

## Pela Alpert: Oral History Transcript

www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Alpert.asp

**Name:** Pela Rosen Alpert (1920 – 2005)

**Birth Place:** Dobrzyn, Poland

**Arrived in Wisconsin:** 1949, Green Bay

**Project Name:** Oral Histories: Wisconsin Survivors of the Holocaust



Pela Alpert

**Biography:** Pela Rosen Alpert was born in Dobrzyn, Poland, on October 26, 1920. She was the youngest of seven children in a well-to-do mercantile family. In the mid 1930s, her sister and brother-in-law, Rose and Jacob Fogel, left Poland to settle in Green Bay, Wisconsin. With the outbreak of World War II, Pela fled with her family to Warsaw when she was 19. She contracted typhus while in the Warsaw Ghetto and nearly died. After her recuperation, her father convinced her to escape from the ghetto by crawling through a hole in a wall. She never saw her family again.

Pela was eventually rounded up for forced labor at the munitions factory at Skarzysko-Kamienna. After more than two years of grueling work, she was transferred first to a labor camp at Czestochowa and then to the concentration camp at Ravensbruck, Germany. She remained at Ravensbruck until late April 1945, when the camp's inmates were rescued by the Swedish Red Cross and transported to Sweden, where she remained for four years.



In February 1949, Pela arrived in Green Bay to live with her sister and brother-in-law. Within months, she was engaged to Richard Alpert, whom she met on a blind date. They were married on February 19, 1950, exactly one year after her arrival in Green Bay. After raising two daughters, Pela worked part-time at a pharmacy. Her husband, a former grocery store owner, was a salesman for a paper company. Pela died in 2005.

**Audio Summary:** Below are the highlights of each tape. It is not a complete list of all topics discussed. Recordings that used only one tape side are marked: (no Side 2)

**Tape 1, Side 1 (no Side 2)**

- Childhood in Poland
- German invasion, August 1939
- Life in and escape from the Warsaw Ghetto
- Deportation of her family members
- Forced labor at the Skarzysko-Kamienna and Czestochowa concentration camps, 1940–1943

**Tape 2, Side 1 (no Side 2)**

- Transfer to the camp at Ravensbruck, Germany
- Brutality of life in the Ravensbruck concentration camp
- Liberation in 1945
- Journey through Denmark for resettlement in Sweden
- Immigration to Wisconsin, February 1949

**Tape 3, Side 1 (no Side 2)**

- Marriage and early family life in Green Bay
- Childhood in Poland
- The Warsaw Ghetto and Ravensbruck concentration camp

**Tape 4, Side 1**

- Immigration to the U.S.
- First impressions of America
- Settling in Wisconsin

**Tape 4, Side 2**

- Marriage and children
- Reflections on life in Green Bay
- Feelings about Green Bay's small Jewish community in the 1950s and 1960s

**Tape 5, Side 1**

- Immigration to the U.S.
- Attitudes toward American culture and politics

**Tape 5, Side 2**

- Attitudes toward depiction of the Holocaust in books and films
- Feelings toward Germany and Israel

## About the Interview Process:

At the time of the interview, Pela had never spoken about her experiences during the Holocaust. Her questioners, in turn, had never interviewed a Holocaust survivor.

Her recollections are especially valuable for their description of life in the Warsaw Ghetto (from which few people escaped), of life in the Jewish community of Green Bay, and for being the catalyst that led to the other 23 survivor interviews available in this collection.

Pela was interviewed three separate times. The first session was conducted by archivist Lindsay Nauen at the Alpert home on January 30, 1974. It lasted approximately 75 minutes. Unfortunately, the last 30 minutes of the interview were inadvertently deleted from the tape. It was not until 18 months later, on June 5, 1975, that archivist Peter Gordy visited Green Bay and re-taped the missing portion.

Five years later Pela agreed to be interviewed about her experiences in Green Bay. Archivist Sara Leuchter interviewed Pela at her home on the evening of March 5, 1980.

The recordings were later arranged and are presented here as a single chronology.

## Audio and Transcript Details:

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### Interview Dates

- Jan 30, 1974; Jun 5, 1975; Mar 5, 1980

### Interview Location

- Alpert home, Green Bay, Wisconsin

### Interviewers

- Archivists Lindsay Nauen, Sara Leuchter and Peter Gordy

### Original Sound Recording Format

- 5 qty. 60-minute audio cassette tapes

### Length of Interviews

- 3 interviews, total approximately 4 hours

### Transcript Length

- 57 pages

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## Pictures:

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WHI Image ID 56276



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## Transcript

The following transcript is from the collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. It is an unedited, firsthand account of the Nazi persecution of the Jews before and during World War II. Portions of this interview may not be suitable for younger or more sensitive audiences. It is unlawful to republish this text without written permission from the Wisconsin Historical Society, except for nonprofit educational use.

### Key

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**LN** Lindsay Nauen, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist  
**SL** Sara Leuchter, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist  
**PG** Peter Gordy, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist  
**PA** Pela Alpert, Holocaust survivor

#### TAPE 1, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)

**PA:** What would like? You want the tape or something?

**LN:** This is Lindsay Nauen staff member for the State Historical Society. Interviewing Mrs. Pella Alpert, on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1974 at Mrs. Alpert's home in Green Bay Wisconsin. Mrs. Alpert, I am interested in when you were born and what your life was like when you were growing up in Poland.

**PA:** Well, I have to say that, that when I was a little girl, that's all, when I remember that my folks, we lived in a small town, and I grew up, I had a very happy childhood, because I was the youngest of seven children. They were all much older than I was, and my folks were set very well, and as I grew up and I start understanding, I was going to a school, a public school and there were a lot of Jewish people. Our home was very Orthodox. I was going to a Hebrew school after public school and our Sabbath was very holy and our father was very strict about it. Of course, I had Gentile friends — girls and boys that I was going to school with and after I start understanding, we were pointed out as Jewish, you know, that we were Jewish people. But this didn't affect so much in this town until we, you know, until because the majority of people in this town were Jewish. But in, let's see, in 1930 we could just feel, in 1931, we could feel this type of flowing in from in — Nazi thing. You could feel it. There was anti-Semitism growing more. And then when I was, you want to know some more? When I was, about my childhood?

LN: Yes.

PA: Well, we were a family, you know my sister that's right now was here, and that I came to her, she was the oldest and was married already and had children, in fact, her children are just a little older than I am, younger, I am sorry. Just a little younger than I am. In 1933, a brother of my brother-in-law, that's right here now, lived in Green Bay, and he came to visit his mother and his brother and my brother-in-law also had a store and was very well set and he, when he saw this, he says, "You got to come to the United States in America." He says, "Well I have three children, I can't." He says he's got to see to it that you come because he went through Germany in '33, he saw what is coming up and he says, "You got to come." Meanwhile, my father had opened another store in Grudziadz, if you can spell it. That was a corridor, that's what the Germans went for, that's the Pomorze [Pomerania], well the German Corridor. They use to be once upon a time they use to be Germany, then the Poland took it back, and then they said they want to stay. Of course, I was already about seventeen years old, and I don't know if that make it too short, or do you want more of it?

LN: No, this is fine.

PA: And we, in 1939 in about August or July — end of July — we could see. I was sitting on a balcony with a friend and we could see in the evening the marching, soldiers marching to the front. But we just still didn't realize that this is going to be a war or anything. We just thought maybe they were going to protect. That's how much we were informed there. And we were sitting and we saw that, and then my parents said — it was just a week before the war started — they said to me, "You better go to my uncle's, to Kutno." It was near Lodz, a town that was farther away because we were just very close to the front. And, so I did say that I wouldn't go without my mother, so my mother and I, and a friend of mine, we went to Kutno, leaving my father, because my father still thought that he can take something along or his store or everything we had. But he didn't. We got in there and then sure enough September 1, 1939, the war broke out and the next day the Germans were in this town and my father and my brother were caught in this. Well they left everything like it was and they walked and that was

about sixty or eighty miles. They walked, they got a ride on a — people were going with horse and buggies and things like this or a train. Anyhow, they got into Kutno, and we lived with our uncle for a little while, and it was rough. We didn't have nothing, we left everything. Besides — I meant to tell you before — I had a sister, who was married and had a child of six months, and they had a store in the same town and she left the same time that my mother and I did, and she took only the child. Her husband went to the army. And she didn't take nothing along for the child. She just took along whatever she had in a little bag. So one day — we were there in Kutno for a while — and the Germans occupied Grudziadz. She said to us, "I have to go back. I have to get something else for my baby." Because [you] couldn't buy it anymore, nothing, and she had to. So she left the child with us and went back to Grudziadz and was there for a week and couldn't get into her house, into her store. But the only thing she wanted to take was clothing and diapers and things for her baby. Well, she did not come back. They told the Jewish people, whoever was left there, to come out on a *markt*, on a *markt*. Do you know what a *marktis*? A place, a square like — to come out and they going to send them wherever they want to go. And, she did. Well, she'd got no choice and she believed and she did go, and they were all shot right on the — they let them go out a little bit of this because one survived and came and told us. Now this child was left with us and he was a year and-a-half old, and we did the best we could because my brother-in-law was in the army yet, see, and he was probably, he was taken, the Germans took him as a, what do you call it, they took him to their camps.....and he didn't come back. So we lived there for a while with that baby, we really didn't have nothing. Everything as we were. While my uncle gave us some clothes and things like this we could change off and it was rough. And it was rough up all the way through. So, my mother's still, my father had this baby but they had said to me, you just go on. And I had a friend there and we just go on, go on to Lodz. So we went to Lodz and we lived with — his parents were there. So we lived there for a while and then there was a time that we all gonna go to Russia because it's no use, and how are we going to go, I don't know. We just went. And a cousin of mine and there were a few young people like us. And this is all — I was

