

# From Our Archives

by Vickie Vogel

*This is the eighth in a series of articles on materials and information that can be found in the TJHS archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas in Austin. If you would like to write an article on any of the items in the archives, please visit <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/services/using.php>.*

## "Mr. G" by Vickie Vogel

Sam J. Glosserman<sup>1</sup> was born in Lockhart on October 15, 1903, the first American-born child of Philip (Feiwel) and Mamie (Mashie) Pomerantz Glosserman who married in Poland in 1896. Philip, born September 14, 1872 in Bereze, Poland and Mamie, born in October, 1875 in Prussiana, Poland/Russia were both from innkeeper families. Philip trained for the rabbinate, but his studies were interrupted by army service. He won a prize for being the best sharp shooter in his regiment.<sup>2</sup>

Hearing from relatives about life in America, Philip came over in 1900 to avoid further army service. He joined his wife's brother Louis Pomerantz in Seguin. Philip worked for three years as a peddler, walking to farms in the area and sleeping in barns, before he was able to send for Mamie and sons Maurice<sup>3</sup> and baby Mose,<sup>4</sup> who was born shortly after Philip left Poland. Mamie traveled in steerage for a month with two babies, one of whom his father had never seen.

Peddling was a hard life, walking all week and returning to Seguin for Shabbat. One night, a drunken farmer pointed a gun at Philip all night, who pretended to be asleep. In 1905, Mamie's brother Harry Pomerantz, who owned a fruit stand in Lockhart, offered



*The Glosserman Family. (Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. Identifier: e\_ha\_0188. Title: Glosserman [family group]. Date: Glosserman Family Group. Source: Annas (Harry Forrest) Photographic Archive. Creator: Annas, Harry Forrest*

to sell it to Philip and accept time payments<sup>5</sup>—a lucky break for the growing family. After Sam, two more children were born—Herman<sup>6</sup> and Esther.<sup>7</sup> Mamie studied English with Esther's kindergarten teacher.<sup>8</sup>

Sam spent his life in Lockhart, playing an important role in business, civic, and government affairs. He was known as "a salesman's salesman" who could sell clothing, cars, or the city itself.<sup>9</sup> From an early age, he worked in his father's fruit stand, which included a peanut

roaster. Sam remembered that his job at the age of four was to take a box of roasted peanuts every Saturday morning to the Carter Hotel and sell them at a nickel a bag. Sam gave up his job as peanut vendor when he started school.

At the age of six, he started selling newspapers, and by age seven he was the agent for the *Houston Chronicle* in Lockhart. The papers would come in on the Katy train by way of Smithville. Bundles would be tossed out of the train as it came

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through. Sam would wrap up against the cold, walk to the station, deliver the papers before breakfast, and then go to school. Sam reminisced about the “extras” editions when some big event happened, such as the sinking of the *Titanic* and the *Lusitania*, and how he felt like an entrepreneur delivering the papers to the hotels where people eagerly awaited the news. Herman also sold newspapers, playing a harmonica to attract customers.<sup>10</sup>

When the saloon next door closed because of Prohibition, Philip acquired the property and turned the fruit stand into a combination grocery store, feed store, and soda fountain, and bought and sold pecans and charcoal. Sam remembered the time his father bought a refrigerated carload of bananas. Sam went to the station and ate bananas until his stomach hurt. They sold most of the bananas straight from the car.

When former President Taft visited Lockhart to give a lecture in the Lyceum Series, the Carter Hotel asked Sam’s brother Maurice to help plan the menu. He bought squabs and the hotel presented this delicacy—squabs on toast. That’s when the President announced he was a vegetarian!

Sam described his mother, Mamie, as having coal black hair and blue eyes. One of his earliest memories was of Mamie taking him to a coffee klatch where he was stuffed with cookies and cakes.<sup>11</sup> In 1908, Philip received naturalization papers certifying that he, Mamie, Maurice, and Mose were now United States citizens. Philip liked to say, “Only in America can a man start with a pack on his back and become one of the town’s most beloved and respected citizens.”<sup>12</sup>

When Sam was fourteen, he kept the store’s books because his older brothers were away in college. He graduated from Lockhart High School in 1919 and enrolled at the University of Texas where he was a member of the University Menorah Society: An Intercollegiate Organization for the Study and Advancement of Jewish...Ideals<sup>13</sup> and was member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity.<sup>14</sup> He attended UT for two years.<sup>15</sup>

Philip opened a dry goods store and Mose and Sam ran it. Maurice stayed in the grocery business with his father. In 1929, the dry goods store became Glosserman Clothiers, a landmark business on the town square. Another business started by the family was Glosserman Chevrolet. When the grocery business closed, Maurice joined his brothers in the auto agency.<sup>16</sup> Glosserman Chevrolet has been in operation for 81 years and is still in the family, operated after Sam’s death by David Michelson (son-in-law), and currently by Jeffrey Michelson (grandson).<sup>17</sup> Maurice, who died at the age of 99, spoke of his father, Philip, as a pious man who helped others get a start in business in Lockhart.<sup>18</sup>

Sam was known as “Mr. G” to his employees, who admired his sales ability, kindness, and generosity to them and to the community.

