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**OH 753/8**

Full transcript of an interview with

**HERTA SULCS, LILITA DAENKE, LAURA  
DAENKE, & IEVA DAENKE**

on 3 September 2005

By Mara Kolomitsev

Recording available on CD

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LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 753/8

**Interview with Herta Sulcs, Lilita Daenke, Laura Daenke and Ieva Daenke  
recorded by Mara Kolomitsev on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2005 for the Latvian School  
Oral History Project.**

TAPE 1 SIDE A

**Good morning, my name is Mara, and today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, and I'm going  
to interview three generations for the Latvian Saturday School Project. Good  
morning, Herta.**

HS: Good morning.

**Now, Herta, we'll start off [with] what is your name, your full name?**

HS: My full name is Herta Sulcs.

**And where were you born?**

HS: I was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1930, the 24<sup>th</sup> August.

**And, Herta, what year did you arrive in Australia?**

HS: I arrived in Australia in 1949 on the 25<sup>th</sup> May.

**Which town did you embark in?**

HS: In Adelaide, Outer Harbour, in the harbour of Adelaide.

**In Adelaide. Can you just tell me your first impressions when you arrived in  
Adelaide?**

HS: First impressions. When I came to the ramp, is it called ramp? The ships –

**Wharf.**

HS: – wharf, to see Australians to see more Australians, and there were only a  
few, and it was interesting to see the people that looked exactly like us. (laughs)  
And then we were, after very short Customs check out, we were all boarding a  
train to come to Adelaide and go to a migrant camp. Then going through from  
Port Adelaide we didn't come exactly to the Adelaide Station, but we went  
around prison building, I think: it took us around Adelaide and off to Woodside  
in the Adelaide Hills, and as we were travelling through Port Adelaide then the

scenery was very, very poor and we all know it was the salt paddocks and those saltbushes, small ones, and it didn't look appealing at all.

**Were you married when you arrived in Adelaide?**

HS: Yes, I was married. A year before coming, I was very, very young, but I was married and we travelled together.

**So you both arrived at Woodside together.**

HS: Yes.

**You didn't have a family at that time?**

HS: No.

**Now, when did you have your children? In Adelaide?**

HS: Yes, yes, everyone was born in Adelaide. First of all we had to be ready to be assigned in a government job, because the passage had to be paid off or something. It was a contract. So we were recruited for the Adelaide – the South Australian Railways, my husband and myself. So that was my first work. But before that of course we went to Woodside, and Woodside had a camp for us which was a barracks that was used by the Army, and we stayed there only a fortnight, Herbert and I, my husband and I, and we were recruited pretty quickly. And when this man from Adelaide, official man came to interview us, then he found me pretty knowledgeable in English but my husband wasn't, so he said, 'Oh, but you will help him to get along in the language, and you both are accepted on the South Australian Railways.'

**So what kind of work were you both [assigned to]?**

HS: He was assigned to be a fireman on an engine, and I was a portress on the trains.

**So how many years did you work as a portress?**

HS: Nearly two years. Because then I became pregnant and I could leave, but it was almost my contract time finished. Before we started our work we had a course: I had a two-month-long course in instructions as for the conductress in

my duties; and so did my husband, he also had to go through a course, mainly for the language acquirement, he couldn't speak English in that time.

**Where did you learn the English language?**

HS: In the refugee camp in Germany, where we stayed nearly four years after the War, and in the camps we had everything: schools and social work and activities and concerts and everything, and I was in school, I only finished my primary school there and then joined high school, and during that time we had to study English; so lucky for me I did a bit of study, and this is where I acquired my English knowledge.

**How many children did you have in Adelaide?**

HS: I had three daughters.

**Three daughters. Now we'll come to the time that they've grown up old enough to go to the Latvian School. Can you give me your version of what happened, why were you involved, why did you want them to learn Latvian?**

HS: Well, we considered ourselves Latvian patriotics. We loved our country, we missed it and we were determined to continue the language, the culture, and we were absolutely sure that our children had to continue this. And that was the reason why, when the School was established, then we joined it. But it wasn't right from the start for the School, because my children needed to grow up a bit, so during that time the School has permanently established and moved their premises as well, moved to the Latvian Community Centre in Wayville where it is still there today. And I think I answered the question.

