

## Interview with John Jacob Albrecht (JA)

Conducted by Betty Maier (BM)

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**BM:** Were going to start by asking John what his name is, date of birth and where you were born?

**JA:** I'm John Jacob Albrect, born in Sad Creek, North Dakota.

**BM:** Is that a township, Sad Creek?

**JA:** Yes

**BM:** That's in Emmons County then?

**JA:** Yes

**BM:** The birth date?

**JA:** I was born in 1918, February the 4<sup>th</sup>.

**BM:** What was your father's name?

**JA:** Fred Albrect

**BM:** Do you know where he came from? Did he come from South Russia?

**JA:** He came somewhere (A12) from Russia

**BM:** When and where did he die? Do you know?

**JA:** Yes. He died in 1963, in Linton.

**BM:** He must be buried then in?

**JA:** In Linton Cemetery.

**BM:** What was your mother's name?

**JA:** Katie

**BM:** What's her maiden name?

**JA:** Katie Leier

**BM:** Was she born here in the States or in Russia?

**JA:** She was born in the States here.

**BM:** Do you know where?

- JA:** Ashley
- BM:** And where is she buried?
- JA:** She's buried in the Linton cemetery.
- BM:** What year did she die?
- JA:** She died in 1959.
- BM:** And how many brothers and sisters did you have in your family?
- JA:** I had three brothers and four sisters.
- BM:** Can you give me the names of them and in the order? I have a hard time doing that with my own kids, I don't know.
- JA:** Alfred Albrecht, Katie Albrecht, Emma Albrecht, Eddie Albrecht, John Albrecht, Martha Albrecht, Frieda Albrecht, and Phil Albrecht.
- BM:** That's great. Do you have any recollections of what your mother told you about growing up?
- JA:** (A28)
- BM:** His mother
- JA:** (A30)
- BM:** Did your father tell you any stories about his growing up?
- JA:** Yes. He did. He said things were rough when they were in Russia and they were told at one time to move out now and it was below zero weather. That's about all he said till they moved to the United States.
- BM:** In other words, they didn't tell you many stories about the old country?
- JA:** No. No.
- BM:** Do you remember any of the village names they lived in?
- JA:** I remember he said something about (A37 White) Russia, where they lived at.
- BM:** When we filled out the form on this oral history interview on some of the records Kleenbergdorf was the village that the Albrecht family had been born in. So we are sort of assuming that John's father was also born there because one of his brothers was born there too. Did your father ever say that he wanted to go back to the old country to visit family?
- JA:** No he never did. I think he maybe couldn't afford it anyway (Laughter).
- BM:** Did they ever get any letters from the old country?
- JA:** Yes, they got some information from over there.
- BM:** And that's this one that was sent

- JA:** My uncle Chris wrote back and forth all the time. (A51) He sent clothes and stuff over there, a number of things.
- BM:** During what time period?
- JA:** It was in the 50's
- BM:** What language did you speak as a child?
- JA:** German
- BM:** So both your mom and dad then spoke German and that was spoken in the family home?
- JA:** Yeah. I don't think my mother even knew how to talk English.
- BM:** Didn't at all, ever huh?
- JA:** No. I don't think.
- BM:** She died in 19-
- JA:** 1957
- BM:** Do you know what dialect you spoke?
- JA:** Low German.
- BM:** Low German. What were some of the childhood chores you had to do, that you liked to do?
- JA:** Feed the cows, hogs and the chickens, and the farm work, I loved that.
- BM:** What were some of the things that you didn't like to do?
- JA:** I don't think there wasn't anything...cleaning out the barn (laughter).
- BM:** Cleaning out the barn was the worst thing. (laughter) Were you ever disciplined? Did your mom and dad ever discipline you?
- JA:** Yes, my dad did.
- BM:** Mom didn't though?
- JA:** No, she didn't
- BM:** She was a gentle person.
- JA:** (Laughter) How do you say that in German? "Schlaeg grikt."
- BM:** Did you get to go to school?
- JA:** Oh yes, I went to school.
- BM:** What kind of a school did you go to?
- JA:** Country school.