eighteen, maybe seventeen-eighteen years and so we all went to Warsaw and we just stepped into a ghetto and that's what we used. We were — it was terrible. Everything was down and it was just awful. And as soon as I got in there I became sick and I had typhoid, typhus. Very ill and they took me to a hospital because they were afraid of themselves, see. The Germans were afraid of themselves that this spread — this sickness that's terrible. So they took us to hospital, Gesia Hospital and all I can tell you, I don't know how I survived. I came there and they cut my hair off, just to the, you know. First of all, they cut your hair, shaved off your hair. And that was experience by itself, but I was so sick I did not care. I didn't have anybody there anymore, so. Well, I don't know how I survived, as I said, I don't know how. They didn't give you medication, they didn't give you nothing to eat, but I guess we got healthy and I survived. And I went back to the ghetto. Then my mother and father and the baby they came by — somebody said [to them], "You better go from Kutno to Warsaw. There's a ghetto there, a place all the Jewish people are there." So they came. Then I was with my mother and father and that baby, and also another sister came. See, we were all spread down because everybody just went different ways. A sister, a brother-in-law, and two children of theirs — a boy and a girl — all also lived in separate, you know, like units because of this, and it was just — people just don't understand what a ghetto is. People were so — died of hunger and they were laying on the grounds, on the streets, and if anybody who had to walk through with a package, I don't know what there was in the bag, there was a package, that people were just wild of hunger that they ripped this package up. They didn't know what to do. And of course, the situation was absolutely — we couldn't see our way out. So my dad said to me, he says, "You are so young, so young, and I would like you to get out of here." Now, I did not have any identification as a Gentile girl. I wore a [sounds like: *paska*] — that means the Jewish Star of David — and I said, "Dad, how will I get out? They'll shoot me." He said, "Well, dying of hunger is just as bad." And he said I didn't have the long nose or something, so he said, "You just try it to go to a small town." So one day I had made up my mind, and there were a couple of friends of mine that — and I says, "I don't want to leave you here in these . . ." "Well, we stay in this" — they had for this

people to stay — "We'll stay here, we'll control ourselves. Don't worry about us." I did not want to go, but my father just pushed me out. And we went through, there was a wall and there was a little, like a — to go through a hole to the other side, you know, where the gentiles lived. There you could take a train. Here I went, took off, ripped off this [star]. For sure, [if] they caught me, I would be dead. And I had a few dollars — not dollars but zlotys — and to buy a ticket and we bought a ticket. I had no identification as a Jewish or a Gentile, but if they caught me and they would ask me, what would I say? They did not recognize me, and I went on the train. I went to a little town of Sandomierz. There was no ghetto there. You could work on a farm, you could earn your food, you could, you were a little more free because it wasn't nothing, as yet. But I wrote, I wrote to my folks and I never received any letters back, and I am sure they didn't receive either, and, but, one night after two, three weeks there, one night, they came, and they said...Of course when I came there I immediately put on my, got a band and put it on as being Jewish, cause I couldn't go on without papers, and so they said, all Jewish people come out, also to the square, you know. And so we did. And then they sorted us. We were young, those that were young and were able went to, they gonna send us someplace. Well, we didn't really want to go, but we did. We had to go, so we went. And the older people, what they did, I don't know but they send us to—it wasn't Poland and it was an ammunition factory and it's called Skarzysko, Skarżysko-Kamienna. There was a Polish factory of ammunition and the Germans took over and there was another one. There was a concentration camp, we had to, we had to work very hard. I worked a machine that was huge that you put in the shells, you had to lift boxes of shells and put 'em in and then control them, if they went through, if they had a little smudge or something, if they weren't perfect, and you let it go, and if you, and they came in with—the Germans came in with a big dogs and things like this and they just controlled your machine, and if they found this little thing that you hardly could see, you had to go someplace and they took off your clothes and you got such a beating that it was impossible to work next day. And the food was terrible, I mean the food they gave you, a slice of bread in the morning, dark, and then they give you soup in the evening and told us you



had, how you had to live. And this was going on for two and-a-half years. And then they, they had little gimmicks like. They came in the barracks we lived. They came and they said, "Everybody out." So we didn't know. First of all we didn't know what they wanted, what it would be, but they came with a big dogs and they looked around, they looked around, they looked around, when they saw a pretty girls, they took 'em. There were friends of mine that I knew that they went. Anybody that looked dead that's where they went to crematories and things like this. So next time, and this was going on like every three weeks they came. We use to have, I don't know, but we got some red paper that we use to put on our cheeks, that we looked nice so we looked younger, we were young, but we looked bad, you know, because of no food and hard work, and so they, we put like rouge, we didn't have rouge, it was paper, we use to find paper and things like this and we use to go out and stand there and they use to eliminate people and we just didn't care, we didn't know what they were gonna do, we really didn't care what they were gonna do with us anymore. Then from there, one day they said, "Now we need people to go to Czestochowa. That was also an ammunition factory, and I was chosen to go there and there were other people that we had gotten to be friendly, of course, and we worked together, so we went there and we worked there and it was the same story. And of course, it was 1943, yeah 1943, yes '43, they, one evening it was all tumult, you know everybody was tired, "Oh, the Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!" And something is said and all the *meisters* said. The heads of the Germans, are kind of nervous and excited and we didn't know. All of a sudden one night, they said, "Raus!" [German for "get out of here."] And the bombing was just terrible, the skies were red and we couldn't find each other, and all the people, some of those policemen or German policemen came and said, "You come with us. Come with us. Come with us." We didn't know some stayed. Some stayed back, they said, "We don't care," and I, and some other friends, we went. We went, we walked with them while bombs were, shells were falling, and it was just terrible. So we went and we wind up miles and miles and we wound up someplace that a train, where a freight train were standing. And they said, "Here." There was no water, no food, nothing, just like this, "Here, you gonna up." Of

course, they were themselves already, they didn't know what they were doing, we were going. "Where are we going? We're going, you're gonna go someplace." Well, we knew where we were going but possibly to death, but anyhow we went and we went to Germany and it was to Ravensbruck, and that was a concentration camp. And there were a camp of 20,000 women, only women. The men they took someplace else, the women stayed in Ravensbruck, and Ravensbruck was an experience, another experience that was rough. Are you through?

LN: Yes.

PA: Okay.

[No more audio exists from the original recording. See the following re-recording.]

**END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1** (no Side 2)

**TAPE 2, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)**

PG: This is the second part of an interview with Mrs. Pela Alpert; made at her home in Green Bay, Wisconsin on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1975. This is a re-recording at the end of the first part of the tape, which Lindsay Nauen did, Mrs. Alpert, you were arriving at Ravensbruck, at the concentration camp in Germany.

PA: Yes. We arrived to Ravensbruck from Czetochowa ghetto, camp. And we had to, I don't know if I told you, we had to walk from Czetochowa because there was a lot of bombing and things and then they said, "Come on, let's go, who wants to be rescued." So some stayed put and some followed, when I say that we didn't know where we're going so we just followed and they were bombing on the way and then just terrible, but we walked to a, miles and miles, until we got into a train, to one of those cow trains, what do you say? And they said, "Well, let's, we're gonna go now someplace." Of course, we thought that we were going to the crematories or something, but we just, we didn't care. But we had to follow so went in those closed boxcars and we arrived in Ravensbruck but I don't know how much time that we, time was no time that time so we just arrived in Ravensbruck and there was a concentration camp, all women, only women, women from Russia, from Poland, from all over and just women. So once we went through and I had, I don't know, I had a little package, the only package I had and saved through all the camps, I had saved a couple pictures and one ring, and I had it under my arm, that's all I had and I kept it. But when we got into a, we had to go through the bathing, like they called this, they got to, you know; give us a bath, or showers. Of course, they took this away from me and I never got it back and just after this, they settled us in the barracks, in the barracks, you know.

PG: Yes.

PA: And they were just absolutely terrible, just terrible. So from then on we, we had to, we stayed; we made the best out of us. And so the food they didn't give us any kind of thing, except, a couple days later they, well they had to come, the whole camp to get counted, you see, every morning about 4

o'clock in the morning we had to get out to be counted. And all those German people they would, Gestapo came out to the dogs and everything. They counted us and then we went back to the barracks and then they had to, they gave us work. They start giving us work. It was nothing that they need us for. They send us out to the fields to wooden; I don't know how to call this, wooden...

PG: Plows?

PA: Not plows, they were like boxes, wooden, big boxes. Two girls had to carry them. Two from one side to carry sand with, it was absolutely work that wasn't needed, just to torture us. So and when they came back they use to give us the soup and the soup was like sand in it. No, it was water hot, maybe a little hot water and a piece of bread, maybe a slice of bread that thick and this was to last for 24 hours. Yes. We were--some of us were so hungry we ate it at once and some girls, they were from Hungary and other Dutch, you know, they cracked it in little pieces and ate a little piece at a time, and it was really unreal. And we stayed there for, we got in there in December, they had us walk out. We didn't hardly have any shoes left because the soles were all torn in the cold and the clothing was very poorly, we didn't have any clothing for the cold and we had to get out early in the morning and, as I said, we had friends, I had made friends in Czestochowa before that were with me and we met friends that came from other sites and we did--I have seen those friends of mine fall in the morning coming, fall from diarrhea, all kinds of sickness that they couldn't take and you just to have to stand there and look and they didn't do, they just let the people die as it is and we were walked, we had to walk back to the barracks.

PA: But one day what was so very, I remember it very well, they had, they came out and they said, "Everybody out." They were big men, the Gestapos came, dogs, oh then we knew what was gonna happen. Who looked a little better, that use to be the experience from before, had stayed on, who looked a little younger, who looked a little drawn, then they take aside, of course, and then they started. So my girlfriend and I stood in this, in this line, and there were oh about 10 people, 10 Gestapos and a woman Gestapos, they were worse than the men. And they looked and they said had

two sides and they said, "One here, one there." Just like this, "One here, one there." So we didn't know which line. We knew there was something wrong, but which line is going someplace else, we didn't know. And this man looked at me and he said, "There," I don't know. I didn't know and I went to the wrong side, that means to the crematories, and I went to this side. And so after maybe a minute, while, the woman Gestapo came up to me, "No, he meant for you to go on this side." And with a--you know, whip, "On this side, not on this side." So I went on this side, what's different. So after a while, we found out that the other side that I had been, went to the crematories, and we stayed alive. Now you can tell, this, this was a miracle, right? And a I just want to tell the facts, that I had been with a friend, and one of, she was older, she was a young doctor, and we were so hungry, we were always hungry and we really, when we stood out there on this counting, we felt that wouldn't it be better if the Americans come and bomb this camp so we can get rid of, get rid of us instead, you know. We didn't want to live anymore. But, and this didn't happen. But this lady doctor, she use to go out in the fields with us, it was wet, it was stink, and she looked around in the dirt, in the dirt like fertilizer, she looked. I said, "Why are you looking?" We asked her, "What are you looking for?" She says, "Well," she says, "this is not fertilizer, those are from our own fertilizer and it is better to eat, have something like this than no eat at all." And she ate it, now we didn't do it. It was, there was a lot of us, we couldn't see it, but she, I suppose from her experience, she felt if she picked out stuff that, you can't believe it, and ate it. In fact, she is alive she was a Swede. So those are the experiences that we had there and it just, and the most of them that I had known, they did not live through it. There just are very, very few. We worked with Russian women; they brought in a big truck to unload potatoes, not for us, but for the people, for the Gestapos and all the German people that worked. Well, they put us on the trucks and we, we hardly could lift a shovel, you know, I couldn't lift anything, but those Russian women, they were just, they were fantastic, they weren't afraid of them, they talked back, they weren't afraid and they just, they took that truck and in no time they unloaded it. They had, of course, they didn't go through what we did, see. Maybe they came right from Russia to that camp

