

*The following is the
Autobiography of my Grandfather, Isadore Moritz.
Items in italics are by my hand - Calvin Moritz Wolff.*

ISADORE MORITZ AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Written April, 1950

**Dedicated
To My Beloved Wife and Daughter**

The following will depict in a large measure the several phases that have transpired during my life up to the present time, any one of which, had they been of a different nature, could have changed the whole course of my future.

It is written, not in any thought of glory nor to magnify the errors that were made, but merely following an oft repeated request, both of my wife and daughter, to give them in concrete form a brief outline of my past experiences.

On April 3, 1883, I first saw the light of day in an humble Jewish home at 306 Goliad St., San Antonio, Texas. The youngest of a family of eleven children born to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Moritz. My parents migrated to the United States several years previous from Alsace Loraine, France and settled in San Antonio. Four of the eleven children, Gustave, Alice, Angele and Celine¹, were born in France. The others, Solomon, Clara, Henry, Bertha, Estelle and Leon were born in Texas. Bertha and Estelle were twins. Leon died in infancy. Thus there were six living sisters and three brothers.

The hand of Destiny took a firm grip on me in my early life by snatching away from me and my brothers and sisters the loving care of our beloved mother (*Emma*) who passed away several months after I was born. It was then the course of my young life was changed. Two of my brothers, Solomon and Gustave², being away at the time of the death of our mother, and father feeling that he was unable to cope with the situation of rearing a large family decided to place the younger children in the Jewish Orphans Home³ in New Orleans, La. Accordingly Henry, Bertha, Estelle and myself were sent to the home in New Orleans. We stayed at the Home several years when we were brought back to San Antonio to be at the bedside of our father who passed away shortly after our return.

Following our father's death a serious problem confronted my elder brothers and sisters: How was I to be taken care of? They were busy trying to make a living for the family group by working in stores as clerks, bookkeepers, etc. and had no time to devote to household duties nor the care of a youngster seven or eight years old. It was then that one of our cousins, a son of my mother's brother, Herman Burgower and his wife, offered to adopt me and rear me as their own son.

As the protégé of the Burgowers, whom I called Uncle and Aunt, I was given every opportunity and advantage of a genuine home. Doubtless, had I not been a mule-headed creature, would

have had enjoyed the advantages that in after life would have opened opportunities for a most successful and lucrative life.

But, such is the quirk of fate. We do not realize nor appreciate our opportunities in our early stages of growth, despite the continued hammering home of these truths by those who devote their lives for our advancement. Here I was, placed in a home that must have been the envy of thousands of other children, less fortunate. A good, clean home where all the necessities and pleasures of life abounded; a foster father and mother who devoted their life to me in an effort to mold my character into a worthwhile human being in whom they and others may be justly proud.

In those early days I failed dismally to respond to their affections and teachings. On the contrary stubbornness took hold of my character and molded me into an incorrigible, uncontrollable youngster on whom whippings, going to bed without supper, confinement and other means of corrections made no impression. Aunt Clara Burgower being subject to periodical severe headaches and other ailments doubtless lost patience with me. During these spells the punishment (I thought) was too severe and created in my mind a desire for relief, any sort of relief even to running away. Under such broodings it did not take long for a bull-headed youngster to make up his mind.

The first year with my foster parents we lived in San Antonio, then moved to Ft. Worth and later to Hillsboro, Texas where Uncle Herman Burgower was engaged in the wholesale liquor business. Travelled with Aunt Clara Burgower to St. Louis, Mo., Kansas City, Kansas, and other points following Uncle Herman's move to Hillsboro.