**Fine. So at what age did you take your daughters to the School?**

HS: Oh, the eldest girl would have been seven, I presume, and the youngest girl would have been four and a half. Then I took them to the School on a bus because then we didn't have cars, of course, and my husband was working: he was working in Port Adelaide. And then, yes, then we went to school and I stayed with the children all the time until the classes ended. Well, from the start it was only kindergarten, of course, and one child joined it, the youngest [?] daughter agreed that she joined the class, the youngest one wouldn't leave my side, she would sit next to me, and I sat there in the garden and I was doing my

cross-stitch or whatever, waiting for the children to finish their classes. But later on I managed to get the youngest girl to join the class as well, and when they were going to do the nursery things, rhymes and singing, so we both joined in. So I have started the School with the children, right from then.

**Did they ask any help from you with the School? Did they ask you to give them a hand in any way, or did you just stay there and listen to – – –?**

HS: In the beginning I was just there and when we went around in nursery rhymes I just joined in. But the teacher was very pleased I did that. But later on that's a different story again.

**Can you recall if your daughters at any time didn't want to go to the School, or were they quite willing to go each Saturday with you?**

HS: In the beginning they were only little girls, so I just took them along, no question asked, and we went along and there was no questions, no complaints.

**No complaints.**

HS: Not in the beginning. Later on a bit.

**Have you got any particular memory of that period that you can tell us, anything that really stands out – that your children did, or perhaps the whole School?**

HS: Not from the very beginning, I can't recall anything outstanding. Later on, yes, yes, later on.

**What kind of – – –?**

HS: Later on?

**Yes.**

HS: Oh, even that is hard to remember. But I myself was always there and I joined in, participated all the time.

**What kind of thing did you participate in?**

HS: First in the games and singing, then later on, when the School gave recitals and sketches and skits, then I helped with that, also with the costumes. I was always there.

**With the costumes, did you actually sew the costumes?**

HS: Yes, I did.

**Can you recall any particular kind of costume that was difficult to sew, or – – –?**

HS: I recall one that is in my mind and I will never forget it, I have the photograph: but that is from my third daughter, she came later than those first two daughters. And Lilita, she was in one sketch, the children were playing in a forest and they had to be shrubs and flowers and animals and everything, so Lilita was required to be a mushroom. And we liked these mushrooms – now I just can't remember the name, what they're called: a big, brown-capped mushroom with white stem – and then I asked my husband, I said, 'How can I make a big, big hat for her which will resemble a mushroom's head? And then the white stalk, that would be easy: I'll make a dress or a cape that will be made from a sheet, bed sheet, I think. But the huge hat has to be supported so that it's outstanding big and stiff.' So my husband made the base out of wire, so I covered the wire with it and she really looked like a big, big mushroom, and everybody loved it and made photographs of it, and that stands out, and I think for herself too, only she was four years old, but I think she can still remember that costume.

**Are you still involved with the community now, with the Latvian community?**

HS: Yes, I am, but I have shifted from one society to the other. I was very strong in the choir, mixed choir, I sang in the choir for more than thirty years. But then I lost my voice and I couldn't continue, for a great shame because I loved singing and everything about it. But now I am mainly in the women's auxiliary for the church, and I'm in there active member. Plus little bits here and there.

**Have you got anything more you'd like to tell us about the School? And then we'll go on and interview your daughter.**

HS: About the School.

**That period of time that you took your daughters to the School.**

HS: Well, it entailed a lot of work and determination to persuade the girls to go to the School. Sometimes they didn't want to go to school. But then I managed to make a new dress or something and I say, 'We'll wear this for the first time,' and it worked somehow! And we went to the School and the teachers were lovely

and I have only good memories. With boys it's slightly different, but with girls I was okay, I was all right.

**Thank you very much, Herta.**

HS: You're welcome, it was my pleasure.

**Good morning, Lilita, and Lilita, you are Herta's daughter.**

Lilita: Yes, good morning.

**Could you give me your – in what order are you, the oldest or the youngest or the middle one? And give me your full name and what year you were born in.**

Lilita: Well, I am Lilita Daenke, and I am Herta's youngest daughter, and I was born quite a few years after my two sisters so there is quite a big gap between us – I think eight years or so.