and they were strong, but anyhow, this, and one, well this was life going on like this all the time. In April, about April 22<sup>nd</sup>, they came in to our barracks, they said, All the Jewish women should go, should go to a place and we want to place them. So, here we go again and we thought, "This is it." So we just, so we just gathered together, we had to and they said that those two barracks, they are for you to stay overnight, to stay. Well we went into this too, and there were a lot of us, so we had to go in and there was worse filth than we were before. And once we settled down, we couldn't even move around, we couldn't, and no getting out. So, we had to go out to, you know, to, we couldn't, so this was going on, everybody who had to go to the toilet, did it right there, that was, there was just a nightmare. And the next day they came and say, "Okay, all out for a count." So we did, so they came and they start talking to us, really nice. "Oh, we have for you, a package that's from the Red Cross and each of you is gonna get a package and you gonna be freed." So all of us, all of us, we are crying, we didn't want to leave because we thought now for sure this is it, you know. We didn't want to go. And so they came around, we had to stay, we didn't have any choice, but we did cry, we did yell, and this, but they came around and says each has a package, they gave us a package. And what was in it we didn't know, but they told us there was this food, so all of a sudden they are so good to us, you know, we didn't know what to think. Well that, that was the 23<sup>rd</sup>, they opened the great gates from that camp and they said, "Now you gonna go, you're gonna go out." And we didn't, we didn't want to go. They said, "Well," we said, "They are probably taking us to the crematories." But, and we stood there. Here they came out; we came to this place out there, five or six Red Cross buses, big ones, from Sweden. Now we didn't know that was Sweden, but they were Red Cross. And they started explaining to us, of course, there were drivers and nurses in the buses, but we knew about their trips so we did not believe, but they, "You're gonna go to a country that you will be taken care of." All of us, we looked at each other, we didn't have a choice but we just said well, whatever, it is gonna be. Then the drivers and the nurses saw us in a panic, they came out and they spoke to us, a little German, and they said "You are gonna go to a country, to Sweden, and we will take care of you and you'll be free." We did

not believe because we knew it, this is how they did it all the time; they tricked people to go to Israel, to all over. So we gotten in on the buses and they start driving away. And some people, opened the packages and start, there was food, eating, very hungry you were, and they start eating just so terribly that they got very sick. I didn't, I just couldn't think of anything, I just maybe touched their cracker, or maybe they had or something, I can't remember. But, this I know, that we went by camps that men stood like we did, stay behind the wire, you know, and we did throw out, some of us threw out the packages to them and then it was at night it started, it was bombing, just terrible. So the driver says now we are gonna go into the forest, they went into the forest and we'll stay here overnight and they didn't know what's gonna happen but the bombing was just terrible. To us it didn't make any difference we still were kinda of, didn't know until we'd gotten close to Denmark. And we gotten out in, what city it was, I can't remember, it was close to the German border anyhow. And then we just realized. Of course, they were under Germany too yet and they couldn't-- And they showed us they had places for us to sleep overnight, they all were paper covered, white paper covered and we had, for the first time, we had a meal, like milk. They didn't have the, the Danes explained to us, "We don't have much to give but we will share with you." That means we had potatoes, we had some meat, milk, very little meat but milk, and something that was, that was food. We stayed overnight, then they boarded us onto boats and went over to Sweden. To Lund I came to Lund, they took us over to the University of Lund. There was all empty, given up to us, we were filthy, that you can't believe that very--no clothing hardly and the nurses there and the doctors, they all came took care of us like babies, and we thought we are newborn, because they checked. First they bathe us and checked us over and who was ill or who had some defects, they took right away to hospital, the ones that they could see that they were ill. Then as long as they had--and stayed overnight and we curled our hair and felt like we were just a newborn baby, absolutely just like newborns. And they were so wonderful to us. They treated us like children, newborn children. I honestly think, all I can explain to you because they gave us paper, also, everything was paper, white paper, because they didn't have--it was war, and in those

white nightgowns to sleep in it and in a couple of days we had all new clothing. Not clothing that was worn, but clothing that was all new, brought from store. That's what I mean by this, that's how they treated us. We stayed there for a few days until we got all checked and we could, they took the people that could go to quarantine. Then we went to Smalands Anneberg. They took us to a church was given up for us, because we had to stay for six weeks quarantine and we were, was also, well it was a church place. And food, we had to eat a lot of food, not a lot of food, but food that we could eat and we were--the people came around to the, not to the church, they couldn't go in, but they was, what do you call it? So they just came and to see us, they had orchestra playing, walk around and playing for us and we just felt alive. And we stayed there for six weeks and they really showed us, I mean as much, we couldn't get in contact with them but there is much cheerfulness and goodness that really I admire those people. I don't know who could do for us that much. Then, after this, after the six weeks, they send us, they gave up a resort place, Holsbybrunn. They gave up a complete resort place with fancy cottages and the dining rooms were special, and special cooks. They cooked for us. There was breakfast, lunch and supper, and we were free. We could do whatever we want to, I mean that means go around, they had a couple doctors that they checked on us, if something was wrong or something. Meanwhile, while I was in--going back--while I was in Smalands Anneberg, on the barracks on the quarantine, the Red Cross came around and asked if you would like to trace back who's was alive or if you had any relatives and they will try to get this on the radio. So I did. I knew how many were gone from my family, but I didn't know if some of my sister's children and for my--one of my sister I didn't know, and my parents--my mother, I knew that she went to Treblinka, And some of my sisters, but the rest I didn't know and I also gave the address of my sister in the United States, I mean that she is in the United States, she's Green Bay and also gave--I had a brother in Israel. And I gave this, where he taught. So when I was in Holsbybrunn already that we were free and everything, all of a sudden I get a letter from, a family, from Kristianstad, from Sweden. And they said, "We received a telegram from you sister and we would like to help you as much as possible." So it happens that the Red Cross had



this on the radio, or whatever they had it. My brother in Israel was sitting at the radio that time and heard it—"Pela Rosen is looking for her brother in Israel and a sister." And he almost passed out. He just, he never knew that I am alive or anybody. He didn't know. We were not in contact anyone. So, my brother in Israel telegraphed my sister here in Green Bay, that I am alive and I am in Sweden. But they didn't know where I am in Sweden, see. So here was a family, a Mr. Schain, I don't know if you heard about him, they don't live here anymore, but he was a Swede and my sister here, they were very friendly. So my sister went over there and she says, "Al, you got to help us, my sister is in Sweden somewhere, we don't know where, but could you please write to your brother or tell it to your brother." So that's how I got the telegram from his brother to Holsbybrunn telling me that if I need any help or anything I need they would be glad to come and see me. And they did, they did come and see me because of brother Rosen that I am. And of course, then I started to be in contact with my sister and with my brother. And those people, as soon as I was to this resort, you know with this place that I had stayed. I think for six, four weeks I think. Then they said would you come to Kristianstad and we will, whatever you want to do, you can do, you can stay with us, you can stay by yourself, whatever you want to do, you can do. So I did, we did, that girlfriend of mine, that was one of my best girlfriends went with me and we stayed in Kristianstad. I stayed for a while with the Schains and then we went on our own. We found jobs and we had a room for us together, both of us, and we start living a normal life, like working and the people were just absolutely wonderful. They were helpful, they were nice, they were, they really gave us a good start I would say. And from then on, my sister and brother-in-law had papers made out for us, for me, you know, but I had to wait for it. That means I had to wait four years to come to the United States. And I had, but as I say, life was there, I went to school for a while, and I just also went to work for a while, and of course I was anxious to see my sister. And that's when I came, after four years, in February 1949, the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1949, I came to Green Bay and I lived with my sister for one year and then I got married.

PG: Yes, which is on the other part of the tape, a lovely little story.

PA: Yeah.

PG: What did, I'll just ask you a couple of questions to go until the end of this tape. How did you learn Swedish, or did you learn Swedish?

PA: Oh yes, I did learn Swedish, of course. I was, first of all, when I came there, I couldn't speak Swedish at all because of, but I spoke Germany and Polish, of course Polish was my main language and Jewish. But I learned it. I went to a night school for a while, you know, of course, you met people that they, we just, we just learned it. And after four years, I did not have the time to go to special school, but I did take a course that was very hard in Swedish as I told you I had a Danish teacher and I could hardly understand her but we did get--there was like a medical course--because you had to know all your muscles and all muscles on your body and you had to write in Swedish, you had write the whole, pages and pages of in Swedish and then we were, when we graduated, there was a doctor, I had the diploma yet, A doctor that, you know, examined us who know those things because if you have a massage, you know, you have to know it but I never used it because my brother-in-law said, "Oh, what do you need a diploma for."

**END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1** (no Side 2)

**TAPE 3, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)**

PA: Is it on now?

PG: Yeah. What happened, after you got to Green Bay? I'll start it off again. This is the second tape of the interview with Mrs. Pela Alpert on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1974 at her home in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Mrs. Alpert, on the first tape we finished talking about how you got to Green Bay. I'd like you to go on and tell me about your life once you got to Green Bay.

