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Interview with Ralph and Helena Alberts

Audra Ransburg

Ralph Alberts

Helena Alberts

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Researcher's Name: Audra Ransburg

Event: Interview with Ralph and Helena Alberts

Place: Harding Road, Mount Vernon, OH

Date: February 15, 2001

AR: This is Audra Ransburg interviewing Helena and Ralph Alberts on February 15th at their home on Harding Road.

HA: The reason I buy the meat the way I buy it is- I got the ham here for 99 cents a pound. OK, it cost \$14 for this casserole that feed three or four meals. I buy hamburger from the meat market at 99 cents a pound and I'll buy a five pound bag. You can fix chili, sloppy joes, however you want.

AR: How much is hamburger normally like if you just go to Kroger, it's not 99 cents?

HA: No, This here is more like a ground chuck because there's very little fat in this as you can see this is real good meat. You have to put grease in before you can fry this. And this here in the store is considered ground round almost and that'll run you about \$2.97 a pound. This here is sausage and it is 79 cents a pound, five pound bags at the meat market. You can take and break it down. I'll break this down because I'll mix sausage in with meatloaf with hamburger. Kids like sausage with eggs and muffins and cheese in the mornings. I buy half gallon things of whole milk at 99 cents to a dollar a piece. Whole milk because it will freeze. So I have plenty of milk for the kids. They've got bacon right now, ends and pieces at 59 cents per pound at the meat market. I'm going to go out and get about 25 pounds of it. That will take and save. If you have meat, you can put a meal around it. But if you don't have meat, it's not a meal.

AR: Unless you're vegetarian.

HA: I'm not a vegetarian. I like my vegetable, don't take me wrong. I do like my vegetables. We've got a fish in here- we went last year fishing, year before, caught some fish and froze them. I buy vegetables by the case because it's much cheaper. I go to Aldi. I can get a case of mushroom soup for 39 cents a can. Other stores it's 59, 79 cents. Tomato juice for chili, I buy it also by the case, 99 cents for the great big cans. I buy them tomatoes, for 39 cents a can. I buy the chili beans for 39 cents a can where at other stores they are not. As you can see, the cabinets are jammed.

AR: OK, what about all this bread on the floor here?

HA: I went to the Wonder Bread Place. They had four loafs for a dollar, four loafs for 99 cents.

RA: What it is is day old bread can't sell in the store.

HA: No, this is not day old bread. Expired date on this bread is February the 17th.

RA: Or it's getting close.

HA: Yeah, it's getting close. It an over load. They take it to the stores and if the stores don't need that much, they take it back to the retail places.

AR: And you're going to stick that in the freezer till you use it?

HA: Sure. And also you can buy goodies. 50 cents a box.

AR: OK. How many kid's are you feeding?

HA: Four. Six at times.

AR: Plus Roberta, plus Ralph, plus whoever shows up?

HA: Yeah, so they eat good.

RA: Ain't none of us loosing any weight.

HA: But I always buy in quantities when it's on sale. If stuff's not on sale, I don't buy it- especially if it's meat. If the meat's not marked down at the grocery store, even if it expired that day at the grocery store, you can go in there and they've got round steak for \$2.99 a pound, but they might have \$3.00 marked off it. You can buy it, bring it home, leave it in the paper it's in and put it in one of these here freezer bags, ziplock it and throw it in the freezer the way it is. As long as it's put in the freezer, it's fine. As long as you cook it when you take it out of the freezer.

AR: But you don't do that at home because you don't have one of these huge freezers.

RA: Small one. It'll hold what we buy.

AR: But you're bigger on coupons and stuff at your place.

RA: Yeah.

HA: Coupons are good, but-

RA: She went to the store (Jennifer did) and bought four hundred dollars worth of groceries for a hundred.

HA: All this bread and stuff you see here cost me ten dollars and something.

AR: How much you got there, five bags?

HA: Five bags full of bread plus a bag of donuts, sweet rolls.

AR: How much time's it take her to clip all those coupons? An hour a night, or what?

RA: Maybe one our. She can usually do it. She gets the Sunday paper, the Columbus Dispatch and she'll clip the coupons Sunday night. She takes and puts them in a little file holder, a little box. Like right now, she's over at the house clipping coupons. And of course it helps when you're at the store and you buy on e and get two free.

HA: That was Big Bear.

AR: Where do you guys usually shop?

RA: She'll got to Big Bear, Kroger, Aldi.

HA: Any place that stuff's on sale.