**Right, so you were born here in Adelaide?**

Lilita: I was born in Adelaide 1963, November 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Lilita, what school did you go to and how far did you go to school? Did you continue studies after high school? So perhaps you could give me a rundown of your school years?**

Lilita: Okay. I went to primary school, which was the local primary school, Edwardstown Primary School, and stayed there and did all the years right through to Year 7, and then moved on to Marion High School for my high school years, matriculated, did Year 12 there, and then I was able to go to university, did a course at Flinders University of SA and I studied Maths and Computing and did a Bachelor of Arts there, which I finished in 1984. I worked a little and then decided that I should become a teacher, so I did an extra year, a Graduate Diploma in Teaching there, in the same university, Flinders University.

**What did you work as before you went back to the university?**

Lilita: As a bookkeeper at the university in the Biology Centre there, where I met my husband, Peter.

**And you did the Bachelor of Education and you went into teaching.**

Lilita: I did. And my first school that I worked at was in Victoria, it was a Lutheran school in Hamilton.



**And was it a high school or primary?**

Lilita: Yes, a high school. I taught Maths and Computing and a bit of Science.

**So you met your husband at the Flinders University, right?**

Lilita: Yes, he still works there in the Biology Department.

**You have children?**

Lilita: I have three children.

**Three children. Okay. Now, Lilita, we're going to talk about your involvement with the Latvian community, and perhaps you'd like to start off with telling me about how you felt when your mum took you to the Latvian School.**

Lilita: Right.

**Can you recall your first years?**

Lilita: Some parts I can recall. Now, my sisters grew up speaking Latvian, only Latvian, in the house, and I think they started Australian school not really knowing any English, or very little English, so they had difficulties in their first few years or in their first year of primary school; whereas when *I* started going to school I knew both languages quite well because my sisters spoke English at home as well as our home language, Latvian. So when I started Latvian School I would have been four years old and in the kindergarten class. I remember really enjoying the classes, we played a lot of games and sang a lot of songs and the teacher was an elderly lady who was so loving that I remember just running up to her and giving her hugs and, yes, just thoroughly enjoying my first days. But then came Grade 1 and I remember Grade 1 quite clearly because I felt I had a very strict teacher, who was Dace Darzins, and in Grade 1 we had to learn how to read and write and I wasn't very clever with the languages and I knew I was struggling in Grade 1.

**What year did you say you started at the School?**

Lilita: Kindergarten I would have started I think in '67.

**'Sixty-seven, okay. So you did the seven years of primary in the Latvian School?**

Lilita: Yes.

**After you struggled with Grade 1, how did you cope with the rest of the years?**

Lilita: Well, in my class we were a class of ten students: nine of them were girls and one boy – that unfortunate, poor boy! But he went through the whole years, all the school years, with us. And the rest of the class were quite intelligent in the languages and I always felt a little bit behind as I was studying Latvian. I could never get the reading quite right and I could never get the grammar quite right, and my writing was not so good either, so I'd say my marks were always near the bottom of the class.

**Can you recall how they marked, were you given a percentage or was it – – –? How was it marked?**

Lilita: The marks were given out of five, so if you got a five that was very good and you could actually get a five-plus and that was excellent, but the lowest mark you could get was a two, so you had a range between five-plus and two-minus.

**Two-minus, okay.**

Lilita: And I think a lot of my marks were around three and four.

**That sounds pretty good, you must have been fairly average.**

Lilita: Yes, probably quite average really, but I felt less, worse than that.

**You felt inadequate in the language, did you?**

Lilita: I did, yes.

**Were the children the same level as you, could you recall, as far as their ability to speak and write the language?**

Lilita: I think they were, but they just had the edge of being able to get everything on paper correctly and read with expression, where I would read maybe without expression, or I would get my endings of my grammar words a little wrong.

**That obviously bothered you, did it?**

Lilita: It did bother me, yes.

**And the teachers, they changed each year when you changed your classes from one year to the next? And you had the first one – – –?**

Lilita: At first they did change from year to year until I think it was about Grade 4 or 5 we had Mr Nabadzins, who was the principal at the time, and he followed

us through right to Year 7, so that was – yes, from Year 4 to Year 7. And he was a good teacher and we got to know him very well.

**Was he very kind as far as the strictness, or was he just as strict as your very first teacher? Did he still have that demands of you?**

Lilita: He was very kind to us and because we were a big class of mostly girls we could, I'd say, a little bit manipulate him. We'd play tricks on him and we'd get our way. But overall he was a lovely teacher to have. And he took us out on trips: I remember going to Victor Harbor once and he took us in his big car, and then he would take us for walks to the park and buy us ice blocks. We really had a good time with him.