PA: Well, when I got to Green Bay, of course, I had my sister and brother-in-law and her children, the family, they were understanding and very good to me and I felt like I am just, I didn't feel like I'm in my twenties, I felt like I'm just 15 years old. That's how I felt. I had a good feeling that I am again reunited. I was in touch with my brother and his family and we met a lot of friends here. I could not speak any English, the only thing I could say is "Hello." Because when I was in Sweden, I concentrated on my Swedish writing and reading and speaking. And I did very well. And, and when I came here, I just didn't know, you know. I spoke to my sister Jewish or we spoke Polish and, of course, you know, with certain people I knew German, so I spoke German, so it wasn't so bad. When I came to English, I had a little tough time but my brother-in-law had a menswear store and being from a family that we had stores as a child, I was brought up right there so I loved it. So my brother-in-law says, "So why don't you come and just sit and watch and stay." And I said, "I love this." So I did go and, of course I had this diploma and everything but I had to have to work, I would have to go all the way through because this had to be, you had to go to school here to get a diploma again if you want to have work, you know, you had to. So my brother-in-law says, "What do you need is, we really need help in our store," So if you just--Sure enough I went and I just loved every minute of it. I learned, observed people and I listened and then I went to vocational school to learn English and then I had some private tutoring also and in no time I found myself selling and it didn't come, it wasn't too bad. Then in April, I came February here, February 19<sup>th</sup> I was in Green Bay. In April one of my nieces came home from college, she had a date, she also went to Wisconsin, she had a date, and she says

her girlfriend came home from college had a date and "Pela," she says, "Would you like to go out with us?" I says, "Well, why not?" So they fixed me up with a blind date and that blind date was my husband, would you believe. He comes from a very--Jewish family, you know, with his mother. He knew a little Jewish, you know, that he could speak with me and I already knew a little English so we kind of went out, we had a nice time and we dated since. And we, in October, October 26<sup>th</sup> he came and did not ever ask me to marry him but October 26<sup>th</sup> he took me out for dinner and while going into the supper club he said, "Here's a gift for you." And it was a ring, an engagement ring, and I was so dumb and I said, "Thank you." (laughter) And we set our wedding on February 19<sup>th</sup>, the year I came here and it was a year after, we were married. And then we had, Rochelle was born in 1950 and Andie was born 4 years later in 1955. No 1951, excuse me, Rochelle was born in 1951. Yeah, right. It's going to be 23, right. And Andie was born 1955. And we were just very lucky to have a wonderful family and besides, my husband's side and from my side our families are very close and that means an awful lot to me. Very close, and so now we had--my husband had a grocery store for many, many years. He was an independent grocer and it just worked too hard. I helped him a lot, we worked too hard, we just didn't, Big stores came and it just didn't work out so we just sold it and now he is a salesman and I am working part-time, we are very happy and it's the first time that I have really expressed myself and I think it will help me a little and thinking that somebody will listen to me. Not that people didn't listen to me, I was the one that I did not want to bother anybody of listening or I always felt that when you talk to people and what I found out, also in America, I mean everybody has their problems and everybody has their good and bad, you know, and nobody likes really to listen to anybody's problems, especially something like this, they listen, they turn around, and this is, I went through too much that somebody should turn away and say, "Well, we have it just as bad." And it isn't, but I really don't believe that anybody who didn't live through this understands what, what the Jewish people or what they went through. There is so much to talk about that I could talk for, I think for a month and I wouldn't come out with everything, and stories that it's unbelievable. I had them.

Going back to, can I say one incident that I had in the concentration camp? It was in Ravensbruck, and also they come to sort the people, they felt some people aren't good, why should they feed them, you know, if they can't do anything, so they had, this was in, like in early March and it was really cold, we didn't have nothing on our feet, barefoot like this worn out because they came, that means the Gestapo. And they came and they took the whole camp out, and there was not only Jewish, there was all the woman and they came and they put us in all around this huge place and they start sorting, looking us over and sorting, so I stood there with my friends on the other side and they started sorting, you see, all the older people, no so looking, the young people looked like old, you know what I mean, just, how could they look. Over here, this one over there, this one over here and it came to me, so he's--I probably just I was so frightened or something, but he said, "over there or over here," I went over there, well what had happened, there was a woman, a Gestapo woman, and she had seen what he did, that he told me to go here, see, and I went instead there, so she comes over to me, she says, "You do not belong there, he told you to go there." So I went there, what is the difference. Why so it happened that all those people on this side that I was there, went to the crematories. So I was saved by the one--she saw that he show me to go this way, but I went the other way and that she saved me. Those are just unbelievable, there are so many things what I had seen in the ghetto is, it's a little children, little children what they did to them, it just, they didn't need them. They took them away from the mothers. They just, they just got rid of them. And in the mother's eye it didn't matter they did this. So this is the story in, sometimes I go back to my childhood, I mean when I was a little girl and I remember things that, we had, I sometimes wonder when I came here also, I had an aunt living in Chicago, and she said to me, "You know I had sent out papers from here a long time ago to your Dad that he should," that was way before the war, way before, "that if you would like to come," and this was my Dad's oldest sister, "if he would like to come, there were papers." But my father use to always say, "Where will I have it so good?" At that time he was a wealthy, you know, a wealthy man, he was known in the city there, he was respected, so who can force him now, anybody could tell, some

American, "Leave everything and go to Israel now, go because, you know, God, before something comes up." They wouldn't go either and he'd listen and say but my brother-in-law listens to his brother, how lucky he was. He listened to his brother and he said, "Okay, if you think so," and he tried to get out just money how much he could and he came here. He worked very hard here, when he came; because they didn't know the language either, see. But, so we were just lucky and my brother left in 1935 because he, for Israel and my mother was just broken up to pieces. She says, "Where are you gonna go to Israel," in 1935 there was just nothing in there remember. There was hard work. He worked in a kibbutz, but he was idealistic, you see. He felt that he had to do something for Israel. He left for Israel, he did not have to work at home that much, but he did go, and he was happy for many years. And some people did come here, there is some people here that came here in 1938, '39 from Germany. And so, I just wanted to tell you, I believe strongly in God that's why I survived, because I couldn't see how, how, when I look back, how I could, how is possible for a person to survive under such circumstances that I lived through. It was just, but I try to forget things and here we are. We are not rich, we're not wealthy, but we are happy. And that means a lot, and [to our] kids, I hope they do the best they can. So...

PG: Okay.

PA: You want to know something else?

PG: Thank you very much.

PA: Oh, you are welcome.

**END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1** (no Side 2)

#### TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SL: Mrs. Alpert I would like you to tell me how it was that you finally got in contact with both your sister in Green Bay and your brother in Israel.

PA: Well, I, when we got to quarantine in Sweden the Red Cross came over and asked everyone of us who we are looking for, you know, in whose life, we didn't know so we just gave our names and we gave the names of my brother, I gave my name of my brother and my sister in the United States and my brother in Israel. And what is happened is my brother is sitting watching TV or listening to the radio, it was heard that, "Pela Rosen is looking for his brother in Israel and a sister in the United States," And other people that were with me. Then my brother immediately, it was, he was just absolutely, he said that he almost had a heart attack, and then he just telegraphed my sister to Green Bay and told her and she was the same thing, because they never heard from our family during the war. There was no contact at, after all. So, my sister here, and my brother-in-law had friends that, the men that they were friendly with came from Sweden long time ago and was married here, and in Sweden, he had three brothers and a father. They were Jewish, Jewish people. So, immediately his--the friend of my sister's--Mr. Schain, got in touch with his brothers in Sweden and said that "There is a Pela Rosen who came from a concentration camp, she is looking for-- and I don't know where she is--and you do the looking." And they did. They looked me up, and also sent telegrams back that I am, I was in a quarantine and from the quarantine we are going to a resting place for a few--six weeks I think. And they got in touch with me, they came to see me, the brothers in Sweden, they came to see me, they were very, very friendly and nice. And my sister, that's the way she got in touch with me. And was, she started writing and they think that I have everything. At first, the Swedes were just absolutely wonderful to us.

SL: Was the Swedish Red Cross that took care of you all the time?

PA: The Swedish Red Cross took, brought us over.

SL: How did you finally decide then to come to the United States?

PA: Well, as long as my sister knew, and my brother knew, they both wanted me. So, they tried to send papers. Of course, I had to wait my quota, so I waited four years. I had, after [inaudible] I went to work, and then I went to a school, and I had very, very wonderful friends there, made wonderful friends learned the language and I liked Sweden very much. And my sister, of course, and my brother wants me, it took two years, after two years he says, "Well, you can't wait that long, an army can come to, we'll get you in somehow." And when my sister heard about it she just, they just didn't want to hear about it, they just thought that I won't go illegal and I, myself, was kinda didn't want to, and of course, after I came here, I had a very, very happy, return home, like seeing the kids and her they were very close and very good to me.

SL: Now you mention something about going illegally and that means to your brother in Israel. Could you just tell me a little bit, about what you would have had to go through if you had decided to go to Israel?

PA: If I had to go to Israel, in fact I was packed to go to Israel. And I kinda was lonely. I had it nice in Sweden, I worked, I happy, but I was kinda lonely for family, so I said, "Well, it took so long I don't know if I should do, maybe I should go to Israel and be with my brother for a while and then to go to my sister." But the thing is they wouldn't let anybody in at that time. You had to go on an illegal ship, go to Cypress, be on Cypress for a while. If my brother could get me out from there, I don't know, but the people that lived on Cypress had a very difficult life and in a way, I as glad I waited.

SL: What year was it that you could have gone to Israel?

PA: It was, let see, I came there in 1945, 1945, in April I was in Sweden, I came to Sweden I think it was 1947.

SL: So Israel was still Palestine at that time?

PA: Palestine, I was almost after, you know, after a year or half a year, so, it was pronounced Israel.

SL: Yeah, in May of '48.

PA: Yeah, right.

SL: So, but would you have gone there after the State of Israel had been officially declared?



PA: If it wouldn't be, if it wouldn't be an illegal thing, then probably, probably would have gone there first, and then come here to the United States to see my, yeah to see my sister, to be with my sister for a while.

SL: So you still had to wait then in Sweden?

PA: Two more years. Two more years.

SL: Right, before you saw anybody.

PA: Yes.

SL: Do you think you could tell me about your trip to the United States when you finally left Sweden and how you got here?

PA: Sure, I left Sweden in 1949 in February, about the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, and I came on the Gripsholm. It was a beautiful boat and feelings that I am gonna see my sister was just terrific. I had a marvelous time and I felt that I am going to people that I'm wanted, and we--the boat ride was about 12 days, and I arrived the 16<sup>th</sup> in New York, and my sister and brother-in-law were waiting for me, at the, you know at the boat, and I was so excited that I remember I had my passport, I had to show, you know, people wait for you, I had to show, so I just, when I saw them I just ran down that board, whatever they had, and I didn't give them the, when they stopped me, to take the [inaudible] So I shouldn't. So one thing, I didn't speak any English. Neither I guess maybe yes or no and that it. Because I had to learn the Swedish language and I knew four other languages, but English I didn't know. But then when I saw them, when more I have to tell you, it was just, stayed in New York for two days and in a hotel with them, and then we visited for two days. I think another day visit some relatives in New York and came to Green Bay the 19<sup>th</sup> of February.

SL: Could I ask you a couple questions about your boat trip?

PA: Yeah.

SL: Were there other survivors coming to this country on the boat with you?

PA: As far as I know, there were some, but I, where they went, they went in different directions, because the first few days we were sick and we were just, you know, from the boat, but they must have been a

lot, maybe some of people. Most of them I think came, that they were over from the United States. They were in Sweden like for visits, for visitations and then they came back, the most of them. I did not see, not too many.

SL: So did you meet anyone at all on the boat?