At both Ft. Worth and Hillsboro I made a number of attempts to flee from the protecting roof of my foster parents. Each of these several attempts resulted in being brought back home. On one of these forays from the Foster parental roof, while living in Hillsboro, I managed to slip out into the country and pass myself off for a roaming orphaned urchin, looking for a home. A farmer, operating a dairy and cotton farm about six miles from Hillsboro, offered to feed and clothe me for working on his place. I was then about nine years old. Here I received my first education in farm life. Yanked out of bed at 3 a.m. to milk the cows, feed the hogs and chickens and do other chores. At six a.m. sat down to breakfast, consisting of a glass of skimmed milk, home-made bread with pure hog lard for butter. Soon as breakfast was over was introduced to the cotton patch where I chopped cotton until the noon hour. The noon hour menu consisted of corn pone (fried corn bread), a few slices of fat, home-cured bacon, greasy cabbage, glass of skimmed milk, home-made bread with a taste of home-made jelly, softened with a liberal spread of pure lard. Then back to the cotton-chopping job until three p.m. when milking chores were again repeated. While feeding a large pen of hogs one evening I thought I would have a little fun of my own. In the hog lot, with hundreds of other hogs and pigs, was a monstrous sow with a brood of a dozen pigs suckling her. I picked up one of them. No sooner had I done this than the pig leg out a squeal and the mother sow started to rush at me. I dropped the squealing pig and ran. In doing so I stumbled over a hog and before I could get up the mother sow and (it seemed to me) the entire pack of hogs in the pen were on top of me. I squirmed and turned, barked like a dog, trying to scare the brutes away, and in some way or other finally managed to pull and drag away from them, but not until I had been badly bitten and torn about the hands, arms and legs. The hog pen was about a quarter of a mile from the farmhouse. No one saw nor heard me. When I

finally freed myself from the pack of brutes I ran like the wind, clearing a barbed wire fence in a single bound, despite my injuries. Managed to reach the house exhausted where I was given medical attention. I still carry a scar on my right leg from that experience. Needless to say I never went near that hog pasture again. Stayed with this family about six months. Accompanied the farmer to Hillsboro one day and no sooner had I landed was picked up by a truant officer and returned to my foster parents. A few months later, wanderlust again overtook me. This time I was determined to make good and stay way. That afternoon I was punished for some infraction and remanded to my room without supper. While both Uncle Herman and Aunt Clara were asleep I slipped out of the house and made my way to the depot where I boarded a passenger train bound for Dallas.

Thus began another period of my life that changed the course of the living stream. Little did I realize what I was doing then. Was a strong headed kid. Made up my mind on the spur of the moment, never thinking of the consequences.

I boarded that passenger train, picked out a seat at the farther end of the day coach and awaited the coming of the conductor as the train got underway. Saw the conductor as he entered the coach and decided to slump down in the seat, simulating sleep. That official pulled and yanked me around until I was more than thoroughly awake, in fact frightened. He asked me for my ticket and whither I was bound. Of course not having a ticket I again resorted to my quick wit, pulling a fast one on the conductor by telling him I was an orphan with no one to look after me. Somehow or other this evidently got under his skin and his kindly eyes beamed out a welcome smile. He told me to remain right where I was until the train arrived in Dallas. Upon arrival there he gave me breakfast and a dollar bill and sent me on my way to loaf around the streets of Dallas.

Here I was in a big city, a kid barely nine years old, knowing no one and not knowing which way to turn, except that I was determined to keep away from policemen whom I feared would return me to Hillsboro.

In strolling up the business section of Dallas I saw the name Saenger Bros, Dallas largest clothing establishment at that time. I casually strolled into the big store and quietly asked for Mr. Saenger. Don't now why. Just a compelling force. I knew he was a Jew and doubtless would give help to those of his faith. One of the clerks escorted me to Alex Saenger and to him I poured out a tale of woe of being stranded in Dallas and wanting to get back to my folks in New York City. Mr. Saenger evidently believed me for he bought me a ticket to New York City, gave me a suit of clothes and \$10 in cash. That afternoon he put me on a train for the Big City in charge of the conductor. I promised some day to repay him for his generosity.

Being worn out from my previous trip to Dallas the night before and the full day of roaming Dallas' streets it didn't take me long to fall into a deep sleep in the chair car. Early next morning I awoke and surveyed my surroundings on the train. I also was rudely awakened to the fact that I was again flat broke as the \$10 given me by Mr. Saenger had been taken from me sometime during the night. Not being wise to the ways of the world I couldn't understand how the money could disappear. But, here again, the hand of fate came to my rescue as other passengers seeing my plight supplied me with meals and a fresh supply of cash. Changed trains three different

times en route to N.Y.C. At each change the conductor of the train I had left turned me over to the succeeding conductor. Arriving in the Big City in the middle of a cold November day I was again put to my wits to know what and where to go and what to do.

Notwithstanding my tender age I never denied my origin, nor changed my name, invariably proudly asserting my Jewish religion, although knowing nothing whatever about it. Many times this brought down on me the wrath of gentile youngsters with whom I was thrown. It engendered numerous fist fights and one time caused my arrest in New York City for disturbing the peace.