**How many subjects were you expected to study? I mean, there's the language which comes with the grammar, reading and writing: were there any other subjects that were part of the school morning?**

Lilita: There were a lot of subjects: History, Geography, and then subjects like Singing, Dancing and Arts and Crafts.

**When you were learning all these subjects, did you find that it sort of interfered with your Monday-to-Friday school at all in any way, did you find that it affected your studies elsewhere?**

Lilita: Well, I remember in primary school having to go to remedial reading lessons, and that might have been because I got my letters a little wrong. But it also might have been because I was a slow learner in the language field of things; I was much better at Maths, somehow.

**But you finished the seventh grade: is there anything that you remember that *really* sticks in your mind, something very strong, of those seven years at the Saturday School, that stand out as something really very important?**

Lilita: Well, every year they'd have a concert and they were magnificent. The teachers would get us to dance and we'd put on our national costumes and you'd sing in choirs, and then we'd have the play and the play would often be about Latvian folk stories, whether we were animals or flowers or some wind or the sun or the moon. It was quite exciting: we'd get dressed up and have makeup put on us and we'd have lots of rehearsals and dress rehearsals and lots of music, so that was very exciting.

**Your mum talked about the costume that she made, that she could recall one of the costumes that she made, but can you remember that mushroom?**

Lilita: I think I only remember it because we've got photos of it, but I do remember my favourite costume was of a flower and on top of my head Mum had made this beautiful pink flower – I think it reminds me of the magnolia flower or something – and I was very pleased to dress in that costume.

**Now, Lilita, you finished the primary school and the high school classes continued on on the Saturday morning as well, did they?**

Lilita: No, we had high school lessons on a Tuesday evening from six o'clock till nine – yes, six till nine – and we had four lessons in the evening, some of which were – actually, I think *most* of them were language lessons. Yes, Grammar, Reading, Writing, Essays.

**Did you go right through to matriculation?**

Lilita: Yes, I sat for the exam in Year 12 and I think I got about seventy-five per cent, which I thought was not good enough because my fellow classmates got much higher grades. (laughter)

**I think we're under stress when we do exams anyway and I think – don't you think that sometimes – – –?**

Lilita: Well, if I look back I think I'd be quite pleased with my efforts: seventy-six is not a bad grade. (laughs)

**It is, yes. How do you feel that your years at the Latvian School have affected your life?**

Lilita: Oh, it's a crucial part of my life and who I am, having almost two identities: my Latvian identity that brings in all those things that I had been learning, and which became very important when I went to Latvia for the first time with my father in 1981, because for the first time I saw Riga and saw all the monuments that I had learnt about and saw the rivers that I knew about from Geography lessons, and I think it was a real experience to actually touch the land, the soil of this place that I had spent so many hours learning about.

**You learnt about Latvia, did you at any time feel that – – –?**

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

Lilita:        – – – luckily I had a lovely best friend from my Australian school, Karen, who helped me integrate these two worlds. She was there with me at school, but I introduced her to the Latvian Society and she came and danced folk dancing with me, she came to the choir, she learnt how to play the *kokle* with me. She was in every group that I would take part in, she was there, and she also went to the Latvian high school for a few lessons to learn the language, and she finally did marry a Latvian man. So we could do all of these things together and that was very important for me to have this friend.

**How wonderful! You were very lucky.**

Lilita:        It was a lovely, lovely time in my life, and great enjoyment to be able to share it with someone.

**You still have this friend close by?**

Lilita:        Unfortunately she died in a car crash when my children were very young, I think she had a little boy, baby boy, and she died in a car crash when he was only two years old.

**Oh, dear. Lilita, you finished your high school, you went out to work, and I understand that you came back to Adelaide – you were married by this time, yes?**

Lilita:        Yes.

**And had three children? And I understand that you went back teaching at the School as well?**

Lilita:        Yes. I must say that my husband went to the Latvian School, the Tuesday nights, and I think he started to go to Latvian School before we were married just so that he could understand what I would be saying in amongst my family, so he had a little bit of an introduction there. Then we had children, and when the children were the right age – oh, actually, even beforehand when Laura, my eldest daughter, was two years old, I started to go to the play group with her, as a little baby girl really, and then with all the other children from then on. And when Karl was four years old and in kindergarten I started as a teacher, and so I worked there.