- BM:** One room school?
- JA:** One room school.
- BM:** You went through grade eight?
- JA:** No I didn't. I went up to sixth grade.
- CM:** Who were some of the kids that went to school there with you?
- JA:** There was a Scherr bunch, Adam Scherr's kids and Moensch, Jacob Moensch, and Hoeger.
- BM:** Were they all German?
- JA:** I would say they were all German.
- BM:** Do you remember your teachers?
- JA:** I don't remember no one. Huber, Lady Huber....
- BM:** Was there religion in your home?
- JA:** Yes
- BM:** Was the church an important part of your upbringing?
- JA:** Yes it was
- BM:** Which church was this?
- JA:** The Baptist church
- BM:** What language were the church services and prayers in?
- JA:** There were German when I was a kid. Then they switched over to English later on.
- BM:** Later on would have been in what year? Do you remember?
- JA:** I would say in the 50's.
- BM:** How did your parents feel about this switch over? Did they accept that or did they not change?
- JA:** They changed but they didn't like it what it was.
- BM:** Were you baptized then in the Baptist church?
- JA:** No I wasn't.
- BM:** Were you confirmed?
- JA:** No.
- BM:** Where there any special activates then in the church that you took part in?
- JA:** Yes there was singing and Christmas programs and stuff like that.

- BM:** Where your parents or grandparents involved in founding or joining of another church or in that same church, the Baptist church?
- JA:** They were only in the Baptist church
- BM:** They were only in the Baptist church.
- JA:** Uncle Chris was a charter member of the Linton church
- BM:** Uncle Chris Albrect was charter member of the Baptist church in Linton. Another question that we have is how did the family deal with death? Were there special songs or special events that you remember with death and grieving perhaps with your grandparents?
- JA:** No there's nothing that I remember but there were special songs they wanted to be sung in church and stuff like that.
- BM:** Were there any wrought iron crosses that were used as grave markers in your family? Yours were all pretty recent so perhaps not.
- JA:** No I don't think that there were any wrought iron stake markers.
- BM:** Are there any heirlooms or objects of sentimental value that have been passed down.
- JA:** Dad's bible, that's about it
- BM:** Your dad's bible was how old when he started that
- JA's friend:** It was probably before he came to this country, there's no dates in it as far as I can see.
- BM:** So you have the family bible and what else?
- JA:** Grandma and grandpa's pictures and that's about it.
- BM:** Both your mother's parents and your father's parents?
- JA:** Both my mother's parents and my father's parents.
- BM:** And the big oval, old fashioned frames. Are there any stories that you can recollect on those?
- JA:** No not really
- JA's friend:** Well Frieda had them, she was a younger daughter, then she had them and when she passed away her husband John Schmir gave them to John, and the bible was given at the same time I think, but Frieda was the first one to have them I think and then it came to John afterwards.
- BM:** I think were going take pictures of those today so we'll put that in the file because its interesting to see both sides of the family like that. Were there Christmas celebrations in your home?
- JA:** Yes, there were. We each got a plate of nuts, peanuts and candy. We really enjoyed them good days.
- CM:** Did you get any fruit, apples or oranges or something like that when you were?
- JA:** Yes we got apples and oranges, peanuts, candy.
- CM:** Did you ever, on Christmas Eve in town the Belzanickel or the Krist Kindle. How did Santa Claus come?

- JA:** Well we didn't really have Santa Claus come in those days.
- CM:** Ok (laughter)
- JA:** We did in my family when my kids grew up.
- BM:** Where there any Easter activities, the Easter bunny come?
- JA:** Yes, the Easter bunny come, we had to hunt for eggs.
- BM:** What kind of eggs? Real eggs or candy eggs?
- JA:** Real eggs
- BM:** Real eggs, ok. Outside or inside?
- JA:** Most of the time they were inside.
- BM:** When you got married were there special marriage ceremonies? Was there a reception held or did you just get married?
- JA:** We just got married. (laughter)
- BM:** There wasn't any according music or anything like that?
- JA:** No, there was no things like that.
- BM:** Did you sing any German songs?
- JA:** No
- BM:** Did you have any kind of a dinner?
- JA:** Well we had – we just went out and spent a few days ...had fun.
- BM:** Where did you meet?
- JA:** I think I met her in the bowling alley in Linton. She was looking for a ride home, and that's where it all started.
- BM:** Now did she live close to you then?
- JA:** Yes she did, about four miles.
- BM:** Oh
- JA's friend:** She was teaching school at San Creek's country school. You didn't give her name at anytime so you don't even know.
- BM:** No we don't. I guess it's suppose to have it on one of the forms here. Who did you marry?
- JA:** Virginia Klein
- BM:** Who were her parents?
- JA:** Eugene Klein and Margaret.