Here I was in the metropolis with but a shirt and a pair of pants to cover my nakedness. No shoes nor overcoat, hungry and friendless in the midst of a big city in the middle of winter. Not knowing what else to do I was whirled along with a number of street urchins, selling papers, blacking shoes and incidentally grabbing a handful of fruit from the fruit stands along the streets. Naturally drifting with these urchins of the streets I chummed with them, slept in dry goods boxes in alleys and the slums of a big city and following their ways. It was not always a smooth, happy way of life for on numerous occasions we would of necessity have to forage for a living such as stealing fruit and things from the open stands. On many such raid we were put to the test in evading the clutches of the law.

With the approach of Spring I was easily persuaded to travel south with a number of these roving urchins, some of whom were much older than I. Instead of riding passenger trains we were taught how to hook on to fast freights and ride the rods. Riding the rods is not the most pleasant way in the world to travel. It may get you where you want to go, but the gravel and dirt swirling about you forces you to keep your eyes closed until the freight train comes to a halt when you meekly drag yourself out from under the box cars and begin wiping off the slime and dirt. In this fashion I rode many hundreds of miles, seeing much of the north and east and some middle-west sections of the United States.

I shall never forget the experience on one of these trips. It was when a group of ten of us urchins (hoodlums we were called) attempted to steal a ride on a fast freight from Nashville to Chattanooga, Tenn. We were on the outer edge of Nashville waiting for the freight as it pulled out of Nashville. Just as the train was picking up speed we divided into groups of two, each pair to pick out a different box car to hook on to. The youngster with me made a dive for a box car in the middle of the train, missed his footing and was sucked beneath the wheels of the freight train and ground to bits. That took all ambition out of me to catch that freight or any other and from that day to this I've never tried to hook a ride expect in a caboose.

The others all made their objectives and went on to Chattanooga. I, alone, retraced my steps to Nashville and then began a lone hand, traveling as best I could on foot, buggy, caboose or passenger train from place to place. During this time I did odd jobs, selling newspapers and blacking shoes for a living. Some how or another I landed in Mineral Wells, Texas. I was then about ten or eleven years old, but had enough experience crammed into my cranium through hard knocks to be wise in the way of the world in nearly two years of hoboing.

It was here another drastic change in my life was made. From a rambling, unkempt ragged urchin who plodded through the country from place to place, making a living selling newspapers,

blackening shoes, etc., I was to see an entirely different kind of life. While doing errands for an aged couple, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell, I evidently attracted their sympathies for they took me into their home and treated me as one of their own. It was here that Billy Sunday (a noted evangelist) was conducting a revival meeting, and, as my benefactors were devout Methodists, insisted that I attend the revival meetings with them. It lasted some three or four weeks, during which I professed religion and joined the Methodist church. This was about 1894. Lived with these good people for over a year, doing chores about the house and otherwise repaying them for board, clothes and room. One day Mr. and Mrs. Allen Womack, relatives of the Mitchells, came for a brief visit. Their home was in Iowa Park, 10 miles north of Wichita Falls, Texas. Through their pleadings I was induced to return with them to their home, where I was promised a home, schooling, and clothes if I would stay with them and help do the chores about the home and farm.

They owned a large wheat and cattle ranch near Iowa Park. Here I worked in the wheat fields in the summer and cattle range in the winter. This was in the early fall of 1895. I entered the first grade in school at the age of twelve. Did fairly well as I was able to skip the second and third grades. In the fall of 1898 I was introduced to the Methodist Minister a Rev. T. J. Beckham in Wichita Falls and told him of my ambition to become a minister. He arranged to send me to a preparatory school in Honey Grove, Texas, where I washed dishes, cleaned up the dormitory, cleaned up the schoolhouse and milked the cows for board, clothing and education for three years.

While it was a rigid rule at this preparatory school that the student body put out lights by ten P.M., I was the exception to that rule. The teachers knew I had no other time to study than late at night so permitted me to stay up as long as I needed to study. So, naturally, I burned the candles at both ends to keep up with my classes.

Three years I worked my way through this preparatory school. During school terms carried out my studies as outlined and in the summer months working about the W. S. Wall home (the proprietors of the preparatory school) and occasionally filling the pulpits in outlying farming communities. At Willis Point, a small village about 10 miles from Honey Grove, I filled the pulpit regularly each Sunday during my last vacation year.

