa's wedding, February 12, 1946 was in Tokaj. Miksa opened up his grocery and sundries store and it was in operation until the summer of 1951 when they nationalized it and offered him a position in a state store. Ilonka made sweaters on a knitting machine and taught private students how to sew. After the October 1956 Revolution, they were successful in escaping in December into Austria, and in the beginning of 1957 they arrived in America. They settled in New Jersey. Miksa got a job in an aluminum door and window factory. Ilonka sewed and designed dresses. The children were enrolled in school. Some months later the family left New Jersey and moved to Pasadena, California. The children continued their studies. Miksa worked in an aluminum workshop for a few months. Afterwards, he opened up his own workshop (Aluminum Screen and Door Products Company). After 22 years, he sold it and retired. Ilonka went back to school and obtained her teacher's credential. The Pasadena City College employed her where she taught for 20 years tailoring and dress design. They have two children, both of whom created very nice careers: Henry and Márta.

Aunt Lotti was the next Billitzer girl. Her husband was Moric Fuchs, my father Henrik Fuchs's younger brother. They lived in Homona and had a firewood and coal business. Lotti néni died at the end of the 1920's. They had three girls: Iolánka, Olga, and Mancí. Iolánka got married in Kézmárok and her husband was a tailor. I don't remember his name. Uncle Moric with the two girls were deported and they didn't come back.

Aunt Eszti —her husband was Jenő Haiman. They lived in Forro-Encse. They had a grocery store and he leased land and had a farm. They had a farm-wagon and horse and buggy for the farming. Uncle Jenő's mother and two older sisters also lived with them and they ran the grocery store. They had two daughters, Olga and Margit (Vityke), and five sons: Ire, Eizik, Pimbi, Zélig, and Mánele (Elek). Olga as a young girl got married. Her husband was Ignác Löwy. They lived in Forro-Encse. They had an oil warehouse and gas station. They had two little boys whose names I can't remember. Ire, Eszti néni's oldest son, also married. He took, the daughter of a Debrecen printer and became partners in the business. Eizik studied tombstone engraving and ran his own factory up until deportation. Pimbi worked in a produce warehouse. Mánele was going to school. Eszti néni died in 1938, and Uncle Jenő remarried to Aunt Ilonka, a Miskolc woman who had a well-run printing shop. Uncle Jenő took it over and continued to work successfully.

Vityke, the youngest daughter, was situated by Uncle Jenő into a drugstore in Forro-Encsen. The store didn't do so well. She sold it and went up to Budapest and became partners in a similar store. She married and a little boy, Gyuri, was born. Her husband's name was Lövinger, and he disappeared as a labor battalion worker. Vityke gave up the drugstore and opened up a cosmetology salon in Budapest. She lived through the war in a "safe" house in Budapest with her son. After the war she re-opened her cosmetology salon. Some years later she gave it up and emigrated with her son to Australia, to Sydney. She continued the cosmetology salon in Sydney. Her son learned auto assembly and repair. At the end of the 1980's Vityke moved down to Florida. Her son Gyuri married and remained in Sydney.

The entire Haiman family was deported or was drafted into labor battalions. Those who lived through the Holocaust were Vityke with her son, Olga and her husband Löwy (their two little boys perished), and Mánele (Elek). The Löwys, soon after the end of the war, emigrated to New York and opened up a kosher restaurant in Brooklyn. Meanwhile, Elek also settled in New York and married. He studied the art of cooking and works in a restaurant as a chef. The rest of the members of the Haiman family all perished. This information goes back to 1958 when we lived in New Jersey and we visited them in New York. What is happening with them now I don't know, because we moved to California and all connections were broken.

Aunt Paula was the youngest Billitzer girl. Her husband, Markus Strasser, was the son of the Tokaj Rabbi, Akiba Strasser. He was likewise a rabbi. After the death of the Billitzer grandfather, the Jewish community of Szepesófalú selected him to be the rabbi. He filled this position there for many years until a larger Jewish community, Vágselye, asked him to be rabbi for a rabbinical position that opened up, which he accepted and occupied until deportation. They had no children. They were deported and perished.

*Uncle Józsi was the only male member of the Billitzer family. He often visited us in Tokaj. I must have been 6-7 years old as far as I can recall. He was an older gentleman and sickly. He constantly smoked cigarettes and coughed. He didn't have a beard but he was very religious. There was always a book in his hand and he was reading, I think studying. As a child I always looked up to him with great respect. I remember that my father said that Uncle Jozsi was a great "Talmudchochem", a great Talmud scholar. He even wrote a book, a copy of which is in my possession. The title of the book is *Ele Hamicves*, These are the Commandments, and is written in Hebrew. The book is about the 613 laws that are required of every Jew to obey, the meaning of which he expounds upon. He lived in Szepesófalú at Aunt Paula's. He never married. I don't know when he died; I think toward the end of the 1920's.*

I believe with this I have finished the history of the descendants of this branch of the Billitzer family, according to the best of my knowledge. I tried to write it down briefly,

and I didn't go into small details. I imagine that someday one of the members of the family will continue to describe the family's subsequent history.

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** Correction by Éva (Évike) Verebes, January 2012: Anuska Szegö should be **Annus (Annuska) Verö**