

**George Glotzbach**  
**Narrator**

**Deborah Locke**  
**Interviewer**

**New Ulm, Minnesota**  
**August 11, 2011**

**AL = Aimee LaBree**  
**Minnesota Historical Society**

**DL = Deborah Locke**  
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**GG = George Glotzbach**

AL: This is Aimee LaBree on August 11, 2011 in New Ulm, Minnesota. Interviewee George Glotzbach, Interviewer, Deborah Locke.

DL: Could you spell your name for us please?

GG: G-L-O-T-Z-B-A-C-H

DL: When and where were you born?

GG: I was born in the Union Hospital in New Ulm, Minnesota on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1931.

DL: Who were your parents?

GG: My father was Linus C. Glotzbach and my mother was Lucile Kuske Glotzbach.

DL: Who were your grandparents?

GG: My grandparents on my father's side were George U. Glotzbach after whom I am named, and his wife was Eva Black Glotzbach. On my mother's side, my grandmother was Louise Schmid Kuske and my grandfather was Paul William Kuske.

DL: Your siblings?

GG: None.

DL: How long have you lived here?

GG: Born and raised here, moved to St. Paul when I was 16, lived all over the United States since then and came back here to retire in the summer of 2003.

DL: What did you do for a living?

GG: Four years in the Air Force and the rest of my working life in the insurance business.

DL: What is your heritage?

GG: It's all German. All of my ancestors on both sides of my ancestry were German speaking. It may have said France or in those days Saxony or Prussia on the passport or the birth certificate but they were all German speaking.

DL: Where did you go to school?

GG: I spent my first eleven years of school here in New Ulm. I started at Washington grade school in 1936 and left here after my junior year in 1948 and took my senior year at St. Thomas Military Academy in St. Paul. Then I went on to two years of college at what was then St. Thomas College, now the University of St. Thomas, and two years at the University of Minnesota. I graduated in December of 1953 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. I was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the Air Force at the same time.

DL: What's the first news story that you remember from your childhood?

GG: News story! News story! Hmm.

DL: Something that made you aware of events beyond your home.

GG: I suppose the most significant event was the bombing of Pearl Harbor at the beginning of World War II.

DL: Which relative had the most influence on you?

GG: Hard to say. I'd say it was about equal. My father was a very strong minded person and a very successful lawyer and businessman but he spent a lot of time away from home. We were living in New Ulm and he spent a lot of time during my formative years in St. Paul so he was often gone except for a day or two on the weekend. So I lived with my mother and my grandmother here growing up. I'd have to say that it was 50/50.

DL: Tell us about your parents. What were they like?

GG: My father was a strong minded, fair minded, lawyer at heart, a fair but tough father. My mother and my grandmother, with whom I lived, thought I was the apple of their eye and they spoiled me rotten.

DL: What did you learn about family history when you were growing up and who told you about it? Did they talk about the past?

GG: Yes, they talked about the past but as most people in those years did, it was just in passing. It would just drift in and drift out of the conversation without being the objective of the conversation. To back up a little bit (I could do this in German but I'll do it in English) my grandparents all decided, "We're in America now." We may speak German at certain points because we're all German speaking but when World War I came along, it was decided that they would speak English in public. By the time my parents came along, they were Americanized to the point where, "We are Americans now, we only speak English." A little German would pop into the conversation from time to time but my grandmother who moved in with us in 1932 after my grandfather died, was the German speaker. She had been born and raised here in New Ulm and grew up speaking German, went to German school and all. That's where I learned my German. So my formative years were a typical mixture of German Americans as only a few places in the United States you could experience, New Ulm being one of them.

DL: Do you still speak fluent German?