While the multitudinous jobs and studies kept me busy most of the time I still found sufficient spare time to enter literary events at this school. Entered declamation contests first and second years and carried off the honors both times. The last year entered the oratorical contest and won that also. A gold medal I still have.

From the time I left my foster parents in Hillsboro until the summer of 1902 they, nor any of my brothers or sisters knew where I was, or whether I was in the land of the living. I would not write them, nor give any information to anyone leading to a discovery of where I was or what I was doing. I had never changed my name nor tried to hide my identity in any fashion. It was after I had been in Wall School three years and was about to enter my fourth and final year that a notion struck me to write to my sisters in San Antonio, telling them where I was and what I was doing.

That letter proved another turning point in my erstwhile checkered career. No sooner had they received it than transportation came for a trip to San Antonio, taking me away from Wall School and a possible preaching career in the Methodist church.

I was instructed to come home as soon as possible in order that our father's estate could be settled. I had then reached the age of 20. But by special order of the Bexar County Court was made of legal age, and thus the estate was settled and each of us received \$1,500. But I'm getting ahead of my story. On arriving in San Antonio I felt sure my sisters would meet the train, but having seen none of them since a kid in knee britches, felt sure I would not know them nor they recognize me. I got off the train and waited until the crowd dispersed and to my joy realized that Celine, Angele, Clara, Estelle and Bertha were waiting for me with outstretched arms. A family reunion that any young man would have been proud.

As soon as the estate had been settled and we each came into our own inheritance I felt rich (?) With \$1500. My years of wandering and self-sacrifice should have taught me to be frugal and how to take care of my inheritance. Evidently I was still a kid and green in the ways of the world, especially financially. My sisters, especially Celine, begged me to permit them to take care of this money for me. Celine urged me to use it for educational purposes. To attend the Rabbinical school in Cincinnati and otherwise prepare myself for a real future. No. I felt that I was now of legal age and knew how to handle my own affairs and refused. Suffice to say the old, trite saying: "A fool and his money soon part" is as true as the law of gravitation. Within a year I was flat broke and had to go to work.

By putting up \$50 cash as security for faithful performance of my duties I was employed by the Van Noy News Agency as News Butch on the I. &G. N. (*Illinois & Great Northern?*) passenger train operating between San Antonio and Longview. It was a two nights and a day run. Kept this job for more than eight months, when one night on my return trip to San Antonio from Longview I awoke from my usual early morning nap, after leaving Austin, to find that I had been robbed of every cent of equipment from candies to magazines, cleaned out slick as a whistle. Knew that my \$50 bond would be forfeited I decided to jump the job at San Marcos, leaving a note in the empty basket telling the agency of my misfortune and enclosing my resignation. It was still dark when the train arrived at San Marcos. I got off there and awaited daylight for business houses to open.

Here again was another milestone in my career. In canvassing the town for a job, the first place I landed was a weekly newspaper office. The owner *was* W. S. Davis and the paper the San Marcos Herald. He was just preparing to start a subscription campaign for a daily he was about to launch. I tackled for the job on a percentage basis of 50%. He accepted. The daily would sell at 20 cents per week or 65 cents a month. First week turned in 100 monthly subs, 50 weekly subs. Next week this was nearly doubled. Seeing, or realizing that he was paying me too much he offered me a regular job in the office of setting type, writing, and doing odd jobs. Thus my career of 30 years in Newspaper work was begun. Confidence in my ability to do things in a newspaper office prompted me to return to San Antonio and accept a job with the San Antonio Light under Mose Harris (*who became a 33rd Degree Mason*) as a sub-reporter. Was with the Light several months when a rancher (Mr. Avant) from Pleasanton, Texas inquired of Mr. Harris for a lively chap to run his paper, The Pleasanton Monitor. Harris recommended me. Avant and

I soon reached an agreement and it was (*not*) long until he took me to Pleasanton to edit and publish the Monitor. Pleasanton was 50 miles south of San Antonio with no railroad at the time and only communication via buggy, horseback or stagecoach. The Monitor equipment was antique, consisting of a Washington hand press (usually called strong arm press) because it required more brawn than brain to operate. Two cabinets of old, outmoded type, even for those days, and a woeful lack of other equipment. This shop really demanded initiative and inventiveness in order to publish each edition of the weekly. Here I was, the greenest of green printer's devils, accepting a job I knew little or nothing about and with equipment that would tax the most competent printer of that day. Notwithstanding this handicap I determined to make good on this my first responsible job. I managed to get out the paper that first week two days later than schedule. After that the routine became familiar pattern and from that time until the paper was sold two and a half years later each edition came out on time and evidently pleased the readers of that town of a little over 300 population, as business and subscriptions increased from week to week.