AR: You guys go to grocery shop one day, you'll hit Big Bear, Kroger and Aldi or it just depends?

RA: Yeah, she'll do...

AR: She'll go to all three?

RA: I don't like to grocery shop, so I don't do it.

AR: OK, you've got to tell me the story about the cow.

HA: I got it when it was three days old.

RA: Well, we had it given to us as a calf. Three days old when you got it mom?

HA: Yeah.

RA: We're gonna raise it and butcher it when it gets bigger.

AR: How big?

RA: Oh, it'll probably get-

HA: Eight hundred pounds.

RA: Or probably around a thousand, I'd say.

HA: No, that there is a Jersey. That's not a-

RA: Well, Bobby's Holstein went a thousand.

HA: Holsteins are bigger and fatter.

AR: Where'd you get it?

RA: Farmer. They were just going to let it die. Let it starve to death, so we got that one for free. Just the time to go out and get it.

AR: And how'd you get it home?

HA: The back of Roberta's van in a box.

AR: Did you tell Roberta?

HA: We had the box from our hot water tank. I mean that guy was just a little tiny thing when we got it.

AR: How much you think it'll cost to feed it till it gets to be 800 pounds.

HA: I've got about \$75 in it so far, but it'll be coming off the milk surplus in about another two or three weeks.

RA: We bought a fifty pound bag of milk substitute stuff which has got vitamins and stuff and it takes two bottles in the morning, two bottles at night. It's got a bail of hay sitting out beside it. It'll chew on that too. But eventually it won't even need that surplus stuff, that substitute. It'll need all grain, all hay.

AR: How much is it going to cost to get it butchered?

HA: That depends.

RA: She's getting beef- a quarter beef- off of Vergil, uncle Vergil. It was, what \$90 to have it processed.

HA: But you that one there went and weighed fifteen hundred pounds. And I just have to pay a quarter of it. My own processing bill is what I got. Bobby's was about 800 pounds. Your dad figured out 400 and some pounds.

RA: It was 200 and-

HA: Yeah, but he took it down there to Dee Jay's and Bobby had extra stuff done to his and he didn't get near the meat back he should have gotten back.

RA: But it was butchered and processed for \$250 dollars.

AR: And you get about half its weight back in meat or something like that?

RA: Yeah. About 60 percent back in meat.

HA: It depends on what kind of beef it is. Some beef you don't get quite fifty percent, some you get 70 percent. It depends on what kind of a beef it is. Or what kind of meat it is.

RA: You take a Black Angus, they're a butchering meat. You'll get 70 percent back on that because they're so stalky. They're a big cow.

HA: Some of them you don't get that good out of them. A Jersey is the smallest.

AR: This is a Jersey?

HA: Yeah. Jersey is brown. Farmers do not want the bull calves.

AR: Because they are mostly a dairy cow?

HA: Yeah, they are heavy creamers. Your Holsteins are your heavy milkers, but they don't have much cream. But your Jersey's got more cream than milk. So it depends on what kind of-

RA: And like us, Mom will use- what we didn't use last night, we'll use as leftovers tonight and put something in it.

HA: Doctor it up a little bit. I got two mashed potatoes left from the other night and I'm going to chop some onion up.

RA: It's like this farm over here. Denzle died this summer and they're lotting it off. Sold this whole woods and they're going to gut it out, timber it out and Mom says she's going to try to buy it, but I don't think she'll be able to buy it.

HA: I want to buy right up along my house. I don't want someone right up against me. I'm going to try to buy it. I've got an idea what I want to do, but it's going to take help and stuff too. I would like to put in nothing more than a produce farm- fresh produce. It was more than good. You want to use it during the summer time. But before I do that I've got to get the tractor and the plows and disks. And Denzle's going to have his sale down there and I want to see if I can get his plow.

AR: When's that going to happen?

HA: I don't know. And there are small grants you can get. They don't cost you anything if I could get someone to help me look them up. It's on the computer and I look up grants. I'm going to have to have someone help me do all the paper work. When I buy groceries, I don't buy small quantities. The mushroom soup. I could fix you the best

hamburgers you've ever tasted. They don't even taste like hamburger, they taste like Salisbury steak. I could make you a meatloaf that's delicious.

AR: Could I get that recipe?

HA: No. It's got garlic, onion, Italian seasoning, hamburger- three pounds of hamburger, six or eight eggs. See, I don't measure. I don't use ketchup. I use Bulls eye Barbecue sauce. I use rolled oats. As you can see, well my family's not skinny.