GG: I wouldn't say fluent but I speak what I call conversational German. I can get along fine in a routine conversation. The German that I do have, I use a lot, often as the guide for Chamber of Commerce tours that take place in New Ulm. There are a couple other people who do that. So I've got this kind of little area of expertise and I use it. My wife has Swiss and German ancestry. Do you know the difference? OK. Germany was formed in 1871. Before 1871 there was no Germany. What we think of as Germany today was a collection of 325 Germanic States. Each one was its own little thing: dukedoms, principalities, dioceses, and all that. It wasn't until Otto von Bismarck came along in 1871 that Germany was formed. So Germany is younger than the city of New Ulm, which was founded in 1854.

DL: That's interesting. I didn't know that.

GG: There's also a New Ulm (Neu Ulm if you want to say it in German) in Germany and that New Ulm, Germany is younger than New Ulm, Minnesota.

DL: Did you ever hear of the 1862 US-Dakota War during your growing up years?

GG: Oh, I heard about it a lot. You couldn't avoid it. I don't remember anything specific from my ancestors regarding my ancestors' involvement in the war. My great great grandfather on my mother's side, Christian Adam, arrived here in 1855 and drowned in the Cottonwood River not far from where I live, in 1856. He is probate case number one

in Brown County, the first white recorded death. His wife Petronella remarried sometime thereafter. The marriage was performed by Wilhelm Pfaender, the founder of New Ulm. That is marriage number one in Brown County. Christian died before the Indian War and Petronella died in 1919, so I never knew her. My grandmother who lived with us, I can't remember her ever speaking of the Indian War. She would have known of them only from her mother Mary, who was a child of Christian and Petronella, Mary Adam Schmid. So I never heard anything passed down from the family on my mother's side. On my father's side, occasionally there was talk about the Indian War but that family didn't arrive here until 1867, five years after the Indian War. I do remember my grandmother, Eva Black Glotzbach, mentioning that her older brother had a tomahawk with which somebody had been killed during the Indian War. There was a tomahawk in the family for a number of years. I know not what became of it but in my memory, it was too new and too commercial looking to have been used at the time. I think it was a replica of something sometime. So the long and short of it is, I don't have any direct memory of any discussions on either side of the family.

Christian Adams' son Anton was here in New Ulm inside the barricades at about the age of ten during the first and second battles of New Ulm. I've got some notes in my files about that. But I have no direct knowledge of that kind of conversation. Whatever I've got, you can get from Darla [with the Brown County Historical Society] because she's got the same thing. Just about everything that I've got on my family ancestry has been copied and it's at the Historical Society. So that's the family side of it.

Terry Sveine and I have a list of 25 names by which this event has been called over the course of time. Political correctness being what it is, [the name of the war] changes not quite from week to week but often enough. So now it's called the US-Dakota War of 1862 and that's fine. When I grew up, it was called the Indian Massacre. Later it became known as the Great Sioux Uprising which is kind of my favorite term. When I was a boy, it was a cause for celebration by both the whites and the Indians. We were all glad it was over. We got together from time to time and in the parades that occurred, the 75<sup>th</sup>, (what year was that?) in 1937 [there was a] big parade downtown. Indians were participants. It was a big happy time for everybody. There was no animosity of any kind that I can remember.

DL: Do you remember this? Were you there?

GG: Yeah, sure, I was in it.

DL: What did you do?

GG: I was dressed in a little costume.

DL: A little Pilgrim costume?

GG: Well no, probably cowboys and Indians. I presume I was a cowboy. I think maybe I can remember having an Indian headband with a feather in it one time. But in those times we played cowboys and Indians and I had a cowboy outfit.

DL: Would this be in August, then, of that year?

GG: Probably August of 1937.

DL: You don't remember it as being partisan in any way?

GG: No. That is to say in these kinds of public events, they were a celebration. Today, political correctness again being what it is, it is now changed into a commemoration. [We] don't call it a celebration any more. If you were to go to the German-Bohemian Heritage Society Library out here on South Minnesota Street, and take a look at... I saw this movie just a couple of months ago. Somebody had taken kind of a home movie of the 1962 event here. There were Indians performing dances and everybody was having a big happy time together. The animosity then in those days you would get not in a direct way.