During my two and a half years residence there I embarked on my first amorous adventure by keeping steady company with a tall, dark haired girl, Fannie Ricks. But this too had its ups and downs, as I found out to my sorrow. Her father, a strict religious man, objected strenuously to his daughter going out with a Jew. I was ejected from her premises many times. We met clandestinely for many months and finally, when the paper was sold and I moved back to San Antonio, this love affair, while not forgotten entirely, was soon dissipated.

While a resident of Pleasanton I applied for and received the three degrees in Masonry in Pleasanton Lodge No. 283 Ancient Free and Accepted Masons.

While back in San Antonio met a young man who wanted to set up a post card business in Corpus Christi and asked me to join him in the venture. We pooled our resources (about \$350) and bought a stock of post cards from San Antonio dealers and then headed for Corpus Christi.

The post card venture proved to be a paying business. Our establishment was a two-by-four room adjoining the post office in Corpus. This was crammed from floor to ceiling with hundreds of fancy and scenic cards. We seemed well on the road to success for several months until one morning I entered the little shop to find that it had been stripped of every vestige of cards and even the cash till had been robbed. It was then that we dissolved partnership. This was in the fall of 1907. We each had \$50 salvage. He went one way and I headed south toward Brownsville and Mexico, anticipating to go all the way to the Panama Canal Zone where the big ditch was then being constructed. I arrived in Brownsville midnight August 6, 1907 on a dark, dreary rainy night, slogged my way from the depot, some two blocks from the business section. Oil lamps on each of the four corners of the principal business street (*Elizabeth Street*) were the only means of lighting in the berg. By the dim light of these oil lamps was I was enabled to negotiate the muddy street intersections and arrived at one of the many saloons that then graced (?) the little city of Brownsville. This was about two a.m.

Weary from the long, slow ride over a new railroad bed from Corpus Christi, I was ready to hit the "hay." At this particular saloon I was informed that I could get a bed upstairs for 50 centavos (25 cents U.S.) for the night. What a room! Bare floors, broken down bed, genuine

hay mattresses and a dirty sheet. There was no wash stand or other conveniences. Despite this I dropped on the bed, leaving pants and clothes hanging on the bed post. I awoke early the next morning, expecting to head straight across the Rio Grande for the Canal Zone. What a rude awakening! I reached for my pants and shirt. The shirt was there but the britches had disappeared together with all my earthly possessions, including the ready cash and watch. I had again been “cleaned out” by a sneak thief.

Once again destiny took a hand in my life! Instead of proceeding to the Canal Zone (it required \$12.00 for head tax for any one traveling through Mexico from the U.S.) My future was suddenly blocked by lack of money. Here again I was stranded in a strange community without funds. And, you might say, without clothes. The bartender loaned me a pair of pants a might too big for me, gave me breakfast and I then proceeded to make a bee line to the printing office. This was the Brownsville Daily Herald (*still in business*), owned and operated by Jess Wheeler and his wife. He immediately gave me a job as city reporter at \$12 per week, considered at that time fairly good pay.

Brownsville at that time was considered strictly a border town. Mexican residents and businesses outnumbered Americans ten to one. Mexican money was as stable as U.S. currency and was rated two for one (*now, after resetting the peso, the ratio would be 10,000 to one*). In fact Mexican currency was more in evidence than U.S. money. The city was one big community where everyone knew everyone else and their antecedents. It was in this atmosphere that I was propelled along and after a few months work on the Herald became acquainted with practically everyone in the berg and within a radius of many miles.

My original plans of going to the Canal Zone went to smithereens as my cash reserve failed to build up appreciably. So I stayed on and on. One night while attending a Mexican circus my attention was attracted to the girl of my dreams. This was a tall, dark haired, fair complexioned young lady who was sitting just across the tent from me. I looked. She looked. Neither of us could keep our eyes from each other. Evidently the circus did not attract but those magic eyes did. It wasn't long after that first chance glance - meeting we had an opportunity of formal introduction at one of the many dances given in the old opera house. Friendship quickly ripened into courtship which lasted for more than a year.