PA: Oh, sure, I met people that, that hardly could come, yeah some Swedish people, I could speak Swedish, yes, yes, but I cannot, I think I was really was the only one. Maybe they weren't Jewish or something, but I think, I think I was the only one that time.

SL: Did you have any feelings at all when you saw the Statue of Liberty?

PA: Yes, tremendous. We, two days, I think it's a day and-a-half, the night before or two nights before, I can't remember, we could see the lights of New York, we could see on the, on the in the sky. It was just terrific, and the air was warm, I think that February was just very nice and warm and, and it was just a tremendous feeling, tremendous feeling.

SL: And seeing the Statue itself, did that give you any feelings about finally being or having some freedom.

PA: Yes, finally, finally well the most thing I was just thinking of my family, not the country, right now, because I, this was one thing that was most important to me, and then I, once I was settled, and this I loved being there, I was glad that I came to the United States. And, my brother came to visit me from Israel here, and it was like I was a reunion.

SL: How long had it been since you had seen your sister?

PA: My sister left Poland in 1939, just before the war.

SL: And how was it that she got to Green Bay?

PA: My brother-in-law had a brother here in, in Green Bay. And he came to visit them, from Green Bay to Poland and they used to have a store, they use to be very wealthy and they could afford, so this brother from here said, whatever he said, "It was anti-Semitism." He saw that, you know, he went through Germany, He could tell that something is coming, and also he said, "why don't you and your family go to my brother-in-law and sister," and they had three kids, small kids, "why don't you try to

get to the United States? I go back, I'll send you papers." And that's what he did. And they worked from there. In 1939 he came with his whole family to the United States to Green Bay. It was just very lucky.

SL: Did your parents feel that they wanted to make the trip to Green Bay as well?

PA: No, my father never thought that this gonna happen. Picture yourself if you would be in the United States and your family has it well and your children, your whole family from way, he just, my father never wanted to come the United States. He had it good and he never felt that he had to go away. We talked about it, you know, that, that someday he's gonna come or something, but it was so far, far away. We didn't even realize that. The war really came up really quick. I remember sitting on a balcony with a friend of my, we were sitting there, and there was, there were the marching, the soldiers were marching to the front because we lived in the Corridor. The Corridor that, the really the war started from. And we saw at night marching, marching, but we just didn't think that that's gonna be. You know, or Poland's gonna lose that fast.

SL: What is the name of your sister's family, what was the name of your sister's family here in Green Bay?

PA: Jacob Fogel, Jacob and Rose Fogel.

SL: Now was that the name, who, that's your sister and your brother-in-law?

PA: Right.

SL: What was your, the brother who lived in Green Bay, what was his name?

PA: Arthur Fogel.

SL: What kind of business did they have?

PA: He was in manufacturing.

SL: And do you know when they arrived in the Green Bay?

PA: I couldn't tell you.

SL: Any idea how they got here?

PA: Well, he came as a young, a very young boy. He had a brother, and the brother brought, you know, like this, and he came as a very young boy I know that. But I wouldn't know the date.

SL: Did they come directly to Wisconsin or did they--

PA: No, no they came, they were in Chicago first or New York and then Chicago and then he got married here, you know. This is the brother. But they were a close family and soon he came and he saw that he had a feeling that, for us, for my father it would be too late anyhow because, first of all, he never thought of going. He never thought that things like this gonna happen, and really a lot of people didn't think that's gonna happen.

SL: You said that your sister and her husband had three small children in Poland.

PA: Yes.

SL: What are the names of their children?

PA: Their names is Evelyn, and Sally, and Judy.

SL: Do you remember how old they were when they left Poland?

PA: Yes, Judy was about, the youngest one was 5 or 4 or 6. The other one was some 10, 11 and Evelyn one must have been 15.

SL: And how old were you in 1939 when they left?

PA: In 1939, I was 18 years old.

SL: So you were very close in age then to your niece?

PA: Oh yes, she has older children than I have. Well, her oldest son is older than our Rochelle is.

SL: Do you, do you know where they all are now? Your nieces?

PA: Sure.

SL: Is anyone left in Green Bay?

PA: No, no.

SL: Where have they gone?

PA: The oldest one got married to a St. Louis boy, and she is in St. Louis and has two children; Sally is married to an optometrist, and she is in, in La Mirada, California, and has two children, and she is a grandma already, and I am not; Judy lives in, in Chicago, in Morton Grove, and has two boys.

SL: Do you keep in close contact with them.

PA: Much, very much.

SL: And you were telling me before that, that your sister is no longer in Green Bay.

PA: No. She left in 1954, she left in 1954, they retired, they sold their store and they retired and they felt like they wanted to live in a warmer climate, you know, so they live close to one of their daughters.

SL: And how often do you see them?

PA: Oh, see them twice a year. They come, they are gonna come for Passover around here and we were just there. So at least twice a year.

SL: I would like to talk to you about your first years in Green Bay and the experiences that you had.

PA: Okay.

SL: First of all, did you have any feelings about the way Green Bay looked in a physical sense when you first came here? Did you it remind you of anything?

PA: Not quite. I lived, at first we were, I was born in a very small town and then we lived in a different town, at Corridor that I told you, in Grudziadz, and it was a little different. Except, you know, the Jewish life at my sister's home was just like it was at home. It was kosher, they observed very much, and they had a synagogue here, an older synagogue, the only one. Now, we have a new one. And we participated, of course. And, at my sister's home, I felt, I felt just like I would have been back home.

SL: Did the city seem small to you to you when you first got here or large?

PA: No, larger, larger.

SL: Industrial?

PA: Larger, larger.

SL: When you first got here, where did you live?

PA: I lived with my sister.

SL: And where exactly was the location, do you recall, the location do you recall what street she lived on?

PA: On South Webster, right down the street, Webster Street, 1021 South Webster.

SL: When you finally arrived here were any of her children still living in the house?

PA: Yeah, the youngest one was, one was, the oldest one was married, and Sally was in college. It was at Madison.

SL: Now, you didn't speak any English?

PA: No.

SL: Did her children, your sister's children speak Yiddish?

PA: They spoke it, they also understand Polish. That was spoken at home, too, a lot.

SL: So you could converse with them?

PA: I could converse with my sister and my brother-in-law. That was no problem.

SL: And their children, too?

PA: And the children. The youngest one didn't understand too much, but we got along. And I did go, he had a clothing store and because I come from a family that were business-minded people — my father — and I was the youngest. So, he, I couldn't speak, but I went to the store and helped them, and I listened, and I listened and I sold things. I think in no time I knew how to speak English — not that good, but I did. I went to, I had a private tutor for a while and then I went to vocational for a while, school.

SL: What did you study in vocational school?

PA: English.

SL: Oh I was just, was it like a night school?

PA: It was a night school, and it was a private tutor for it. And it didn't come so hard because if you know a few languages like German and Swedish and Jewish and, after a while you feel that except the writing,

when you write English, that's the most difficult. It was the most difficult thing for me, because you speak it differently as you write it.

SL: Could you tell me a little bit more about the clothing store. First of all, did it have a name?

PA: Yeah, Fogel's Men's Wear.

SL: And where was it located?

PA: On the Main Street.

SL: Right, pretty much downtown?

PA: In Green Bay, now it's no longer because the mall is there, but it's down, it was downtown.

SL: And when your sister and brother-in-law left in 1954, did they close the store?

PA: They sold the store, yes.

SL: Did it change names?

PA: Yes, it changed names to; I can't remember the name of it, the man that bought it.

SL: Is the building still there?

PA: No, no, no.

SL: When you first came to Green Bay, did you experience any incidents at all of anti-Semitism?

PA: No, I really didn't. I was kept—I couldn't have stand this if I would experience this, like anti-Semitism, no. First of all, I was mostly in Jewish surroundings except in the store. Because, until I started going out, then I also went with, mostly with Jewish people. Don't you want to know when I met my husband?

SL: Yeah. Could I ask you a few more questions before?

PA: Yeah, yeah, sure.

SL: Okay, you came and lived with your sister so that some things were taken care of for you right away, but did you feel that you, as a new immigrant, had certain problems that were typical of those that newcomers would have to this country or did you feel pretty much taken care of?

PA: No. Pretty much taken care of and pretty much at ease and happy. I never, you must know, after so many years being away from home, taken everything away from you, I came to a home that had everything — love. Never, I had everything I could ask for, except, you know, I missed my parents and things like this. But otherwise they made me very, very comfortable.

SL: Did you, for instance, experience anything in the store, attitudes of other people when you were selling or standing around, that would make you feel that you weren't welcome in the community?

PA: No. I can't say that.

SL: You didn't speak English though.

PA: I didn't speak English, but they, in fact, I had a lot of supportive people that he had a lot of customers that they were Polish, you know, and they came from like Pulaski here — Polish — and when they heard that I was Polish, they took to me very much, and I didn't have no problem.

SL: Do you recall any special acts of kindness that was shown to you here when you first came, any incident that stands out in your mind?

PA: People, people invited us because I came, had a special gathering that I meet people and families. They was very nice. Really, I didn't want much from. That's all I needed at this time, that's all I needed is a home, the warmth and love and kindness. And, of course, as the years went by you experience different things. Right? You're on your own, you're, I felt — you know how I felt? I felt like I'm just getting out of grade school. That's how young — those years that I lived terrible years through and I couldn't believe that I'm alive and I'm still with my people, you know and I'm, and I just felt wonderful, wonderful, in a way.

SL: I would like to turn the tape over.

PA: Sure.

**END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 1**



**TAPE 4, SIDE 2**

SL: When you first came and you lived with your sister and your sister's family did you become friendly with her friends?

PA: Yes.

SL: They weren't too much older than you were?

PA: Did, but it didn't mean a thing, you know, you just make the best of it, and they was very friendly. Very friendly, and giving and, you know, it was a pleasure. It was very nice people.

SL: Were they Jewish, all of them?

PA: Yes, most of them, yes. I met a few other people, you know, but most of them were Jewish friends of my folks, you know, my sister and brother-in-law. So we joined the Synagogue, I mean we were with the Synagogue from the beginning and we worked during the days we worked, at night, we came home tired. My sister worked, my brother-in-law worked, the girls, when they came home, worked. It was a family store.

SL: Were you helped by any community organizations?

PA: No.

SL: There were no Jewish organizations in Green Bay that helped you at all?

PA: No, no.

SL: But in a way you must have not needed it.

PA: I did not need it.

SL: Do you recall the process that you went through in order to become a citizen?

PA: Yes, I had, I had to study for it, and then, this was already after I was married and had two children.

SL: What year was it that you became a citizen?

PA: I think in '55.

SL: Had you come with the intention that you would stay in the United States permanently? Become a citizen?