I was a boy at the time, not exactly knowing or understanding what it was all about. Nobody sat me down and told me good things or bad things about the event. It was just, a hundred years ago there was a war between the whites and the Indians and the whites won and the Indians now live on the reservation and we live here and we can go there any time we want and see the reservation and they can come here any time they want. Sometimes we celebrate together and that's about it.

Now I suspect, and I don't know this, but I suspect that if you lived in Milford Township and your name was one of those associated with the families that were killed up there, undoubtedly you would get filled with reminiscences from your ancestors, your parents and grandparents about the troubles of the time. But I never went through that. It's only lately that I remember the conflict between certain Indians and the white community brought to public knowledge by people like Angela Cavender. The actions and speeches and events by her and others in the last few years, the demonstrations up at Fort Ridgley have done more to set back the relationships between the two races than anything I can think of. You've got to remember, looking at it from New Ulm's point of view, that the Indians had good cause for their unhappiness. The government annuities were late. The whites were making them change their culture. There were fights going on here and there and everywhere. So from the Indian point of view, they had a cause against the federal government. I understand that and I don't think any fair person would disagree with that.

Now today, in my great opinion, [I believe that] the Indians attacked the wrong people. They should have attacked the federal government and the Fort. But they didn't. The Indians attacked the whites – defenseless, unarmed and generally a peace loving people. New Ulm did not attack the reservation; the reservation attacked New Ulm twice. So from that point of view which I hold, especially when you read contemporary

books from the time (and I've got a few of those at home because I've got a pretty broad library on all this), the atrocities committed by the Indians against the whites are unforgiveable. I understand that that was the Indian culture of the time but that was not the German culture of the time and it is not the culture of today. So is it any wonder when the kinds of massacring that was done would cause one to be displeased with the event today.

GG: I could talk more about that if you want but I mean that's kind of where I'm coming from on all this.

DL: What atrocities are you talking about?

GG: I'm talking about how the Indians killed people and what they did to them after they had murdered them. I mean this business of killing innocent women and children, chopping their heads off, pulling babies out of wombs, nailing babies to barn doors. Whether all of that is factually correct you don't quite know because the white men are the people who wrote the histories and the Indians never wrote anything down and therefore all you've got is their oral history and the oral history of most Indians has been kept pretty close to home. They don't broadcast their oral history so you tend to get a one sided view of all that. I've got two books at home, one a contemporary book written in 1863 by a guy who was a sub-officer to Sibley and Flandreau and those people. [During the editing process, Mr. Glotzbach added the book title: History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863 by Isaac V.D. Heard, Harpers & Brothers, 1863] He recorded how white victims of the war had been found and it's awful by today's standards and by the standards of the day back then. I understand that there were likewise scalplings and all that kind of stuff by the whites on the Indians following that but I think most of that was a result of having learned from the Indians what they did to the whites returned the favor on the Indians. So there you are.

DL: Is it possible that some of those accounts were exaggerated?

GG: Certainly.

DL: It sounds like you buy them, however.

GG: I'm saying you read Curtis Dahlin's book on how they died. He records the deaths of a hundred and some people in there. He can't be wrong on all hundred. If only half of them are right... I will grant you they were written by white men sometimes years and years later and sometimes contemporary with the events. But this book that was written in 1863 by this sub-lieutenant to the Indian campaign certainly does have the ring of truth to it. So are a few of them wrong? Sure. Are all of them wrong? No way. [Book title added at later date: Dahlin, Curtis. Dakota Uprising Victims: Gravestones and Stories, Beaver Pond Press, 2007]

DL: Do you think war is ever kind?