“He was a very good talker,” said Crystal McKean, a clothing store employee for over thirty years. “He never saw a stranger...He was a super salesman. You might not want one thing, but he could sell you.”<sup>19</sup> One story told of Sam concerns a large two-story house on the property next to a church in Lockhart. The church bought it and tore down the house to construct a parking

lot. In the house, an old cancelled check was found made out from W. C. Stagner to Sam Glosserman for a couple of dollars for a suit of clothes. The check was presented to Sam, who was in his 80’s at the time, and he said, “I remember that suit.” If you knew Sam, it is said, you knew he was telling the truth.<sup>20</sup>

In 1934, Sam married Elsie Klein from Houston, the eldest of eight children of Alexander and Jeanette Klein. Alexander was the comptroller for Piggly Wiggly grocery chain. They moved to Beaumont after Elsie graduated from San Jacinto High School. Sam and Elsie met at the Michelson’s<sup>21</sup> candy store and ice cream parlor in Gonzales, through mutual friends in Galveston. Sam would drive to Beaumont after work on Saturday to see Elsie, returning Sunday afternoon.<sup>22</sup> They had four daughters: Abigail, Deborah, Maschia, and Glicka, and one son, Michael.

From 1954 to 1964, Sam Glosserman was mayor of Lockhart. During his ten-year administration, the debt-free City Hall was built (on land where once stood the house where Sam was born), City Park was established, and the Dr. Eugene Clark Library was acquired.<sup>23</sup> The fire station was renovated, and a master plan was created for the city. City streets, lighting, street signs, and electrical and water systems were all improved and expanded.<sup>24</sup> Richard Bean, city manager during part of Sam’s tenure as mayor, said, “He was very much a booster of Lockhart. (He) remained active in civic affairs after leaving the mayor’s office...”<sup>25</sup> In fact, there is a Sam Glosserman Room at the Lockhart City Hall.<sup>26</sup>

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In 1960, Sam founded Darst Creek Oil Company and soon after became president of Lockhart Oil & Gas Company. In addition to his many business ventures, he was active in civic affairs: a director of the Lockhart Hospital; Vice-



*Sam Glasserman. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. Identifier: e\_ha\_0083. Title: Glosserman, Sam. Date: 1948. Source: Annas (Harry Forrest) Photographic Archive. Creator: Annas, Harry Forrest.*

President of the Lockhart Chamber of Commerce; county chair of the American Red Cross; Director of the Plum Creek Watershed Association; President of the Kiwanis Club,<sup>27</sup> the Businessmen’s Club and Community Concerts. In 1985, the Lockhart Chamber of Commerce presented him its Most Worthy Citizen Award.

Also participating in Jewish organizations, Sam was a member of Congregation Beth Israel in Austin (where the family went for Yom Kippur) and Temple Beth El in San Antonio (where they went for Rosh Hashanah), and was active in Seguin’s B’nai B’rith Lodge 1456<sup>28</sup> and United Jewish Appeal. Sam insisted that his children have a Jewish education. At Beth Israel in Austin, son Michael celebrated his Bar Mitzvah and all the children were confirmed. At Passover, Mamie hosted the seder and after her death,

Roslyn (Mose’s wife) and Elsie rotated as hosts for the up to forty family members and guests.<sup>29</sup>

In mid-December, 1989, Sam was hospitalized, and on February 4, 1990, he died at the age of 86.

Funeral services were held at McCurdy Funeral Home Chapel in Lockhart with Rabbis Sam Stahl and David Jacobson of Temple Beth El, and Rabbi Emeritus Louis Firestein of Beth Israel officiating. Interment was at Beth El Memorial Park in San Antonio. Pallbearers were his nephews: Gerald Klein and Lewis Hoffer of Beaumont, Nor-

man Glosserman of Houston, Robert Glosserman of San Antonio, and Mark Klein and Philip Glosserman of Los Angeles. He was survived by his wife, Elsie; daughter and son-in-law Abigail and David Michelson of Lockhart; son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Marilyn of Bethesda, Maryland; daughter, Deborah of Cleveland Heights, Ohio; daughter and son-in-law Maschia and Stephen Kaplan of Elliot, Maine; daughter and son-in-law Glicka and Michael Kaplan of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He was also survived by eight grandchildren: Jeffrey and Jon Michelson, Marc and Scott Glosserman, Jenny and David Kaplan, and Jacob and Naomi Kaplan. It was requested that memorials be made to Reading is FUNdamental of Lockhart.<sup>30</sup>

Long-time employee Crystal McKean said, “He was a fine man.