**BM:** What was her maiden name?

**JA:** She was a Baumgartner from Strasburg.

**BM:** We were talking about family activity, I've asked John about dancing and playing cards and he said that they did belong to the Baptist church, so did they not dance and they did not play cards. Was there any music in your family? Did they play any instruments?

**JA:** No there weren't.

**BM:** Were the children permitted to stay with the adults when some other adults came to visit you?

**JA:** Yes they were once in a great while.

**BM:** Were there any community meetings for young people or the families?

**JA:** Dad went to the neighbors, there were a lot of neighbors in them days and we were gone once or twice a week to visit.

**BM:** Did the kids get to play games then when you went, depending on what time of year I suppose?

**JA:** Yeah we played baseball, hide-n-go seek, you name it.

**BM:** Were your parents or grandparents superstitious in any way?

**JA:** They were sometimes.

**BM:** Like what?

**JA:** Like if you would get into trouble or something like that?

**BM:** What do you mean, if you got into trouble?

**JA:** Doing things you shouldn't. (Laughter)

**BM:** Oh, ok

**JA's friend:** She meant superstitious.

**JA:** Oh, no not really, not superstitious.

**BM:** What happened when you got sick, when some of the kids got sick? What did your parents do?

**JA:** They tried to take care of us the best they could.

**BM:** You didn't go to the doctor then?

**JA:** Yeah sometimes we had to go to the doctor?

**CM:** Tell about your experiences when you were in school that day.

**JA:** I got sick one day at school. I was sick before I went to school but I didn't want to miss no school so I went to school and about 10:30 in the morning I had to vomit and didn't quite make it out of school, so the teacher made me stay in the horse barn the rest of the day. I had whooping cough and got

pneumonia and my appendix bursted; I was pretty bad shape. I couldn't hardly walk by the time I had to go home. It took me about three weeks to recover.

**JA's friend:** You were in the hospital.

**JA:** Yeah I went to the hospital then

**JA's friend:** They operated on you.

**JA:** Yeah.

**BM:** The teachers were pretty strict and stern in those days weren't they?

**JA:** Yeah they were.

**BM:** Do you remember how old you were?

**JA:** About nine years old.

**BM:** Did you have anybody in the neighborhood who helped with home remedies or was your mother pretty good?

**JA:** My mother was pretty good at that. We did have neighbors that had remedies to help overcome sicknesses and stuff like that.

**BM:** I don't imagine that you would remember if there were midwives in your community?

**JA:** No I don't

**BM:** Were there German newspapers in your home?

**JA:** Yes there were

**BM:** You remember what they were?

**JA:** No I don't but my dad was getting two or three of them. The Daily German paper...and he checked up pretty well what was going on in the world.

**BM:** Did you ever read them?

**JA:** No, I didn't know how to read German.

**BM:** Oh that's right, people can speak German around here but they didn't learn how to read it. Do you remember if he read anything about families back in Germany?

**JA:** No he didn't - about the family that was left behind in Germany, he talked about them but that was it.

**BM:** Were there any funnies or comics connected with that paper?

**JA:** Yes there was.

**BM:** You didn't read those either huh?

**JA:** Well if they were English.



**BM:** Do you remember when your family got any modern conveniences like electricity?

**JA:** Yes, I would say in the late 50's.

**BM:** How about radio?

**JA:** The radio we got back in the 40's.

**BM:** Do you remember when you got your first car?

**JA:** No, I don't, but my dad had a car ever since I can remember.

**BM:** What kind of a car was that?

**JA:** Overland was the first one.

**BM:** Do you remember when you got your television?

**JA:** Yes, I remember that, it was in the early 50's.

**BM:** What were your favorite programs?

**JA:** Well on the radio it was Amos and Andy and when TV...I can't remember what was – we were just was just glad to see a picture.