GG: GOD WAR IS AWFUL! You just have to look at what's going on in Afghanistan and Iraq, places like that today. And Somalia, the human degradation that's going on in Somalia it puts what we're talking about in a very small capsule. In Somalia today, they're killing and starving people by the millions. We're talking about a couple of thousand people here. I don't mean to minimize any of that but I'm just saying man's inhumanity to man is just unimaginable.

DL: You said earlier that what the Dakota allegedly did to children was unforgivable. At the same time we have news accounts from Iraq of the number of children that the UN Forces blew up. Literally blew up.

GG: It's awful. War is hell. Winston Churchill in World War II ordered the destruction of a great German city and his own Air Force, British Air Force officers, did not want to destroy Dresden. Dresden was essentially an open city full of refugees fleeing the Russians. The British came over and carpet bombed that town with incendiary weapons and waited two hours until the fires were going real good and the firemen from all the surrounding towns had rushed in to put out the fires and then they came back and did it again so they would be sure to get the firemen on the second round. When that was over and daylight comes and the few thousands and thousands of people who were left were beginning to leave the city -- then the Americans came over and carpet bombed them all again. They must have killed somewhere between two-hundred and five-hundred thousand people. They never knew how many. That was a deliberate act against a civilian city.

DL: When the Dakota families were marched either through or around New Ulm in route to Fort Snelling, they have stories as well, about having boiling hot water thrown on them, bricks thrown at them. Some of them died because of the violence of the settlers. They might step forward and say those acts were unforgivable. So where does that leave us? You telling us that what they did against the settlers was unforgivable and standing up and saying what you did against women and children, who were forcibly marched and had nothing to do with this war, that's what was unforgivable. So where does that leave us today?

GG: It goes back to what I've said three times already. That inhumanity of man against man is hard to believe. I think the evidence supports the fact that the Indians did not come through New Ulm, that they came around New Ulm. That the women and the other settlers who knew they were passing by went out and threw things at them. I doubt boiling water, but that's possible. Threw things at them and hurt them and may have killed a couple, that is entirely possible. I am inclined to believe it. The timing was bad here because it just so happened that on the very day that they passed by, New Ulm was digging up the dead that had been buried here on Minnesota Street. So I'd be one of the last ones to say that if I'd been there that I would have stayed home. I wouldn't have stayed home.

DL: You mentioned that most of what you've learned has been from reading books but you also mentioned that there were stories handed down in the family. That's what

we're interested in getting at. What do you remember your actual relatives telling you that they recall hearing from that time?

GG: I thought I said that before but I'll say it again. I have no memory of any specific conversation with any of my ancestors about the events of the Indian War except for this lone thing about my grandmother remembering that her brother had a tomahawk that had killed somebody.

DL: That was fake.

GG: Either that or there'd been another tomahawk. But whatever it is, I never have particularly believed that story. So essentially my memories of all that are zero.

DL: Have you ever been to Mankato to the execution site?

GG: I've been to Mankato but I never have seen the specific site of the hanging because didn't they move the plaque? See?

DL: It was taken and it disappeared.

GG: My great grandfather on my father's side was farming outside of Mankato with his first wife and their first child when the Indian Wars were about to occur. His first wife died in childbirth with the second child. That child also died. He remarried and brought his second wife back to Minnesota to Mankato and they lived in this dirt floor cabin that was their farmhouse at the time. I have a letter at home where his second wife, who is my great grandmother, says that she wanted to move back to Pennsylvania from whence she had come because she didn't want to live amongst savages. So that little piece I've got at home.

DL: Do you know if she did move back?

GG: Yes, the family moved back and forth between Mankato and a town called Natrona, part of Pittsburgh four times before they finally stuck here in Minnesota. Between 1860 and 1888 they moved back and forth four times before it finally stuck.

DL: Number 13 lists a number of historical places relating to the war. Are any of those places you've been to or have any thoughts about?