It was then I realized I could not hope to take the woman of my choice from her comforts of home without providing as good or better for her. I had been with the Herald from August 1907 to late summer of 1908 when, learning of the development in the western end of the (*Rio Grande*) Valley and of the several new towns being opened and contemplated, decided that my future laid to the west. Accordingly one Sunday morning I boarded the Branch Line train for the new town of Mercedes. There I met with business and professional men and arranged to publish a newspaper for them. I obtained from them a pledge of \$500 cash in subscription, a year's advertising contract from each (estimated at over \$2,000). With this pledge I went head-over-heels in debt for a plant costing \$1,500 without a red cent down payment.

Following my agreement to establish a newspaper in Mercedes that Sunday, I returned to Brownsville that evening, turning in my resignation to Mr. Wheeler to be effective as soon as he could find someone to fill my place. He became so enraged that he fired me on the spot. He

believed it was (*he had*) an inherent right to the newspaper field in this section *of the state* and did not want any youngster butting into his affairs.

After ordering the plant from the American Type Founders Co. at St. Louis, Mo., spent the intervening months canvassing the territory in and about Mercedes for subscriptions. Made the trip over the territory, void of highways and paved streets, via bicycle, horseback, and buggy, securing over 700 subscribers at \$1.50 each. Made my first payment with this money and the plant arrived in Mercedes about the middle of August. On Thursday, October 8, 1908, the first issue of the Mercedes Enterprise made its appearance with three full pages of advertising and a single page of news items, patronized by merchants of Mercedes, Donna, and Brownsville. It was the first weekly to be published outside of Brownsville in the Rio Grande Valley (*it is still in business*).

I made weekly week-end trips to Brownsville to visit with the young lady and incidentally to obtain advertising and job printing from Brownsville firms. After the printing business was well established we (*Julia Bollack and Isadore*) set the wedding date for Wednesday, June 23, 1909. It was a beautiful home wedding in the Bollack home (*corner of 13th & Washington St., Brownsville*) with Rabbi Marks of San Antonio officiating (*Rabbi Marks' daughter Freddie later married my father's cousin Herbert Wolff*). Ceremonies took place at 8 A.M. and following a breakfast my bride and I took the branch line train for Mercedes where I had previously rented a home and furnished it. Upon our arrival in Mercedes we were greeted by a host of business and professional men and well wishers, with an ox cart. My bride was put in the cart and I was compelled to walk behind it through the main street of the city to the hotel where we spent our honeymoon for the next week or ten days.

On April 10, 1911, we experienced our first genuine sorrow of married life when our first born, a son, failed to come through the ordeal and was laid to rest in the Old Mercedes cemetery, with Jewish rites.

To overcome this bereavement our sole attention was absorbed by a bright, cheery eyed baby girl, born to us in Brownsville July 9, 1912. It was on that date that Rachael Emma came into our lives and materially lifted the veil that had hung over *our* erstwhile happy home for more than a year. She furnished the spark which ignited our ambitions to move forward and endeavor to do bigger things.

As a citizen of Mercedes I participated in numerous civic enterprises, particularly a live commercial club, then headed by Wm. Lingenbrink, a real estate dealer, and the formation of a Masonic Lodge, Mercedes Lodge No. 1010. The third Masonic lodge to be organized in the Valley at that time. Mr. Rathbone was the first Master, I the first Senior Warden, and James Ogburn the first Junior Warden of Mercedes Lodge. It was then I began to learn the esoteric work of the Order and by the time the Grand Lodge met in Waco in Dec. 1910 I was ready for my first certificate of proficiency which I have steadily maintained throughout the years, and now have a permanent life certificate.

On my trip to Waco in 1910 I made a side trip to Dallas for the purpose of meeting and returning to Alex Saenger the money he so generously gave me many years before. I met him, told him

about the circumstances and turned over \$25 to repay him. He accepted same, but to my utter chagrin and surprise never even thanked me for returning the money to him. Neither did he inquire concerning the past nor the future. I became so disgusted with his actions I immediately turned and left the store. However, had the satisfaction of knowing I had kept my promise.