**BM:** Did you get to watch Lawrence Welk?

**JA:** Oh yes, that was very important, the Lawrence Welk show we religiously listened to that once a week.

**BM:** Did you know Lawrence Welk or?

**JA:** Yes, Lawrence Welk was my wife's first or second cousin.

**JA's friend:** Tell about when they come and hunted pheasants and ate steaks at your house.

**JA:** Well, old Lawrence brought steaks from Chicago at the Stockyard Inn and my wife made them. Lawrence was quite a guy; he was just an ordinary person like me and you. (A239) to talk to. He hunted pheasant and stuff like that, handed souvenirs.

**BM:** He was in Chicago at that time then huh?

**JA:** No, not all the time, but Virginia's brother he worked in the Stockyard Inn and that's how through Lawrence we got some steaks from the Stockyard Inn.

**JA's friend:** One of these dippers is from Lawrence Welk. He handed out soup ladles and one of these is from him, I don't know, they're not marked.

**BM:** He was always giving something out. He never came when he didn't have something to hand to people.

**JA's friend:** Now this is the one here that he gave because the other one is from Peavy Grain company.

**JA:** Give jack knives and combs and stuff like that.

**BM:** Which family member do you remember the best going back to your ancestors or older generations than you and who do you look up to?

- JA:** One I look up to very much is Virginia's best aunt.
- BM:** You have your best and then you have your ordinary one right. (Laughter)
- CM:** Now Phil Berglund, her maiden name was Baumgartner.
- BM:** She was married to Gus Berglund who was a teacher.
- BM:** Is there anything else that you would like to say about something that we haven't covered cause we have left a lot of open spaces in here.
- CM:** Now let's go back to your earlier days of farming. Did you ever work with horses?
- JA:** I sure did work with horses. I started out in '39 - farming. I had a car and I was about 19-20 years old and I gave that up for run down tractor and I thought that was pretty hard to do you know.
- CM:** What kind of a tractor was it?
- JA:** An old 1530 McCormick Deering.
- CM:** Now did your dad ever have any tractor or anything like that in his farming days?
- JA:** Yes he did. He had a 2-cylinder Hart-Parr and an old 2-cylinder...wasn't Rumley.
- CM:** Did he ever have any steam engines in the family?
- JA:** No we never had no steam engines.
- CM:** Who did the thrashing for you at harvest time?
- JA:** My uncle Joe. Joe had the thresher.
- CM:** Joe did the community threshing. Did you pitch bundles and pitch stacks too?
- JA:** I sure did
- CM:** Did you have binders and headers when you were harvesting?
- JA:** Yes, we had binders and headers, and finally went into combines.
- CM:** How old were you when you first had to start to drive the headerbox?
- JA:** I must have been about seven years old.
- CM:** And your brothers, they had to all work on the headerboxes too when you were headering?
- JA:** Yes they sure did.
- CM:** How many horses were on your header at the time?
- JA:** Four horses
- CM:** Headerbox with two horses.
- JA:** Yes

- CM:** Did you header with two headerboxes and one header?
- JA:** That's right
- CM:** How often did give your horses a rest when they were on the header?
- JA:** At lunch time.
- CM:** So they worked four hours on and four hours off huh? (Laughter) How many acres did your dad farm when he was starting out?
- JA:** About 300 acres.
- CM:** Did he homestead?
- JA:** Yes, he did homestead the farm we were on.
- CM:** Did the girls have to go out and help in the harvest fields too?
- JA:** Yes they did. They had to stack the stacks.
- CM:** Did you do any grain binding?
- JA:** Yes, we sure did.
- CM:** Did the whole family go out and shock the grain then?
- JA:** Yes.
- CM:** Did you raise any corn?
- JA:** Yes we did, about 40 acres of corn every year.
- BM:** What did you use that for?
- JA:** First we stacked it up at home and every morning we threw it over the fence and the hogs come and got the corn and then about an hour later turned in the cows and they ate the (A316 stalk) part.
- CM:** How many cattle did your dad have when you were growing up?
- JA:** About 30 head
- CM:** How many hogs?
- JA:** About 30 to 80.
- CM:** That's quite a few hogs
- JA:** 30-80 hogs
- CM:** And chickens?
- JA:** Yes, it was no farm unless you had chickens.
- CM:** How about ducks and geese?