PA: Well, I really didn't know, at that time I didn't know what, but, meanwhile, I was just happy to stay. And after a year I was married so then I knew that I am staying.

SL: Okay. Let's talk about your marital status.

PA: Right, yeah.

SL: I would like to know about your husband and so on, just tell me how you met him; I need his name, when and where he was born, and that kind of thing.

PA: Okay, yeah. I met him on a blind date, my niece came home from college and there was, it was Easter time, I came here in February, Easter time was in March or April. And she says, "Pela," they never call me aunt, so "Pela, well, would you like to go out with us?" and that time, I didn't know much of English. I said, "well, yes, sure I'll go." And, she had a couple friends, they were couples, so they knew my husband had a store here, a grocery store, and he was single and he asked, they asked him, I guess, they called him each time a Jewish girl came to town, they called him up, they called him up for a date. So, he accepted, and Saturday night he came with other young men and we were four couples and went out dancing. You know, it so it happens my husband comes also from a very Jewish family, Jewish mine is religious, and he knew a little Jewish, so I guess we, he was very kind, very nice, and from that time, I guess we were dating. He called me up, and all he could say, "Would you like to go to a movie?" And I says, "Sure." Or I says, "I'll think about it." And that's the way and by October 26, October 26 we were engaged. He didn't ask me to marry him; he just brought me a ring. And I accepted and November, or February 19, on the date of my coming to Green Bay, we were married.

SL: Just one year after?

PA: Yeah, that's was just 30 years ago this past February 19.

SL: What is your husband's full name?

PA: Full name? Richard Alpert.

SL: And when was he born?

PA: He was born in 1916.

SL: Is he a native of Green Bay?

PA: No, Sheboygan.

SL: Oh Sheboygan, do you know anything about his parents' history in Wisconsin?

PA: His parents came, I think, from—a whole bunch of them came from Russia, Polish Russia, on the border, I think, Deuschitz(?) or something. And they had a very hard, then they had a very hard living to do, because there was difficult times. That was a long time ago. It were difficult times. I think his mother came with two small children to the United States, yeah.

SL: Do you remember what, or do you know what his parents were doing in Sheboygan, what kind of jobs they had?

PA: Oh, they did what? What did they do, Jewish people, they were, what kinds of things were they, , [sounds like:*lumpin, lumpin*] that's just— anyhow, they did whatever they could, you know. It was just, they worked, sometimes a factory, sometimes they sold out of a wagon, or things like this. That's what I heard.

SL: Did you ever meet them?

PA: Before?

SL: Yeah, were they still living when met him.

PA: Yeah, his mother, yes, his mother.

SL: Was she still in Sheboygan?

PA: She died four years ago, at 94. And very, very nice, just loved her. And he has a sister in Sheboygan; he has a whole family in Sheboygan.

SL: Oh, are you close with them? Do you see them?

PA: Very much, yeah. Very close. Very like my family.

SL: In what way?

PA: The same way, in a way of giving, warmth, and close. Very close. We're all very close.

SL: How is it that he got to Green Bay instead of settling in Sheboygan?

PA: Well, he just wanted to go away from home and he settled, his brother started here a business, and he worked for him for a while, and he lived at the Y [YMCA] by himself, and that's how, and he stayed, since then he stayed in Green Bay.

SL: Now you told me that he had a grocery store.

PA: Yeah, when I met him.

SL: Was this his own?

PA: Yes.

SL: What was the name of it?

PA: He used to call it Alpert Brothers.

SL: And where was the grocery store located?

PA: On 9<sup>th</sup> Street. On the west side of Green Bay.

SL: Is it still there? The building?

PA: The building is still there, it's no grocery store anymore, because we, we went out of it. It was too hard. It was too much.

SL: How long, when did you leave the business?

PA: Oh, about 10, 11 years ago.

SL: And what does your husband do now?

PA: He's a salesman for a paper company.

SL: Does he travel a lot out of town or is it mostly in town?

PA: Yeah, he used to travel; now he doesn't; now he is mostly in the office.

SL: I'd like to know something about your children. Why don't you tell me their names and their dates of birth?

PA: Rochelle was born in Green Bay, her name is Rochelle Lynn, and she was born in 1951, May 14. I think she's just beautiful, so is my other daughter, and Andrea was born in 1955, June 2<sup>nd</sup>. They are four years apart and they are lovely girls, I have to say.

SL: And what are they doing now?

PA: Well, Rochelle is in, right now in Santa Rosa and she is in special guidance counseling, she has a job and is very happy. She has a boyfriend who is a psychologist and, hopefully, they are gonna get married. Andrea is in Milwaukee, she is in social work, she is also very happy working. And Andrea comes home a quite often.

SL: Do you speak English primarily with your children?

PA: Oh yes, mostly English.

SL: Do either one of them know any Yiddish or Polish at all?

PA: A very seldom, I am very sorry that I didn't speak that, but the reason, I had to learn English, to improve my English, so I never spoke to my kids Polish or Jewish. They knew a few words that I would say or my husband would say, but I really want to learn my language (English), so therefore I didn't speak to my kids.

SL: Did you and your husband speak primarily in English?

PA: Yes, all English, yes.

SL: How much do your children know about your Holocaust experiences?

PA: In fact, I just spoke to Andrea last night, and I had told her that you are coming. She says, "Mother, oh I am so proud of you." She says, "Mother, that you have so much to do it again." Because I never told my kids, I never told my husband about my experiences in the beginning, no.

SL: Was it too painful?

PA: Yes, it was too painful, I didn't want the kids to, to go through an experience even just thinking what I went through, so I didn't. In fact, maybe it was wrong, but this the way I felt and I can't help it. I didn't tell things to my sister that she wanted to know because I knew that would hurt her very much, I

couldn't. I couldn't what happened to my family, I couldn't tell her all those things. I just told her that they were, that they were killed, they were, they're not here. But I never, until this came up with the taping, my tapes and things like this, as they gotten older, they started asking me questions when they came from high school, they used to ask, well, you know, they had of non-Jewish friends, of course, they felt maybe now Germany's all ready this, and they couldn't understand that I carried a hatred for them, for all those years gone. But I was, I used to tell my kids, I couldn't help it. I understand you have to sometimes forgive, but it's very, very difficult. I didn't do anything to hurt them really, what they did to us. So, after a while, after a while they kinda understood. It's what I meant.

SL: So it really wasn't until 1974 when you made the first tapes that they knew a lot about it?

PA: Well yes, they, they knew, they knew, they knew, of course they knew, certain things they knew, but not really the real things they didn't. How....

SL: In such detail?

PA: In such detail, I never, I still didn't tell all the details. Because, I think that's because it hurts me so much myself, very much, I think.

SL: Do you think that your children faced any problems growing up when they were in school, perhaps because of your unusual circumstances?

PA: I don't think so.

SL: Never tormented by any children in school because you were an immigrant or because they didn't have grandparents or anything like that?

PA: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. One thing I know they were excellent students and they were always looked up to. They had friends, non-Jewish friends and our house was always open to them, always.

SL: In comparison to other families, do you see that your children perhaps over-achieve in some ways, maybe making up for things that you couldn't have because of what happened in your life at an early age?

PA: I don't know, it's possible, but I wouldn't say that. I think they are just smart.

SL: Do you think that your family is closer to one another than a lot of other families that you see?

PA: I would—I think so. I think the fact that it's just, my kids used to, for years my kids used to never go to bed before they came down and kissed us goodnight. They were older already, even now, when we were over at Rochelle's place, now she's 28 years old. I always a goodnight kiss, very warm. Also the kids are very, very--when I talk to the kids on the telephone, "I love you Mother," maybe that's why they, they feel it that way, and especially now, but they used to always be like that.

SL: Why do you think that there is this closeness? Do you think that it would tie in to some way with your experiences?

PA: Possible, very possible, that they would, but one thing I can tell you that, my whole family is like this, and they used to be like this, and I think it carries through too. After, it carries through.

SL: Do you see yourself as perhaps being more concerned a parent than some of your friends?

PA: Yes, definitely.

SL: Why do you think that?

PA: Why, because I lost everybody. I was very, very concerned about if my child got sick or my husband got sick, I just shook. I was very, very tense and I could, when they slept in their rooms, I admit, there was a thunderstorm, I was flitting in between the rooms, to watch them at night, so that nothing happens. So this, this comes from, I know that this comes from that, because I was, still, I am still like that.

SL: I'd like to ask you a few questions about the Jewish community in Green Bay that was so important, especially even at the beginning.

PA: Yeah.

SL: First of all, are you still an active member of the Jewish community?

PA: Yes.

SL: What types of organizations or things do you do that would keep you active.

PA: What type I belong to?

SL: Yes.

PA: I belong to the B'nai B'rith Woman, I belong to Hadassah and I belong to Sisterhood.

SL: And do you ah....

PA: I don't take too much—well, what did you want to ask me?

SL: Well, I was just going to ask which types of things that you did?

PA: Well, I help, you know. I used to do more when the kids were little, when I didn't do work, you know. I used to come to meetings all the time and I used to do work, whatever I was assigned. I was never president or anything like this because I can't take that kind of pressure. I can't, but I never refused helping, and, that's what I do. We keep a kosher home, even our kids, our kids came home once from Madison and said to us, "We can't, you know we can't get meat here in Green Bay, kosher meat." So I said, "Let's," I was kinda upset at the table because they didn't send me the meat and I didn't have enough so I said, "well, I think I'm gonna switch." So both of them said, "Mother, you can't, you won't do this, will you?" I says, "No, I just was joking." But they don't keep kosher because of difficulties in, but they come home, they like it.

SL: How many synagogues are there in Green Bay?

PA: Just one. Conservative.

SL: And what is the name?

PA: Cnesses Israel Synagogue.

SL: How large a synagogue is it? Do you know approximately how many members there are now?

PA: Yes, there about, I think there would be 125 families.

SL: Is it a fairly active congregation?

PA: Yes, very much.

SL: Very close knit.



PA: Very much so, very nice too. They know each other, they do things for each other as much as possible, and they work together nicely.

SL: Do you feel that you've really fit into this community, this Jewish community?

PA: Yes, I love Green Bay.

SL: Is it something that maybe is connected with the Jewish aspect that you've been into in the community?

PA: Yes, absolutely, that's what, we keep together a lot, work for the same cause, you know, needs and causes and I never felt that I was behind, even I couldn't speak that good English and things like this, but I was very welcome wherever I went. As I could tell, Green Bay has a wonderful way of showing.

SL: Who are your close friends today? Are they many of the Jewish people that you have met over the years?

PA: Yes, yes. Some newcomers too that came to town. We belong to clubs, we belong together with my husband, also we belong--I belong to separate woman's clubs too.