Took increasing interest in Masonry, traveling to Rio Grande City to conduct classes, organizing lodges at Mission, McAllen, Harlingen, Edinburg, Donna and elsewhere. I was appointed District Deputy Grand Master for the 40th Masonic District, embracing at that time Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Kleberg, Brooks, and Starr counties. This was in 1912. Reappointed D.D.G.M. for seven succeeding years.

In the fall of 1912 I sold the Enterprise to J. W. Lamb and moved to Brownsville where I purchased one-third interest in a clothing store owned by D. L. Spero. After six months of the merchandising business an accounting was held and learned to my sorrow that I was over \$2,000 poorer but wiser and decided to dissolve partnership. Spero remained in the clothing business while I returned to my first love -- newspaper business. Obtained a job as city editor of the San Benito Light, a daily owned by Stephenson at a salary of \$18 per week. Stayed with the Light several months then made arrangement to buy the Edinburg paper, the Hidalgo County Advance from E. M. Card. Bought it on nothing down and \$50 monthly.

Edinburg was then, in the latter part of 1913, a hustling busy, (*Hidalgo*) county seat town. Was promised and given the full support of the courthouse clerk for two years when a school trustee election came up and I supported a candidate opposed to the "ring". This again marked a turning point in my career. The courthouse gang shut down on me and canceled a fat delinquent tax list I had been awarded earlier by the Commissioners Court and proceeded to starve me out. In doing so they brought in another newspaper. Realizing that I was up against, I negotiated with McAllen business men for the purchase of the McAllen Monitor, owned and published by M. J. Cox. The deal being completed early in December 1915. I made arrangements to turn back the (*Edinburg*) plant to Mr. Card and closed the Advance on Dec. 31, 1915 with a scathing rebuke editorialized on the front page against the "Old Regime".

On Jan. 1st, 1916 I took over the McAllen Monitor. Europe was then in the throes of a big war with considerable talk about the U.S. being drawn into it. Mexico was unsettled with Mexican bandits frequently making disastrous raids on the American side of the Rio Grande, killing people, stealing horses, equipment, ammunition, etc.⁴ The state militia was called out to run these marauders out of the country. Then Mexico was invaded by Gen. Pershing, causing great unrest throughout the border sections. Thousands of militia men from various states were rushed to the Border, set up camps and trained their battalions. On July 4th, 1916 McAllen became headquarters for New York Militia who brought over 30,000 men and equipment here to establish a camp. Within less than 24 hours after the militia landed and every eating establishment within miles of McAllen was cleaned out of provisions. Even hardware, implement and dry goods establishments were hard pressed to fill the demands of the troopers. This was the beginning of McAllen's steady climb toward a real business city.

My little printing establishment, then equipped with a small printing press, capable of printing only two pages at a time at a speed of only 500 pages an hour, a small job printing press and a

handful of type, was woefully inadequate to cope with the demand made upon it by the influx of 30,000 men and officers. To increase the output and keep up with the demand I went further in debt and ordered a complete printing plant costing more than \$10,000, including a linotype machine, a modern power newspaper press, larger printing presses for commercial printing, new type etc. Most of this equipment came through by EXPRESS as the business in hand had to be taken care of. In addition to this I was forced to build my own printing home as rents on Main Street were soaring month after month. With these heavy obligations facing me and continued high prices being paid for labor and materials it became evident in 1924 that I must either sell or be forced into bankruptcy. In 1924 the Valley was hit by a depression, cutting off considerable revenue to all business concerns. It was then I sold the plant to C. H. Pease of the Water Users Association. After paying off all obligations and taxes I had \$6,000 left. This I used to purchase the Willacy County News in Raymondville (*approx. 20 miles north of Harlingen, TX*) on Oct. 1st, 1924.

Here, again, I took over a run-down newspaper and built up a thriving business. The plant was completely run down with the exception of a new linotype machine. Otherwise everything in it had to be rebuilt or replaced with new machinery and type. Again I bought heavily in type and machinery.

Politics were at fever heat in Willacy County. Factions being divided into two well defined camps -- Independents and Democrats. Feelings ran high on both sides and I had the crazy notion I could bring them together by publishing a strictly impartial paper, giving both factions opportunity to air their grievances through my columns and writing editorials along peaceful lines. My efforts went for naught. After giving them the best newspaper ever published in the county, I was forced to meet opposition by a new plant brought in by one of the political factions. However, this paper did not affect me as badly as opponents thought it would. I continued to hold my patronage and maintain a first class weekly paper. On April 30, 1930 I sold it to R. M. Gilmore.