RA: She's got enough money for her trip.

HA: Everything but spending money. She's still got a little bit of spending money she's still going to have to come up with yet. She's done good. And she's an honor student. Her grade point is 3.8. No it's 4.0 now. She went up. She's got a 4.0 all the way across. We went to the Wonder Bread place, honey. You can go up there and get cakes. There's a nickel bakery up there. You can get birthday cakes and everything else. You go into town, they want \$1.69 to \$1.99 for a loaf of bread. You go up there- these big loafs were three for \$1.55. Giant loafs.

-Side conversation with the kids about making Jello right-

HA: This here's a \$1.99 loaf, I got three loafs for \$1.69. So I saved \$2.40 cents. These are the small ones and they are \$1.29 on sale.

RA: So tell me where the savings at?

AR: How much did it cost you in gas to get up there? Did you go up just to go to the Wonder Bread place?

HA: No, I went up to look for a deep freezer. So we went to a wholesale place that's supposed to have freezers real cheap. They were not cheap at all. They were more than what they were at Sears. We stopped at Sears and we stopped at the Wonder Bread place. So it wasn't a wasted trip.

RA: A lot of it depends- you were asking about the gas- it depends on whose vehicle you take. We took my Geo. I put five dollars in it last night. Started out a half tank and right now it's between a half or a quarter.

HA: Even at that, you stop and consider what you've saved. What you're going up for and everything. But you get it for 50 cents a box. You get all sorts of cookies and all kinds of little pies. Anything you want up there in the line of bread.

RA: Now your pies- the little apple pies you get at the store, they were five for \$1.88.

HA: You can usually get them five for a dollar.

AR: Do you ever splurge and spend a whole lot of money for food?

HA: Only time I really splurge on food is when-

RA: When it's on sale.

HA: Once and a while I'll splurge and get stuff to make pizzas. Cake mixes I can go to Aldi and their 79 cents a box. I make my own frosting and decorate them up a little bit. I go where the cheapest things are at. I have to.

RA: Bout the only time we really splurge is Christmas.

HA: Well, even at Christmas, I get the hams on sale. Turkey on Thanksgiving is usually 38 cents a pound. I usually get two of them.

RA: When we buy cheese and stuff like that-

HA: I buy a fourteen pound roll of cheese. It usually costs about 39, 49 cents a pound. If I buy it in the big rolls, they'll slice it down. In the freezer right now, I've got....

AR: Fourteen pounds at a time? And how long does that last you?

HA: Well from last year at new years, I got this. That's the second one I've bought.

RA: We love cheese, we really do. I love cheese.

HA: It's got a little bit of mold on it. Cheese that's got mold on it is good. It cost me \$21 and you cut the mold and I'll have them slice it. Now if they slice it, they charge you so much extra a pound.

RA: That's one thing that you buy it by the bulk. Rolled cheese.

HA: If I go into Big Bear Kroger and pay \$2.99 a pound, you go out there and get it for \$1.49 a pound. Chunk it, or if you've got a meat slicer, you can slice it yourself. You can freeze it.

RA: You don't even buy it by the pound over there. You buy it in little cubes about like that.

HA: It's really much cheaper doing it that way. Sometimes I'll buy the mozzoli, mozazoli for pizza. You can get the five pound loafs of it for \$1.39, \$1.49 pound, but you have to take and great it yourself.

AR: You guys aren't on discover, are you? Do you know anyone that is. In Chicago, Michael was on it for a while and you would get a discount if you bought from the

farmers market, it would be cheaper or you'd have more portions you could buy if you bought local stuff. Do you if that's the case around here?

HA: No, but what you can get here is called a food chair that you can get through the churches. It costs about \$20 and you're supposed to get about \$40 worth of food, but you don't get any choice in what you get.

RA: That's through Inner Church, isn't it?

HA: I think the Salvation Army does it and some of the other churches do it now too. Well, they still have it. I did it for a long time, but there was so much stuff that we wouldn't eat. Well, we would eat everything, but there either wasn't enough of it. You might get four potatoes, three or four carrots, two or three oranges. It wasn't enough for the family. One person it'd be great for.

RA: Is that what you're talking about?

AR: No, the food stamps, but now it's a card that you swipe.