**So what year did – – –?**

Lilita: He was born in '95, so in '99 I taught at the School, at the Latvian School.

**So the girls were in classes and – – –?**

Lilita: They were in classes already.

**And Karl was – – –?**

Lilita: And Karl was already in his kindergarten class.

**Kindergarten.**

Lilita: So I was free to teach.

**Did you take any particular grade or were they a mixed group of children when you took classes in Latvian?**

Lilita: I took the Art and Craft kind of classes and the Singing and Dancing classes.

**Oh, okay. You were saying that you learnt music, the *kokle*: did you study the music separately from the Saturday School?**

Lilita: Yes, that was more like a group that got together during the week, an evening during the week.

**So there was a professional teacher that could teach you the traditional instrument?**

Lilita: Yes, I started to learn when I was about twelve and we had a teacher who was from Canada who had learnt there and she brought her music and taught us, and I eventually became the teacher of that group as well.

**And when she taught you she obviously taught – were you able to read music already then, or were you taught by just – – –?**

Lilita: I could read music because I had been learning piano ever since –

**Oh, you were already – oh, okay.**

Lilita: – I was eight years old.

**Okay, so you already were able – – –. What about the rest of the group, were they – can you recall if – – –?**

Lilita: Oh, they all had different backgrounds. Some learnt by ear, like my friend Karen learnt by ear, she wasn't a musician but she learnt; and then there

were others that were very musical and wrote music for the *kokle* and harmonising for singing. So all different levels.

**So this little group, from the age of twelve when you were studying it, did you used to perform at some of the Latvian functions then, whenever there was a special occasion did you perform?**

Lilita: Yes, we performed quite a lot.

**Did you?**

Lilita: Yes. There were years there when almost every concert our little *kokle* group performed.

**We were talking about you being a teacher. The children have settled down in the classes, and a little while ago you were also saying that you sat with your youngest, Karl, in the play group. The parents that brought the children there, were they the parents that you had seen through the school years, or were they fresh faces?**

Lilita: Most of the parents were those that I grew up with in the class, yes. And there were some that were fresh faces, but they were from other communities, say from Melbourne or Sydney, that had moved because of work to Adelaide, so we got to know a few others.

**I didn't ask you this earlier: when you were young, doing primary school, can you recall if the children at that period spoke Latvian all the time, or did you revert to English when you were having a recess break? Can you recall that?**

Lilita: I think we always reverted to English at recess because I remember being shouted at, 'Speak Latvian, speak Latvian!' right throughout recess and after school.

**Okay. So obviously the common language amongst the children was still English.**

Lilita: Yes.

**All right. When you started teaching the children, did you find that you had to revert to English with the group that you were teaching in the late 1990s, or did you speak only in Latvian to them when you were teaching?**

Lilita: I think we started to revert to using more and more English in the late '90s, because there were more and more students that did not speak Latvian at home.

**This is in the 1990s when you were teaching; did you find that when you were going to school that there were a lot of children that came from families that did not speak the language as well then, or you didn't notice it at that time?**

Lilita: There were families that came from mixed marriages, I guess, that sent their children to the School; but mostly were Latvian-speaking children there.

**How did you feel teaching the children, what was your impression teaching these children – did the children that you were teaching, were they happy to come to the School? Did you feel that they *loved* spending that Saturday morning with you? In your Art and Craft class?**

Lilita: Well, luckily I taught the nice things like Art and Craft and Dancing and Singing so they were a bit happier in my classes; but yes, there were times when you could tell from the body language that those students really didn't want to be there.

**But they were there.**

Lilita: They were there. And at times they were really enjoying themselves, so –  
– –.

**And the order of the Saturday morning was obviously very similar to the time that you went: you had your Language classes, the Geography was still kept up, was it?**

Lilita: Yes, but it was gradually being changed. I think now the curriculum is quite different to when I was teaching in the '90s. Because the students could speak and read and write in Latvian, we could teach them History and we could teach them a bit of Geography; but now, as the years went past and the children that couldn't speak fluent Latvian started to come into the School, we had to change our ways and concentrate solely on language and everything was aimed towards that – the Singing, the Arts and Crafts – so that the students could use what they knew and just to speak and use the language. And so the History lessons and Geography lessons were –

**They were dropped, were they?**

Lilita: – ..... dropped because it was all too hard.