Lockhart has lost a great man.” His son Michael said, “I think he was just a very blessed man and a blessing to anyone who knew him and came in touch with him. He was a revered person in his community. I think he was viewed as a wise and elder statesman. I would say Dad’s sense of humor and his affinity for older and younger people were among his great strengths.”<sup>31</sup> At Lockhart’s 2001 Christmas Celebration, the library dedicated their 12th Annual Dickens’ Celebration to the memory of the Glosserman family.<sup>32</sup>

Daughter Abbi Michelson remembers her father as an energetic man who seldom sat down at the store. He did his bookwork standing at the counter. If a conference was needed, they sat in the shoe department. Glosserman Clothiers specialized in men’s wear, but also carried women’s clothing. One time, Mose bought so much lace that Sam said, “That’s it. We’re not going into dry goods.” After Sam’s death, daughter Abbi ran the store for four years and then it was closed.

Elsia died August 20, 2000, in Lockhart. She had broken her arm in a fall and then suffered a stroke a week before her 90th birthday.<sup>33</sup>

When Sam Glosserman was a boy, people came into town on Saturday to shop, socialize and eat barbecue. “People used to go around and around, walking around the square having the time of their lives...People in boots, people in wide-brimmed Stetson hats. When it rained, it was muddy and it was awful...This was really a wild town...I used to stand on Dad’s corner and see...one fight after another.” Sam remembered the time the sheriff and a constable had a gun fight on the courthouse steps.<sup>34</sup>

In 2007, grandson Marc Glosserman, a native of Bethesda, Mary-

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land, opened a restaurant in New York called Hill Country BBQ and included on the menu a “Mayor of Lockhart” drink of tequila and sparkling wine. Lots of stories and pictures are on the wall about Sam Glosserman,<sup>35</sup> including one of Glosserman Clothiers, which also sold cowboy boots.

“I always romanticized Texas,” Marc said, “with its barbecue and cowboy boots.”<sup>36</sup>

“Had my grandparents been alive when I came up with this idea, they probably would’ve been scratching their heads—‘Why in the world would you wanna do that?’” Glosserman told Marc Tracy of *Tablet Magazine*, who turned out to be his cousin. “I remember my grandmother would go and she’d just get five pounds of brisket, ten links of sausage, and get this huge

piece of butcher paper, and she’d put it on the table for everybody,” Marc reminisces of childhood visits to Lockhart.<sup>37</sup>

Sam Glosserman believed the most important possession in life was a good name. He took pride in his heritage, and emphasized the necessity of family responsibility, an obligation to Judaism, and loyalty to the community.<sup>38</sup> And growing up in Lockhart is bound to involve barbecue.

**References**

<sup>1</sup>Box 3A 168, File 2, Family Histories Fro - Gug, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection. Unless otherwise cited, all information is from this file. All written documents cited are contained in

this file. According to daughter Abbi Michelson, the “J” stands for “Jack.”

<sup>2</sup>Esther Dora Glosserman family history, undated.

<sup>3</sup>Maurice married Frances Rosenthal of Houston. They had two children, Shirley and Norman. After Frances died, Maurice married Pearl Marks. Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Mose married Roslyn Kuminir of Houston. They had two daughters, Karen and Leslie. Mose was president of the Lockhart School Board for twenty years, board chairman of the First Lockhart National Bank and president of the School Board Association of Texas. Mose is credited with introducing Hebrew to the curriculum at the University of Texas. Ibid.

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before World War II, so we tried to find the house. We found the street, but it was on a section of the main road that ran through the old Jewish neighborhood and had been widened. The Jewish Cemetery was near this main road, so we went there. It was locked and no one answered the phone number that was on the sign, so we could not get in.



Shirley and Marvin Rich in Huj, Romania.

When we went to City Hall to find records, we discovered that we needed permission of the mayor to get into the record archives. He saw us immediately and we were optimistic. The birth records were in separate books for each religion and were hand written with the given name at the top and the family names in the text, but underlined. We began in the Jewish book of 1870 and after about fifteen minutes, found a cousin's father's name. However, it was already after 3:00 PM, so we gave up and left to find the remaining synagogue. It was behind a large apartment block, and locked. It was intact, but looked unused.

After we had lunch, we went to Huj and asked where the Jewish cemetery was. We found it down a dirt back road, but it, too, was locked. I walked down the road and saw the graves behind a barbed wire fence with thorn trees growing along the fence line. It was difficult to get a good view, but I was able to take a

few photos.