RA: Oh, yeah they've got that but I don't know anything about it. No you don't get anything any cheaper. A lot of places, your farm markets and stuff probably wouldn't take it. But I sell tomatoes in the summer time. I can't take it. I don't have the machine for it. A lot of times if I have bruised tomatoes or something and some people who come up on by that really don't have anything and I will give them the tomatoes. Because I bring them home and they sit there. The kids and I we go and pick them. Ralph cans them for me, he knows how to can and we can. We've got half gallon canning jars and we try to fill all of them up and I've got- I don't know how many- quart jars. We like to put up 200- 250 tomatoes.

AR: When you grow your own food in the summer, what's your main reason you do that?

HA: Because I know someone ain't spitting in the ketchup. I've herd people say they work in these here canning places and stuff and you wouldn't believe some of the stuff people tell in these stories.

RA: Well most of them's just...

HA: The convenience of having it here at the house.

RA: You know your vegetables are fresh when you do it yourself.

HA: You know how they're done up and you know what's in them yourself. No preservative and stuff like they put in at the stores.

AR: What's good about having them fresh?

RA: Just knowing we did it when you can it.

HA: And you feel good when you look at all the stuff you canned on the table and you think well, we done that our selves. She can can peaches. She and Carla did 35 quarts for me one day. She says she wants to learn how to do tomatoes this year.

RA: I tried to do jam by myself one day and I made a lot of ice cream topping.

HA: That was very good. It was delicious on top of the ice cream. Forgot to put the gelatin stuff in there. But we use it on top of ice cream. It was really good. There are so many ways people could save money if they'd just try. But most people don't want to take the time. It does take a long time to do it. I'll be honest. You're tired when you're done.

RA: Your going to see a change. In another six months, stuff's going to go right through the ceiling.

HA: And they won't be able to pay it when they could already be doing something for themselves. All the prices are going up in the grocery store. People are complaining. Why complain? Why not get a freezer and put stuff in it. You can freeze crackers, you can freeze about anything except candy. You go to Aldi and you get crackers as good as Zesta crackers for 39 cents a pound, or 49. I mean it's stupid to go in there and pay the price they want. Noodles. What do you pay for them in the store? These are 49 cents at Aldi's. You'll have to go grocery shopping with me some day. I can be in and out of that store, if there's no one at the register in 20 minutes. If there's no body at the register. OK cocoa, you go buy cocoa- you go to Kroger or Big Bear. You go in and price it. This here is 99 cents. Powdered sugar- a two pound bag, 99 cents. There's no reason to go into the stores and pay such a high price for stuff. Cake mixes, these are wonderful. 79 cents. Why pay a dollar something for Betty Crocker? These are better than Betty Crocker. Jello- 19 cents a packet. You can only get one kind- strawberry, but what's the difference. Put fruit cocktail in it, little bit of whipped cream. Rolled oats- this big container for \$1.39. You go to another store, it's more than that. I do not buy my milk there at Aldi because it's \$2.90 a gallon and I wait till Kroger's got it on sale for a gallon for two dollars, or 99 cents a half gallon and I'll buy two gallons and freeze it. Get a half gallon out at a time, otherwise the kids will drink a whole gallon in one day. Escaloped potatoes- people like escaloped potatoes and they are 69 cents a box. And they are delicious.

AR: Does Aldi have sales too?

HA: Their priced are the same all the time, you go in take your plastic bag, get your boxes. They don't bag it for you there, you do that yourself unless you want your prices to go up. Carry it out yourself. It's a lot cheaper than going to the other stores. Onions is 69 cents for a three pound bag. Like these things I go to Odd Lots for because they're 49 cents. This here's meat tenderizer. They have chili pepper, the have meat tenderizer, they have onions, they've got chipped garlic. They have regular salt garlic, onions and things.

Any kind of seasoning you could imagine. 49 cents a box. Why go to the store and pay three dollars and something? They've got ground cinnamon and other stuff up there. Like this is 99 cents. Celery seed, celery salt. Anything you want. I went and spent almost five dollars for a thing of Sage at Kroger because Aldi was out of Sage and I needed to get sage for thanksgiving and I was very upset. But their salt is about 17 cents for a pound bottle, where other stores it's more expensive. About the only thing I can't get there is Sweet and Low. Their cereal- \$1.59 a box. It's the very same thing the other stores have got. I use cocoa rice. It's the very same thing, just different box. Just like your vitamins. People go to the drug store and pay five dollars for a box of vitamins and they told on T.V. that they run right through the same machine. Different forms, different shapes, different designs on them, but people are willing to pay the higher price.

-End of tape-