I continued to reside in Raymondville for over a year, selling fire and life insurance. Took a "fly" into politics that year running for County Judge and was defeated in a three-cornered race for the nomination. Following my defeat my family became dissatisfied with living in Raymondville and decided to move to Harlingen. I invested money made from the sale of the Raymondville plant into the tire business, taking on the Valley agency for General Tires.

I did not know it then, but later found out to my sorrow, that I was embarking into a business I knew little or nothing about at a time when the country was passing through the worst depression in its history. However, hard times did not strike the Valley as yet and the tire business was going over exceptionally well, with payments being met by purchasers on time payment contracts. This kept up until the fall of 1932, when financial institutions began to fail and fold up, tying up thousands of dollars of purchasing power. The bank I did business with in Harlingen, and in which I had a considerable cash balance, failed to open its doors one Saturday morning. Then things began to happen thick and fast! Credit, even among our best customers, went from bad to worse. There were no cash sales. Those made on time, even protected by mortgages, were never paid. I had to pay cash for my merchandise, and, not being able to sell for cash was soon forced to the realization that to remain in business would be suicide. Hence on

January 1, 1933, I closed out the tire business, returning what stock I had on hand to the General Tire Co., thus liquidating in full my indebtedness to this company and coming out of the tire business with a whale of experience and considerably less cash than when I first started in the business world.

Worked for several months as news editor for KRGV radio station in Harlingen. Resigned to accept Valley-wide news reporter for the Harlingen Star. Was elected secretary-manager of Harlingen Junior Chamber of Commerce for a year or more. As well as owned and operated a package liquor store for many months.

While living in Harlingen on *Dec. 23, 1934* our daughter, Rachael Emma, was married to Charles Wolff at a quiet family ceremony conducted in our home there. This wedding was attended by the groom's father (*Edward*) and mother (*Molly*), my sisters Angele and Celine, Mrs. (*Salina Bollack*) Ashheim (*Isadore's sister-in-law*) of Brownsville and several other relatives and friends.

Early in 1939 we moved to Brownsville where I have been engaged in several occupations including work as a civilian employee at government posts (*Fort Brown*) during the war, clerical work in the courthouse, and other jobs.

The crowning event of these troublesome years came the early part of this month, April 1950, when through the generosity of Sister Celine, that (*Celine*), Alice, and Angele and myself were permitted to meet each other after a lapse of many years at Celine's comfortable cottage in McAllen. We spent the better part of two weeks in a delightful renewal of family life which so early in my career I had willfully thrown away.

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EPILOGUE

Isadore loved smoking his pipe, always with Prince Albert tobacco, from a tin. In his later years he rode a bicycle for transportation. He was respected and liked by all who knew him, and he loved his family very much, as we love him. He remained active in Freemasonry to his last days.

When Isadore owned the Edinburg newspaper, he opposed the notorious Sheriff A. Y. Baker of Hidalgo County. Edinburg is the county seat. Baker put Isadore in jail overnight, with no cause.

Isadore Moritz died in Brownsville, Texas in June of 1958, at age 75, of a ruptured aortal aneurism. He is buried along with his wife, Julia, in the Temple Emanuel cemetery in McAllen.

In the winter of 1957-58 he entered the Methodist Hospital in Houston as a patient of Michael DeBakey, who was becoming famous for his treatment of aneurisms by surgical replacement of the affected vessel with a synthetic section. While waiting for surgery, Isadore was exposed to very cold air, as is commonly experienced in hospitals. He developed pneumonia, from which he recovered. However, after that, DeBakey would not perform the surgery on him. He was 74 years old at the time.

NOTES

1. Celine married L. P. Peck of San Antonio and eventually settled in McAllen, Tx. She raised her deceased sister Clara's two sons: Simon and Leonard Frank. Leonard lived in Austin. Simon, a prominent lawyer, lived in Houston.
- 2 Gustave became a medical doctor and lived in St. Louis, Mo. He had one daughter, Erma.
3. The Jewish Orphans' Home in New Orleans still exists, it is now called the Jewish Children's Regional Service, and supports needy Jewish teens and young adults with scholarships. Their records show that Isadore was admitted on April 28, 1884 (age 13 months) and departed on June 6, 1891 (age 8).
4. Isadore was part of an armed vigilante group at that time, organized to defend against Mexican bandits that crossed the River.