**Right. Fair enough. Just give me in a short sentence how do you feel your involvement with the School, right from the time that you started until the present day – because you've got children now that have gone to the Latvian School –**



**what do you feel that you'd like to say about the experience that you've had and you're still experiencing?**

Lilita: I think it's a wonderful experience, but it also is a hard one to keep up. You have to put in a lot of effort to continue to devote that Saturday morning for language and for the Latvian background, but if you can continue it it's really worthwhile because it opens up your life to wider horizons.

**Thank you very much, Lilita. I'm going to be interviewing your girls in a moment. I have met your son at the School so I've asked him a couple of questions as well.**

Lilita: How lovely.

**Thank you. (break in recording) Hello, Laura, and Laura's Lilita's oldest daughter. Now would you like to tell me your name and your age, what year you were born in?**

Laura: Okay. My name's Laura Daenke and I was born in 1992, the 23<sup>rd</sup> August, and I'm in Year 7.

**Laura, what school do you go to?**

Laura: I go to Hills Christian School in Verdun.

**Do you like it?**

Laura: Yes, it's really nice there because I've got heaps of friends, everyone's really friendly, now I'm in Year 7 so it's just nice to look down on all the people who are just starting school.

**Have you been at that school right from your first days at school?**

Laura: Yes, I have, except for one year when I went to Latvia.

**Okay. Well, we'll talk about that a little bit later on. Now, I understand you started the Latvian School when – how old were you when you started going to the Latvian School?**

Laura: Oh, I don't really remember but I think I was really little because I can hardly remember anything from when I started.

**Okay. Now, can you remember anything at the kindergarten at all?**

Laura: Yes, I can remember we used to play games outside and sing Latvian songs and do all the little actions, and I remember learning the colours and animals and all the basic things.

**What was the best part of going to kindergarten at that time, which did you like the best?**

Laura: Probably the singing and dancing.

**And you could speak Latvian at that time?**

Laura: Well, I think I could just say the basic things like animals and colours and ‘thank you’ and ‘hello’ and things like that, but couldn’t say a conversation or anything.

**Did you speak with your grandma in Latvian, or did you try to speak with – –?**

Laura: Yes, I think I tried to speak, like ‘hello’ and things like that, and I’d say, ‘Please could I have some cake?’ or ‘Please could I have a drink?’ and things like that.

**Okay. Now, you did Grade 1 to 7 at the Latvian School, did you, on the Saturday morning?**

Laura: Well, I think we didn’t really have grades, we just kind of went up into a class if you were good enough to, like even I remember one time there was this girl in my class who was three years younger than me and we were in the same class because we were at the same level of speaking and writing and things.

**Did you like speaking and writing the Latvian language?**

Laura: Yes, it was quite interesting. It was fun trying to read a different language, and I remember at my English school everyone used to say, ‘Oh, please talk Latvian, please write Latvian,’ and all of this.

**And did you used to write Latvian for them?**

Laura: Yes, I used to – they used to ask, ‘What’s “hello”?’ and all that and I used to tell them, and they’d go on about it: ‘Oh, hello, hello, hello.’ (laughter)

**What part of the school years did you like the best of all, tell me, what did you like the best?**

Laura: Probably when I was about nine, I was just about going to Latvia, because I was pretty excited so I tried to learn heaps of things and I had some – like I could remember most of the things then, and we used to draw, and it was just really fun that year, when I was just about to go to Latvia.

**What year were you here, the year that you went to – what grade school year were you here?**

Laura: In English school I was in Year 5? No, 4, in the middle of Year 4 I went.

**So when you got to Latvia did you go to school there as well?**

Laura: Yes, I did, I went to a Latvian school.

**What did you think of the time you spent at the school?**

Laura: It was very hard. I couldn't say – I could speak Latvian but I couldn't say a conversation to friends, I couldn't express myself and it was really hard because all this changed: no-one could speak English at the school, so it was a little bit like just the basic things and it was quite hard.

**It was hard.**

Laura: Yes.

**But did you enjoy it even though it was hard?**

Laura: Yes, I made some really nice friends and I still write to them now, and we keep in touch.

**And when you write to them do you write to them in Latvian?**

Laura: Yes, I write to them in Latvian. They sometimes try to write in English.