GG: Well I want to take the tour of Leavenworth and Milford that is coming up. I've been to Leavenworth and been to the cemetery there but I've not been to the farms and all that that Gary Wiltscheck is going to take us to. I've been to the Milford Monument and the ambush site out there and everywhere else, the Leavenworth Rescue Expedition Monument. I think I've seen all of those that I know of.

DL: Including Fort Snelling?

GG: I've been to Fort Snelling but I've not been to any related monument there.

DL: Oh, the site of the what do they call it the camp, the prison camp?

GG: The prison camp, call that what you will, there are people who will say those people were taken there for safety. To keep those people safe from the depredations of the white man and to feed them, and water them and give them medicine. So there is not all agreement that this was a concentration camp. There are people who will say that was not a concentration... Have you talked to John LaBatte?

DL: Yes.

GG: OK. Enough said.

DL: We've also heard that there was tremendous suffering at the hands of the soldiers. There was illness, there was starvation.

GG: I believe that.

DL: You could see people starving before your eyes and from I understand nothing was done to rectify that.

GG: I can believe there was mistreatment of the Indians and death there. I can believe that.

DL: So they weren't really safe.

GG: There are people who say that they were taken there to be safe and whether they got safe treatment once they got there is a different thing. But that they might have been mistreated along the way or that they were mistreated or killed while they were there, I can believe that. I don't know that but I can believe it.

DL: Give us some impressions especially with your military background, about Fort Ridgely or Fort Snelling. We've heard arguments from some of the Dakota that those places should be burned down and forgotten. We've heard from Dakota vets that it stands as a memorial and it should stand not only as a memorial with regard to the camp area but with regard to the structure itself because of its service to the country during times of war. We've heard from some Dakota that say, "Burn it down." Of course it was a site of tremendous pain and sorrow to the Dakota then and still today. What is your take on that? Would there be any value in destroying a place of great anguish to people?

GG: Have we destroyed Auschwitz in Poland where millions of Jews were gassed? No! We as an American people and the Germans of today, and the people of Poland of today have preserved that specifically so that we today will remember and learn from it. Likewise my answer to you is we should preserve those remaining buildings and areas

and artifacts and all that for the very same reason. Maybe if we see enough of that, we'll try and remember to not do that again to each other. That's a two way street.

DL: What is your opinion of the war?

GG: Well I said earlier, no question but what the Indians had cause to be unhappy. We were fighting them in various places. The treaties were of questionable equality. The payments from the Federal Government were late. All that is true and we were destroying their culture and we wanted to make white men out of them and all of that. I understand that and I have empathy for that. I'm just saying the beef they had was with the Federal Government. OK, let's go after the Federal Government and make war on the Federal Government if that's what it takes. But the way to make war on the Federal Government is not to kill innocent people, innocent unarmed peaceable people. I've said it before, and I'll say it again. The Indians attacked Milford. Milford did not attack the Indians. The Indians attacked New Ulm. New Ulm did not attack the Indians. So from that point of view, we had every right, duty and responsibility to defend ourselves and we did. Now did that serve a peaceable end? I guess it did because we stopped shooting at each other at least at the Battle of Wounded Knee. I'm saying maybe in order for the United States to be what it is today, those wars had to occur. Like we had to fight the Mexicans in the Mexican Wars and we would have fought the Russians in Alaska if they hadn't sold it to us. I was not the policy maker there and the policy makers weren't always in control of policy. Those were made at the scene at Acton when the thing flared up. So I mean, it's like 9/11. The United States didn't declare war on the Muslim Nations. They declared war on us or at least somebody did and killed 5,000 people in one fell swoop. Well is it a great surprise that we armed and retaliated. I think it's perfectly normal. If somebody came in and attacked my family, I'd attack right back.

DL: That's what happened to the Dakota.

GG: Yes.

DL: Someone came in and attacked their families. Someone came in and took their hunting land, removed their buffalo and destroyed their way of life.

GG: True, all that's true.

DL: And they attacked right back as you just said.