- JA:** No we didn't have.
- CM:** No goats and no sheep?
- JA:** No
- CM:** What was your favorite horses' name?
- JA:** King
- BM:** (Laughter) I've never heard that one before.
- CM:** Konch net da king reita (rest unclear). Could you ride King?
- JA:** We rode him to the neighbors and whatever we had to do with him.
- CM:** Did you ever race with old king?
- JA:** Oh yes. He was the fastest horse around the neighborhood.
- CM:** Do you know what kind of a horse he was?
- JA:** He was a black horse and he really could run.
- CM:** Can you still speak German?
- JA:** Very little
- CM:** Can you say a few words in German like "Wie gehts bei dier heut?" "How are you today?"
- JA:** "Du, du, liegts mir im herzen, du, du, liegts mir rim sinn." (Laughter)
- CM:** Was ish dei namah? (What's your name?)
- JA:** John Albrect.
- CM:** Wiegehts bei euch? (How does it go by you?)
- JA:** Zeimlich gut. (Pretty good.)
- CM:** This will conclude our interview with John Jacob
- BM:** I want to add a little more on here because there is four of us sitting at this table so we want to identify John's friend here. What's your name?
- I'm Betty Miranda and I lived most of my life in Wyoming and in South Dakota. I've lived the last 15 years here with John.
- BM:** What heritage are you?
- Well as far as I know we all came over when they started settling the country and one of my relatives has signed the Declaration of Independence – it's Frank Richard Stockton.
- BM:** I think that's interesting.
- JA:** Yeah, came over on the Mayflower.

**BM:** Thank you Betty and John. You've been most gracious to share all of your family things with us. We've talked about a lot of things in-between our questions, so there might be a few additions to this. Sometimes we get cut off into conversations, so we will be adding a few other things.

Just a note: John and Betty have completed all the answers, so I will integrate that at the end after I have read it. We'll also include in this a letter that was dated August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1956 from relatives updating them on their family, how they left Russia and gone to Germany, so that will be added on to.

A question that we can answer a little more completely from his writing was what kind of work did women have to do outside? He had written down garden, raise the chickens, and his mother also picked cow chips to cook with and was also responsible for milking cows.

Do you remember the special German foods your mother cooked or baked? He remembered that they had Kuchen, noodles, homemade bread and a lot of foods that were made out of flour and also a variety of soups.

Was there music or entertainment in your home? He answered that they had a battery radio which you could hardly hear and a phonograph.

I also wanted to go back about healing techniques. He had here that they ate a lot of jello and a special tea; they used hot packs and a lineament, and then later on they used a product called Vicks. The family also did believe in the folk medicine. They said that infection was treated with cut up chicken, and boils with something they called Denver mud or a poultice.

What do you remember about the role of midwives? He said that he remembered that his Aunt Job was a midwife and that when the doctor was called he would come to the house for a charge of 25 dollars.

What information did you get from the family newspaper? He already told us they got news from Germany.

What about the funnies and the comics? The comics to their family was very important; couldn't wait to get them on Sunday.

Do you remember when your family got its modern conveniences? He said that they always had a windmill and that they got a refrigerator in 1946, their first car in 1936, a telephone in 1955.

Which family members do you remember the best? He remembered his aunt and uncle, Dave and Caroline Job, and some other aunts and uncles, Adolph, Minnie, and Helen who were from Wishek.

He wanted to mention too that of his family there were only three of the eight children left at this time.