**So they're learning English, are they?**

Laura: Yes. When I came to their school my year was just starting to learn English.

**Okay. Now, comparing your school here in Adelaide and the one in Latvia, I know it was harder in Latvia, but can you give me some comparisons? Was it about the same as far as learning and the teachers?**

Laura: When we saw the teachers we used to always stand up and say 'Good morning –' like the teacher's name, and we used to always say the teacher's

name, not 'Mrs' and 'Mr' and things, like we called them by their first name. Now we just call them 'Mrs', 'Mr', but there in Latvia we just called them by their first name.

**So they were very relaxed that way?**

Laura: Yes. But another thing was when – like in English school we have recess and lunch, and you play outside and you have fun, but there they didn't have an oval, they didn't have a basketball court, there was just a building and after every lesson you would have fifteen minutes to just socialise in the building, and it was quite strange because I was used to going out and playing basketball and playing on the oval.

**In the Saturday Latvian School, do you keep in touch with some of the friends you've made on Saturday mornings?**

Laura: Yes, I've got some nice friends there. And because my brother still goes to the Latvian School, whenever we drop him off I always say hello to my friends. And if we go to a Latvian concert or something I've got friends there that I've made.

**So you keep in touch.**

Laura: Yes.

**Do you play the tradition *kokle* instrument?**

Laura: No, I don't, but when we went to a Latvian camp I was quite interested in them. My mum taught me a song but I can't remember it any more. So I do want to play it but I've got lots of things: I already play two instruments, so – – –.

**What do you play?**

Laura: I play the clarinet and the recorder.

**Oh, right. With your musical talent, did you ever perform for the Latvian community playing your clarinet, with the School?**

Laura: Yes. When there was Latvian concerts we used to be asked to go up and play a song to everyone. I played my recorder and I played my clarinet, too, so I have performed with those two instruments.

**Now, can you tell me how it will affect your future knowing the language, can you answer me that question? Do you think how it will affect you?**

Laura: I think it will be good, because if I wanted to go to back to Latvia I could like speak it and see all my relatives again and talk to them properly – I could actually talk to them and help.

**And do you now talk to your grandma in Latvian?**

Laura: Well, I try to but some words are just a bit too hard so I kind of say it in English, but most of the time I say, ‘Could I please have this?’ and yes, I do talk to my grandma in Latvian.

**Have you finished your Grade 7 in the Latvian School?**

Laura: Well, I don’t actually know what year I was in when I finished the Latvian School because I didn’t have any friends – oh, I had friends but they weren’t my age group – so I decided I’d move to learn with my grandma.

**Okay. Would you like to continue learning the Latvian language right through to matriculation?**

Laura: Yes, I think it would be really nice, but sometimes it’s a bit hard because because it’s on a Saturday morning all my friends ask me, ‘Do you want to have a sleepover,’ and I have to say, ‘Oh, sorry, I’ve got Latvian School in the morning.’

**Thank you very much, Laura. Would you like to tell me something more about the Latvian School? Anything that you – can you remember something, very strong memories, that you’ve spent the time at the School: what’s the most exciting thing that you can remember that you’ve done there?**

Laura: When I was littler we had this big play and it was *Alice in Wonderland*, and heaps of people – like the high school and the pre-school people were in it. And I was the little bunny and I had to say a line, and I was very proud of myself because I performed for lots of people. I thought that was really good.

**I’m sure you enjoyed it, too. Did you enjoy it?**

Laura: Yes, I was very happy because I could be in a play and it was really nice.

**Lovely. Laura, thank you very much for answering the questions. I’m going to interview your sister now. You’ve got nothing more to tell me?**

Laura: Oh, one more thing: I really liked dancing, and at the Latvian School here I danced, and in Latvia I danced too, I was in a little group and we went performing around Latvia. And here in Adelaide we used to do dancing classes.

**Do you still do the dancing classes?**

Laura: No, not any more because I'm not in the Latvian School thing any more.

**I don't think I asked you what were the subjects that you learnt at the Saturday School?**

Laura: Well, when I was smaller we used to do – like learnt about Latvia, like the country, and the language; we did Dancing and we did Art and we did Singing; but now they normally do just the language and Dancing and Singing. They don't do learning about Latvia.

**Well, thanks a lot again. Thank you. Hello, Ieva.**

Ieva: Hello.

**And you're Laura's sister, aren't you?**

Ieva: Yes.