GG: And I said there was cause for them to do that. I don't doubt that. I'm just saying from my point of view, they killed the wrong people.

DL: And you think they should have just all gathered and marched to Washington some way and attacked the Federal...

GG: They could have attacked the Federal Government at Fort Ridgely.

DL: There was an attack on Fort Ridgely wasn't there?

GG: But there was also an attack on Milford and New Ulm and Leavenworth.

DL: So they should have limited their attacks to Forts.

GG: I think it should have been military to military, yes, not military to civilian.

DL: We never did that in Iraq.

GG: We've killed...

DL: We didn't do that in Vietnam.

GG: We...

DL: I don't think that happened in World War I or World War II.

GG: What?

DL: You limited your attack to a military environment.

GG: No, I've said that twice already. We have not learned our lesson yet.

DL: There you go.

GG: And a hundred years from now you and I (our descendents) will be saying exactly the same thing. We haven't learned our lesson yet. It's the history of mankind. I'm sorry but that's the history of mankind. You and I and your research project and all the papers that are going to be printed as a result of all this aren't going to change that one iota.

DL: Do you think it's a good idea to commemorate the events of the 1800's?

GG: And you're using the word commemorate rather than celebrate.

DL: We never use the word celebrate.

GG: OK, I'm saying there was a time when celebrations did occur.

DL: That's not the question. The question is: Is it a good idea to commemorate the events of the mid 1800's?

GG: Yes.

DL: What's the best way to do that?

GG: I'm not smart enough to know. I do know that people like Denny Warta here in New Ulm and others have extended what I would consider to be sort of an olive branch to the Indians up at the reservation and have invited the Indians here. Are you aware of the polka band and polka dancers and Indian dancers that were here just a couple of weeks ago?

DL: No.

GG: Oh really! Well this occurred twice in the past. Denny Warta is a guy here who has friends up on the reservation and last year and this year, the New Ulm Area Foundation, The Friends of German Park, and a couple other organizations funded an event. Every Monday night during the summer there's a free concert put on by the Park and Recreation Department down in German Park. The concerts vary from week to week. They tend to be German stuff. Last year this group funded a group of Indian dancers, the name of which I can't remember but a family of Indian dancers danced along side of a polka band and polka dancers. So they had a polka band and polka dancers and they had Indian dancers and Indian drummers and they all performed, I say, together. Sometimes they alternated performances. In just two weeks there was a big event out here at... It was a hot night so they decided to move it inside. If you give me your email, I've got some pictures that I'll send you.

DL: I'd like that.

GG: This was one of those, I call it, olive branch attempts to say, "Hey it's over now, why don't we just make friends." Yeah we'll remember what happened before but we're not going to go around beating each other up for this forever.

I brought along a file here to show you that it hasn't always been quite so bad especially in my family. My father was the head of the Works Progress Administration in Southwestern Minnesota and then for the whole state. He did a lot of work up on the reservation during the 1930's. My father was inducted into the Dakota Tribe as a Lone Pine. I brought along the stories of that today. Here is the building up on the Lower Sioux Agency and the WPA plaque that's on the side... There's the building.

DL: Yes. 1937.

GG: 1937. And here's a newspaper clipping, Thursday June 2, 1938. Director of District WPA, my father, now a member of the Indian Tribe. And he was inducted as Lone Pine.

DL: That's quite an honor, to be adopted.

GG: Yes! I thought, "Hey isn't that nice?" I guess that doesn't include me but you know... [Laughter] I mean it's a mixed bag we're talking about here. You made me say

things that I normally would not say in polite conversation but you asked me what I really thought and I'm telling you what I really think. But I don't go around talking like this every day and making trouble. I don't. But when you get down to where I eat, where I think, I can sum it all up in one sentence I said I've said three or four times now: The Indians had great cause [but] they just killed the wrong people from my point of view. That sums it all up in one sentence.

DL: Thank you.

U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project  
Minnesota Historical Society