SL: That are non-Jewish?

PA: No, no, they are Jewish girls; they play mahjong or things like this.

SL: Oh, oh really. Would you say that most of your close friends are Jewish?

PA: Yes, but I do have some Gentile friends, very close to, neighbors, wonderful neighbors. Absolutely wonderful.

SL: Do you have any friends at all who are survivors?

PA: Yes, but not here. There are none.

SL: Where are your friends living, the ones that are survivors?

PA: They are in Philadelphia, New Jersey, that's what I know. And some are still in Sweden.

SL: Do you keep in contact with them?

PA: Well, one of the friends was here, but she didn't come to Green Bay, she was in Philadelphia, and that time my husband wasn't feeling well so I couldn't go. But she lives in Sweden, she has, she married a Swede and she has two children and is very happy there.

SL: When was it that you finally moved into this house?

PA: At first, we lived on the west side. Since Rochelle was four months old, we moved into a house and then we moved here in '62, no '63.

SL: Are many of the neighbors that you have now, people living here at that time?

PA: Yes.

SL: So you have been able, there is really a closeness in the neighborhood?

PA: Oh, only a few really but we're very nice friends with all of them. They all know me, because I worked close to here in that drugstore.

SL: What drugstore do you work in?

PA: Snyder, Snyder's Drugs.

SL: And where is that located?

PA: It is located on Webster did you come this way?

SL: Yes.

PA: Yeah, it is located at 8<sup>th</sup> and Webster.

SL: How long have you been working there?

PA: It's gonna be 10 years.

SL: Oh. Did you, did you have another job prior to working at that?

PA: No, then I helped my husband in his store when we had our store, I helped him.

SL: What type of work do you do at the drugstore?

PA: I checker, I sell, I love that, and I see all the people, and most of the Jewish people live also here in Allouez, so sometimes we see them more than at synagogue. I know, but I know a lot of people.

SL: You told me before that your family had been involved for many years in selling and in merchandising.

PA: Right.

SL: Is this something that you really enjoy doing?

PA: Yes. Absolutely.

SL: Why, why is it?

PA: Why that's because that's what I grew up with. See, I just, I remember as a child, my sisters and brothers, they all were involved in a business. I used to be just sitting there on a little step stool and watching people, watch my parents after I came back from school, I just watched my parents or how they sell I just do all that.

SL: There has been traditionally an animosity between Eastern and Western European Jews. Some Westerners felt that the Eastern European Jews maybe were not as cultured or lived in the *shtetl* and had a different type of lifestyle and this was something that they disliked in one another. I wanted to know if there was anything that you felt in the Jewish community now in Green Bay that, is there any animosity at all between Eastern European Jews and Western European Jews even though now you are all Americans?

PA: I don't think so. Not here in Green Bay, because if it would be, you know, if you go to Sheboygan, like my husband used to tell me that they used to have a very Orthodox synagogue, and they felt they so much better, you know, and they had three synagogues there. While here was always one. And therefore, sure, some people would like to go to change a synagogue to a Reformed temple, but they don't, because there still many more, many people that they are Conservative and they keep it this way. And we have a woman, our president of the Synagogue. Very nice.

SL: Do you belong to any organizations of survivors or *landsmannschaft* There aren't any survivors in Green Bay so?

PA: There aren't any I would like to, I would like to go back, if all is well, I am planning to go to Philadelphia to see. Even in Chicago they have it.

SL: In Milwaukee they have, Polish survivors. With a hundred, a hundred numbers.

PA: They don't, no kidding.

SL: Yes, they do very very strong communities.

PA: I forgotten how to speak Polish.

SL: They speak--they speak Yiddish pretty much.

PA: Yiddish?

SL: Yeah.

PA: Oh sure, forgotten to speak Yiddish. No, Yiddish I didn't forget.

SL: Your American-born Jewish friends that you have made through the Synagogue and other contacts here, have you talked to any of them about your Holocaust experiences?

PA: Some, some of it.

SL: Do you think that they have an understanding, and have they been compassionate about it?

PA: Sure. They are.

SL: Are they interested, do they ask you questions about it?

PA: Sure, they do, sometimes. You know, I never really, maybe I am not that outgoing, I don't think that's the word, but I never, I feel, I never like to impose or speak about it because I feel there are some people that it just goes one ear in and one other out and I think those things so precious to me to tell people that don't give you the attention or something, that wouldn't hurt me too much, so I rather not.

SL: Have you discussed the Holocaust in general with them?

PA: I would say so, of course, they read a lot about it. They seen TV programs and they would ask, "Is it possible that you went through this?" I says, "Yes." When we watch the movie, what was it, the *Holocaust*. At first I didn't, I couldn't watch it; I didn't want to watch it. And once they were playing, they were having it over on TV, my husband was in bed, and I went by myself and watched this, and I really, what my reaction was, was nothing, it was nothing compared to what we went through.

SL: Did you feel that anyone became more interested in your experiences after watching the show?

PA: I think so, yes. How could people do this? But to me, they left out everything, what I went through they didn't, it's not one percent.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 2

## TAPE 5, SIDE 1

SL: Did you talk to any of your Gentile friends about the Holocaust, about your experiences?

PA: Yes, in fact, at work some of the girls that were kind of close and they heard it. Of course, I was on TV, and, as I say, customers — a lot of customers came and told me, first of all, they said, "Oh, you were so good. You expressed yourself so well." I says, "Fine." But that's how they came, and sometimes they used to come and talk to me because at work you can't talk too much. So anyhow, I did.

SL: What do you think their reaction was? Was it somewhat similar to the reaction of your Jewish friends or different?

PA: Pretty much very — the friends I had and I have that are interested and they — of course, they showed, they showed a lot of interest — "How could that be, and how can people do this?" Yes.

SL: Have you ever had any particularly unpleasant experiences with non-Jews here in Green Bay?

PA: Not myself. Except I had a terrible, I don't want to talk about it, a terrible boss.

SL: Anti-Semitic?

PA: I would think. That's the first person that I really— I never dislike anybody.

SL: Has he said anything pointedly to you about your Jewishness or your experiences?

PA: No, no. How could he? All of the customers are Jewish, most of them.

SL: How do you think you would feel if your children married non-Jews?

PA: [laughter] What a question to answer. I don't know, I feel, mine— thinking changed a lot, just because I have seen a lot, I've seen Jewish marry Jewish people, and they are just as unhappy. They have terrible experiences together, you know. I feel really, I feel if my daughters came home and would say that I am in love with a boy, you know, and, and I know, we knew, both of us that it is the right thing. You discourage it at first, sure, but if it is the right man, and the right, you can tell. I don't know what I could say. Of course, today is a different story, you know. My father wouldn't let me, I assure you, and there were times that we were very upset if our daughters went out with somebody non-Jewish, but

today I just couldn't say that. Of course, the kids take it differently too. They don't want to be told, if they feel happy. Can you do something about it?

SL: Do you think that it is important to them to find, that it would be important to find someone Jewish?

PA: Oh, I think so, I think so. Our, Rochelle, I don't think I should talk about it; they want to listen to this. I think that they would rather, but if they find somebody that's very nice and, and good, I can't see why not. You know, in a way, maybe someday we are gonna feel that maybe it would be never a Hitler. Of course, those times in Germany, people turned too much to the other side, and then he didn't approve of anybody. So what, we can't be sorry about this. But we would prefer, sure, we would. I wish they know our wishes. I don't know if they are gonna do it.

SL: You told me before that you belong to quite a few Jewish clubs, through the Synagogue and through just your friends.

PA: Yeah.

SL: Do you belong any political or any other social clubs at all in Green Bay that aren't necessarily Jewishly connected?

PA: Political? No.

SL: Any social clubs at all?

PA: No, not especially.

SL: I just want to talk to you a little bit more about the part that religion plays in your life. You talked about keeping kosher in the home.

PA: Yeah.

SL: How often do you think that you go to the Synagogue?

PA: Well, my husband goes every Saturday. I go every other Saturday, or every third Saturday. I work on Friday and get very, very tired, stand on my feet, and I might be on Saturday mornings kinda hard to get up, but we do go.

SL: Did your children receive a Hebrew school education?

PA: Oh, yes. They both, Rochelle was teaching Hebrew here, Andrea was teaching Hebrew, they went to Camp Ramah you know what Camp Ramah is? They both went to Camp Ramah. They, I just want to tell you we are so proud of kids, because their Hebrew is far above ours, my husband's and mine, and they know what they are praying and they know what they are saying. The Hebrew in Green Bay was absolutely wonderful.

SL: Through the Hebrew school?

PA: Our kids who speak the most fluent education in Hebrew, and therefore Rochelle, even now, in Santa Rosa, she says, "We went all to the Synagogue," she says, "I just wonder if they have here a Hebrew education." She would like to get in there to tutor Hebrew.

SL: Do you keep other traditions in the home, as far as lighting candles, and all the other?

PA: Yes, yes. If I am not too...

SL: *Seder*?

PA: Yes, and also we go to Sheboygan, they are very close, and they are very, my sister-in-law has 30 people for *Seder*. She's the family Passover doer.

SL: [laughter] How do you think your feelings about your religion have changed since your experiences?

PA: Ah, what do you mean, my religion has changed? In a way? Which way?

SL: Do you think that perhaps there has been a change in your belief in God, or your belief in the goodness of man, that Judean teaches?

PA: There were times in camp when it was so bad that you really didn't want to live, and we asked questions then, "Who is God?" and things like this. Otherwise, I am a believer. I'm a believer.

SL: And still to this day you are?

PA: Yes.

SL: I would like for you, if you can to kinda give me a description of a typical day that you have in your life right now. How many days a week do you work?

PA: Three days a week.



SL: What do you do those days that you are not working?

PA: Oh, I have lots to do. I have a home to take care of; I have a social life, that means I do play cards, or play mahjong with the girls. Once in a while, I'll go out to lunch. And Saturday we go to synagogue or, you know. Sundays, I am with my husband, we are together, and in summer we fry outside, we have a big yard, and we invite our neighbors. We go out, we have next door two kids that are 26 and 27 he's a teacher she's a nurse. They ask us to go with them. Well, we feel so comfortable with you. That funny, we have older kids, they are very nice.

SL: Do you feel that you are pretty socially active you have a full life?

PA: Yes. We do. I really do. I do whatever I feel I want to do. We are not wealthy, we are not, can't afford all trips, although some people do it here, we, I am not jealous of this because we do what we can.

SL: Do you like to go to the movies?

PA: Oh, my husband falls asleep. We can't go to a movie. We do once in a while.