We then went to the only synagogue that was still standing. It was locked behind a large apartment block. We found the lady who had the gate key, so we had a good look and took a few photos. She said that the shul president was old and sick, and most of the local Jews

had intermarried.

By this time, it was after 8:00 PM and beginning to get dark. Our return trip through Vaslui and Bacau was easy because there was almost no traffic. However, at Bacau we took a wrong turn and did not get back to our hotel in Brasov until 2:00 AM! After a rest and touring in Brasov, we



Doheny Synagogue Cemetery

returned to Bucharest and flew home.

Although we did not find any family records, it was exciting to visit the site of our roots. If you are inspired to return to your family's origins, I advise you to try to do so and tell your children to also go, because it is something that you will never forget. 🇺🇸

<sup>5</sup>"Phillip [sic] and Mamie Glosserman," p. 326, "Historical Caldwell County: Where Roots Intertwine." The Mark Withers Trail Drive Museum, 1984. Available at Dr. Eugene Clark Library, Lockhart. Abbi Michelson located the information available at this library and copies have been placed in the TJHS archives.

<sup>6</sup>Herman married Gladys Garonzik of Dallas. They had three children, Robert, Terry, and Philip. Herman graduated from the University of Texas and practiced law in San Antonio. He was president of Temple Beth El in San Antonio from 1949 to 1951. Glosserman family history, op cit.

<sup>7</sup>Esther graduated from the University of Texas and married Dr. Bernard Brill from New York in 1942. They had two daughters, Stephanie and Alexa. Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>David Matustik, "Lockhart merchant, leader dies at age 86," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 6, 1990.

<sup>10</sup>Glosserman family history, op cit.

<sup>11</sup><http://www.library.lockhart-tx.org/showcard.asp?MARCID=19295>. Oral interview with Sam by Bill Phillips. 217 S. Main St., Lockhart, 512-398-3223. A transcript is in Box 3A 168, File 2.

<sup>12</sup>"Historical Caldwell County: Where Roots Intertwine," p. 326, op cit.

<sup>13</sup>[http://www.e-yearbook.com/yearbooks/University\\_Texas\\_Cactus\\_Yearbook/1922/Page\\_363.html](http://www.e-yearbook.com/yearbooks/University_Texas_Cactus_Yearbook/1922/Page_363.html).

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<sup>14</sup>Telephone interview with Abbi Michelson, October 6, 2010.

<sup>15</sup>Telephone interview with Abbi Michelson, September 21, 2010.

<sup>16</sup>Glosserman family history, op cit.

<sup>17</sup>Telephone interview with Abbi Michelson, October 6, 2010.

<sup>18</sup>Maurice Glosserman speech at his 90th birthday celebration, as quoted in Glosserman family history, op cit.

<sup>19</sup>Matustik, op cit.

<sup>20</sup>Lynn Moore. <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/TX-CALDWE/2006-05/1147890125>.

<sup>21</sup>Coincidentally, Sam’s daughter Abbi later married David “Buddy” Michelson. Abbi is currently a Board Member of TJHS.

<sup>22</sup>Telephone conversation with Abbi Michelson, September 23, 2010.

<sup>23</sup>Telephone conversation with Abbi Michelson, September 29, 2010.

<sup>24</sup>*Austin American-Statesman* obituary, February 6, 1990.

<sup>25</sup>Matustik, op cit

<sup>26</sup><http://www.newstreamz.com/2008/03/06/>>-envision-central-texas-blog-regional-growth-meetings-for-hays-county-on-march-24-and-april-2/>.

<sup>27</sup>Maurice, Mose, and Sam all served as president of the Kiwanis, Business Men’s Club, and the Lions Club. Oral history, op cit.

<sup>28</sup>The Seguin Council of Jewish Women worked closely with the Lodge. Speech presumably by Maurice Glosserman, undated.

<sup>29</sup>Telephone conversation with Abbi Michelson, September 29, 2010.

<sup>30</sup>*Austin American-Statesman*, op cit.

<sup>31</sup>Matustik, op cit.

<sup>32</sup>Glosserman family history, op cit.

<sup>33</sup>Telephone interview with Abbi Michelson, September 28, 2010.

<sup>34</sup>Oral history, op cit. Sam shared many other fascinating memories of Lockhart in this interview.

<sup>35</sup><http://www.roadfood.com/Forums/m404564-print.aspx>. Also “You Can Take the BBQ Out of

Texas,” Bryan Curtis <http://www.texasmonthly.com/2008-06-01/webextra3.php>.

<sup>36</sup><http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/fea/travel/thisweek/stories/071110dnenthillecountry.1dd0758.html>.

<sup>37</sup><http://www.tabletmag.com/life-and-religion/2003/theres-the-rub/>.

<sup>38</sup>Telephone interview with Abbi Michelson, October 6, 2010. 

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