**Can you give me your full name and the year you were born and your age?**

Ieva: Well, my name is Ieva Zigi Daenke, and I'm eleven years old and I was born in 1994, April 27<sup>th</sup>.

**And what year are you at school, and what school are you going to?**

Ieva: I'm in Year 6 and I go to Hills Christian Community School.

**And what do you like about school?**

Ieva: Well, I like Drama, it's really fun, and I've got lots of friends there.

**You just like school.**

Ieva: Yes.

**And you went to the Latvian School on a Saturday morning?**

Ieva: Yes.

**Would you like to tell me some of your experiences? Perhaps you may remember your first time you went to the Latvian School?**

Ieva: I can't remember my very first time, but I remember when I was in kindy there. Selma was my teacher and we used to hide from her when we came back from recess.

**Why did you hide?**

Ieva: I don't know, it was just some sort of fun game that we just made up ourselves.

**Did she used to try and catch you?**

Ieva: Yes.

**Did she used to find you?**

Ieva: Yes, she found us. We normally hid under the table or something, so it was kind of easy.

**Can you remember if you spoke Latvian in the kindergarten or did you speak English?**

Ieva: I spoke a bit of Latvian like 'please' and 'thank you' and that sort of stuff, but not the main things; I just talked to my friends in English.

**And did the teacher, the one that was looking after you in the kindergarten, did she speak only Latvian to you?**

Ieva: If we didn't understand her in Latvian she spoke English. Most of the time she was speaking English.

**Okay. Now, how many years did you spend at the Latvian School?**

Ieva: Well, I'm not quite sure.

**So from kindergarten?**

Ieva: Yes. So about five years or something.

**And what did you like best about the Latvian School?**

Ieva: Well, probably having the friends and just – yes, having friends and talking to them.

**Did you like learning the language there?**

Ieva: Sometimes. It wasn't always the best thing?

**Why not?**

Ieva: Because it got a bit boring and sometimes you knew the things and the teachers just went over them anyway, so you almost fell asleep.

**Were there any *exciting* lessons that you can remember you had?**

Ieva: My favourite was probably Singing and Dancing and Art.

**In the Art classes, can you remember what you used to do in the Art classes?**

Ieva: We did some sewing and one time we made this big poster.

**And with the Art classes, did they teach you some of the traditional Latvian designs to use in your artwork?**

Ieva: Yes.

**And did you like doing that sort of thing?**

Ieva: Yes, it was quite fun.

**Quite fun? Now, you and your sister went to Latvia to school as well: how did you cope with the classes, because your sister said it was a little difficult, what about you, did you manage all right?**

Ieva: It was pretty hard making friends, and the language, they had different words. Like we use like a 'dustbin' for a bin, but they use like a 'rubbish bin', so when we said one word they told us it was like old-fashioned for them, so — — —.

**So you feel that some of the words you learnt were a little bit old-fashioned, did you?**

Ieva: Yes, and they didn't know what it meant.

**Okay. Do you think that your Saturday learning the Latvian language helped you at — — —?**

Ieva: Yes, it did, because when I went to Latvia they kind of knew what I was meaning and they understood me pretty much.

**Can you tell me anything really exciting that happened in the school, in the Latvian school in Latvia?**

Ieva: Well, they had lots of things after school like dancing and art classes and just homework classes.

**What about excursions?**



Ieva: Yes, there was a few excursions. And my favourite was we went to the .....  
Museum.

**Okay. Now, Ieva, I'm running out of tape so I'm going to have to ask you more about your learning of the Latvian language: how do you think it's going to help you in the future? Do you think you could tell me how it's going to help you in the future?**

Ieva: Well, probably when I go to Latvia again I'll be able to talk to people and meet more friends there, so it will be a lot easier and I'll be able to talk to just people around me who are in Latvia.

**Would you like to tell me in a sentence what you liked about the Latvian Saturday School, the best part of it?**

Ieva: Well, that's a bit tricky. Probably being with my friends and the recess.

**The recess! And what about the teachers, were the teachers good?**

Ieva: Yes, but when you got – after the trip to Latvia there was this really mean teacher, and she's stopped now.

**How mean was she?**

Ieva: When we couldn't tell a word she got – like say a word, she got angry at us.

**Sometimes teachers are impatient, aren't they?**

Ieva: Yes – – –.

END OF INTERVIEW.