SL: Do you like to read?

PA: Yeah, I like to read. I am interested in needlepoint, I do a lot of that, and talk to my kids, talk to my family, and I keep up my house. That's all.

SL: What newspapers and magazines do you receive here in the house?

PA: In the house, we have magazines we buy, *Newsweek*, the papers we have the *Milwaukee Journal* on Sunday, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, the *Chronicle*.

SL: *The Jewish Chronicle*?

PA: No, not *The Jewish Chronicle*, I would like to get the *Jewish Chronicle*. I told my husband to buy it, but not the *Jewish Chronicle*.

SL: What is the *Chronicle*, is that a Green Bay paper?

PA: Yeah, it is a Green Bay paper.

SL: Do you get any Jewish newspapers at all?

PA: No. Once in a while, there is a man here that gets the *Forward* and things like this, and once in a while he brings it to Synagogue to the library and we get it.

SL: Have you read any books on the Holocaust?

PA: No.

SL: By choice, or just you haven't found any.

PA: I just don't, I have some books of some of the Holocaust of Oswiecim, that's, what do you call it, what do I wish to say, the ones that have numbers, what do they call them?

SL: What the concentration camps?

PA: Yeah, where they--

SL: Auschwitz.

PA: Yeah, Auschwitz, Auschwitz Oswiecim. I have it in Polish. I have read that, and I read some of this, but I just, I had it. I really don't, don't want to remind myself of what it was.

SL: Have you traveled much in Wisconsin?

PA: Yes, yes we travel in Wisconsin, we go, in the summer we go to Door County, and Madison, Milwaukee, not too far, I would say.

SL: Any particular parts that you like more than others in the state?

PA: In the state? I love Door County.

SL: Why?

PA: Because it is so, it looks just like Sweden.

SL: Like Sweden, in what way?

PA: The trees and the things, this, of course, it looks also like home, back home too; we had the same climate as Wisconsin. The winters and the summers were short.

SL: Physically, does it remind you of it, the terrain, the hills or—

PA: The hills, yeah, and we didn't have too many mountains and things like this. Not where we lived anyhow.

SL: How much happier do you think you would have been living in a city or an area that had quite a large population of Jews? Such as New York or Los Angeles, or Philadelphia.

PA: I don't know, I can't tell you. We are very happy here. It is a nice close community. I would have like to go and to see, you know, in a big city how, you know how it is, because I visited once a year, at least, Los Angeles when my sister used to live in Beverly Hills, we used to go to synagogue, and it didn't appeal to me. It really didn't.

SL: Because it was too big?

PA: It was too much uppy, or you don't see the between, or below yourself, or way up. Here it is almost— there are people that are really wealthy and known here in Green Bay for years and years and years, if you come together you won't see the difference.

SL: How do you feel about living in Wisconsin, which is a state that has quite a large number of ethnic Germans who had settled here? Is that something that you think about or it doesn't bother you, or affect you at all?

PA: No, no, it doesn't. I never knew that they had so many Germans. I think Milwaukee does. Milwaukee does that's what sometimes bothers me, you know. When they set up those marches and things like this. If I would be there, I think I would do something about it myself.

SL: Did you, did you feel threatened at that point? How did you feel when the Nazi's were planning that march in Milwaukee?

PA: Terrible.

SL: Did you feel you could do anything at all?

PA: Yeah, kill 'em.

SL: Do you feel that the government say should have obligated to?

PA: Well, yes.

SL: What do you feel the government should do about it?

PA: They should never have allowed it. Even if it is a free, free speech and everything we can do here everything. But this, whatever happened, what they did to people, like worse than an animal, so they couldn't, they can't allow to do this. They shouldn't.

SL: What kind of an effort have you made to become acquainted with Wisconsin history? Read any books on Wisconsin history?

PA: Well, we had some, I didn't but we went once, and she spoke about it beautifully, Shirley Abrahamson. I heard her a couple times. She spoke about Wisconsin, about Jewish communities and everything. It was very interesting. No, I didn't, not much, but I hear those things when I go to Sheboygan. They tell me the stories, you know, from way back.

SL: Do you think that you feel an obligation to Green Bay or to Wisconsin because the community gave you a start in a new life?

PA: If you ask me if I had an obligation to my sister and brother-in-law, they really gave me a start. But I, sure I would say that too because they were very nice to me, and they took me in all over, I mean, I had no problem. That maybe some people had problems, I don't want to be with, you know, the person that, you know. It is something you decide to post if they had it. If you only one or two in the community, but no, I didn't have any problems, I would say yes.

SL: How satisfactory do you find the American system of government to be?

PA: Well, I tell you, [laughter] we had such a lovely government in Poland that I— no, it could be better.

SL: Here, it could be better?

PA: Yeah.

SL: Why?

PA: It's better than any place else.

SL: In what way do you think it could be better?

PA: What?

SL: In what way do you think it could be better?

PA: Well, if they, I think if they would put some smarter man in office, not smarter, but people that think more, people that. The middle class people or the poor people, I would say. But, I tell you, when, if people come, years I said this and complained about government, complained about prices. Now, of course, it is different story, prices, and complained about food, what they don't have. See, I couldn't stand it, because with, people just don't know how lucky they are, whatever they have here. What they have here, no place, I have been in Israel, they don't have it.

SL: Do you vote regularly? Do you take advantage of the opportunities that you have?

PA: Yes, yes, yes, I do. And a good politician, I am not.

SL: How do you feel about the prominence of Jews in American society, and in government, in the arts, and in the news media?

PA: I think, well, that they do have a large amount and that is good.

SL: It's not something that you feel frightened about that so many of them are visible?

PA: What do you mean, visible?

SL: That there are a lot of Jews who are well-known and do you think this is a bad thing to be?

PA: No, it's a good thing; there should be more of them.

SL: What do you see are important issues that are facing this country right now?

PA: I told you a politician, I am not a politician, I am not, but it's sad, it's frightening what's coming up.

SL: What do you mean by that? What things?

PA: Well, the recession, the people, the people that, older people, they use to have something, they used to sell their home, they used to so they can live comfortably, now they can't even buy anything for it. It is just very, very bad. What I hear, and what it is, and what I experienced myself, it's sad but it is all over, it's all over very sad, and worse, so let's hope it's gonna be a better year.

SL: To what extend do you believe there is anti-Semitism in this country?

PA: Oh, I believe that.

SL: That there is?

PA: That there is.

SL: A lot, do you think?

PA: Hidden?

SL: Either way.

PA: Maybe we don't know much about it, that much, but it definite is.

SL: How secure do you feel in America though? Do you see that there might be another situation arising such as the one you faced?

PA: I don't want to think about it even. I just hope never.

SL: Do you see any indication that there might be or?

PA: I don't think so. To keep up with all. It took you a long time to write all those questions.

SL: That is true. What are your feelings about Germany today and present-day Germans? Do you have any feelings towards them at all?

PA: No. I mean, except, I don't want to say hatred because my kids always told me not to say that, but I always feel, always I think, never will go away from me to the day I die.

SL: Up to what?

PA: A feeling of hatred, I would say.

SL: Do your children share any of those feelings about Germany?

PA: I think so now, I told you before that they came home and say that you got to forgive and something, what they listened in school, and I explained to them, and they couldn't understand, but I think now they do.

SL: Do you receive any restitution from Germany?

PA: Yes, yes.

SL: How often do you receive it?

PA: Once a month.

SL: You talked before; you mentioned that you had been to Israel. How many times have you been there?

PA: Once.

SL: And when was that?

PA: When my brother was so ill, he died.

SL: What year was that?

PA: 1963.

SL: So you remember, what was your reaction to Israel, how did you feel about it?

PA: I liked it in a way. I know what they did; I don't think I would like to live in it.

SL: You wouldn't like to? Why not?

PA: Ah, I don't, I can't explain it to you why not, I just, I just, I guess I made this my home, that's why, and I just, I couldn't live in the way that they are living there. Maybe it's just for what I saw, and maybe I went just in a bad time, because my brother was so ill and I was very, very upset, and I have a nephew that lives there, and is a ophthalmologist, and has, that's my brother's son. And a niece and I have cousins that came previously, you know, before the war started.

SL: Are you active in any organization, or do any fund-raising at all for Israel?

PA: Oh yes, we do a lot in Green Bay UJA and all different kind of, HMO, we are a next state organization right in Green Bay.

SL: So, even though you felt that maybe you, yourself wouldn't be able to live there, but you feel that it's....

PA: Oh definitely, we have to have a state, absolutely. Oh, maybe someday will come, as I say I was in such a bad mood and times that I thought myself, maybe I would just like a peaceful life, you know.

SL: I've, we are running out at the end of this tape so I'd like to turn it over.

**END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 5, SIDE 2

SL: Do you think that it is easier for you now to talk about your experiences then it might have been about five years ago?

PA: Yes, definitely.

SL: Why do you think that's so?

PA: I, it opened, you know, really, the Historical Society, the Jewish, it opened to me a world that I could speak to someone like I speak to you, I speak to, I know that a when I spoke to my kids, when I didn't speak to my kids, they were too young to tell them, and when they came and said you can talk to us, you can open your heart, and talk to us. I felt, after I didn't want, I just felt that I could do it. And it is... I think it is a very good thing to have.

SL: How do you feel about the increasing awareness in this country about the Holocaust?

PA: Well, it's, it's the most important thing. People should never forget, and they have to be reminded because, if you don't experience this, experience yourself, then there are times that you just let it go, just like wars in the far countries here. We just watch it on TV and then you go away and nothing. But the Holocaust was so terrible, especially for Jews, I mean you should not forget those things. People should be reminded.

SL: I mentioned to you before that some of the funding for this project has come from the Wisconsin Humanities Committee, which receives its money from the federal government. How do you feel about the fact that the federal government is providing money for this type of study?

PA: I think they should, absolutely, because it has to come from somewhere, and I think that they are, they are, it should be so very important for have people work for that kind of cause, and reminding them that this doesn't happen here.

SL: Why do you feel that it is important for you to participate in this type of project?

PA: Well, I would like to prevent that this should never happen to any, any or Jews or Gentiles or anybody in this world.



SL: You said before that you wanted to have it as something that your children could have, that the tapes would be something that they would have.

PA: Yeah, that's right. The tapes... and that should be a reminder for the future generations to come, you know.

SL: Is there anything that you would like to say about, whether it's about your life in Green Bay or anything that you feel like we didn't cover. Certainly we will go back to them.

PA: No, we covered, really. I appreciate you coming and I think it is wonderful that I can express myself.

SL: I think so too. Well, thank you.

PA: Yeah, thank you.

**END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 2**

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**