

## 8. Irene Makarin

June 6, 2004

[This tape begins with checking the microphone and a reading of the Oral History Release Agreement.]

Ray Hudson: Today is June 6, 2004. Talking with Irene Makarin. . . . [I read the agreement. We talk about the number of copies of the tape Irene would like to have. She signs the agreement and says:]

Irene Makarin: I never go to school.

RH: They didn't have a school when you were young?

IM: No. Nothing in there. No school or nothing in there.

RH: Now, Irene, let's start with some basic things. When were you born?

IM: I born 1930.

RH: 1930.

IM: April 28<sup>th</sup>.

RH: April 18<sup>th</sup>. I'm April 24<sup>th</sup>.

IM: And my ex-husband born 1925.

RH: Ah. Coco?

IM: April 1925.

RH: And where were you born?

IM: I born here. And Coco born—I'm sorry, they called him Coco—

RH: Yeah, Coco. I know him.

IM: She born from Kashega, Makushin, I think. Kashega.

RH: He was a Yatchmenoff, right?

IM: George Yatchmenoff's first son. Then after first wife passed away he moved to Biorka and he married to Elsie Ermeloff. That's Coco's second mother. Fede

Yatchmenoff, then Margaret Yatchmenoff—that's Coco's step-brother and step-sister. They were born here. Their dad is from Makushin, no, from Biorka. Her mom was from Makushin, I guess. I don't think they know that.

RH: And where were your parents from? [Throughout this interview Irene had difficulty hearing my questions.]

IM: They had a war in here, 1942.

RH: Ah.

IM: And Biorka people, they don't know nothing. They have no war. The men come in here to get groceries. All the way up there, all the way down there, and all over on other side, [the pass from Ugadaga Bay over the ridge and into Unalaska Valley] nothing but armies. My dad, Andrew Makarin, and George Yatchmenoff and Anna Merculieff's daddy, Ruff Ermeloff, and Candy, Candy Ermeloff. They come in here to get groceries. In June or July—June, I think.

RH: Yes, June. June.

IM: Then they come in here. They are going to get groceries because they had groceries [here]. Then they come in here and they get caught on other side [in Ugadaga Bay]. They [the military] thought they Japanese.

RH: Oh.

IM: The only one, Candy Ermeloff, the only one could speak English good. The rest of them, they don't speak English. They understand. They tried to speak English; and they had a hard time to speak English, you know. Then it took us about two weeks to go [back] to Biorka because they're really strict.

RH: Yeah.

IM: [Unclear] This place is nothing but armies, that's all. Then two days, I think it was about a week to go home to Biorka.

RH: Then they brought you the news about—

IM: Yeah. Just the chief, Alec Ermeloff, that's from Biorka chief, the only one that stay with us: Nick Galaktionoff, Coco—his name is William; they called him "Coco"—

RH: Yes, right.

IM: —my ex-husband, and then—Nick Galaktionoff, he was adopted for a while by Andrew Makarin—then his sister Marina Shapsnikoff, his sister married to—

RH: Oh, is that Molly Lukanin?

IM: Oh, yeah.

RH: Molly was married to—

IM: That's Moses' mom.

RH: Oh, yes.

IM: Moses Gordieff's mom. His dad is name is that Peter Lukanin. That's from Biorka. They come in here. They got married. Then they went to Biorka. They moved to Biorka. Moses mom. Then Peter Lukanin. They're in Biorka after they got married. Then after they had the Moses—I don't know what year Moses was born—1930 something. I don't even know. Then her husband Peter Lukanin beating his wife too much then that's why they talked to Chief Ermeloff from Biorka. Moses about five or maybe two months, one years old. And they brought him in, his mom and my dad and Alec Ermeloff. They brought him in here. They asked Maria Makarin, they asked if she could adopt that baby. And she said yeah.

RH: That was nice.

IM: After they gave her the baby they went back to Borka. His mom's name is Molly. They go back to Borka. And in the summer time, all the men go back to Borka, you know. Then all the kids, me, Marina, Margaret, Fede, and Anna Ermeloff—they're kids. Coco and Nick, they're older than us, you know. They used to beat us up! And they're playing outside. They never seen that airplane before [in] all their life, you know. They're playing outside. A bunch of round things come around to the Borka. They don't even know they're Japanese! They come to the Borka. All the kids that are playing outside, they're standing there, waiving at them. They [the pilots] think they are—probably they think they are Japanese. [Laughs] They don't bother us, just past the Borka. They go around that lake over there. They go around and they come back and they're really low. All the kids are standing up, waiving at them. They were waiving at us, too.

RH; Wow, they were waiving at you, too?

IM: Yeah. Good thing they don't bother us. Because nothing in there. No lights or nothing. Used the lamps, you know. After Biorka, after the people went back to Biorka they were talked to the chief, Alec Ermeloff. He told him, Peter, Peter Lukanin and

Candy Ermeloff, they talked to Alec Ermeloff that they bombing Dutch Harbor. Pretty soon they're going to—Army boat going to Biorka and they're going to bring us up. Kids don't know nothing. They don't know nothing. They're playing outside.

This month, 12th, they're making dry fish. Lots of them, lots of fish and they brought the fish and all the woman were going to make dry fish. When they're making dry fish, they hang them outside. Then that night, me, I don't even know what time but it was getting a little bit dark out, you know, then my daddy came out from that house. They're army people. They wonder who they [are] coming to Biorka. Then Candy Ermeloff came out and my dad is out. They talk to this army person. He told everybody to pack his stuff so they are going to bring us over. All the kids, they don't know nothing. Even me, I don't know nothing, you know. Then daddy went inside and talked to his wife in Aleut. Me, I just stood there looking at my dad and my daddy turned around. He told me to pack my clothes, in Aleut. I said, Okay. I have no suitcase or nothing, you know. Then they give me box or a flour bag, used them a long time ago. Put my clothes in there, put all my stuff on the box and getting dark out. Then there was three mens. They're over my daddy's house. They're the armies. They're waiting for us, waited for all of us Aleut people to go down the beach. And it's getting dark out, little bit getting dark out. Everybody they go in the skiff. And then they took us over to a army boat, too small, about as long as this one [the room], I guess. Holy Smoke, they left—all the Biorka people they left a lot of stuff. My mom and dad used to have a chicken, dogs and cats, everything. They left a lot of good stuff in their houses. And they're making dried fish and they just leave it like that. I think they brought us in at midnight. And then they took us over to the dock over there.

RH: Yeah, at Standard Oil.

IM: Yeah. Then all the kids are sleeping and they wake us up, you know. They took all the men and put them on a really big big boat. That's what they called the *Columbia*. That's how they took us to Southeast.

Then they wake us up and they put us down the dock and the army's there in a line, they're watching us. They're helping those old people in. Me, I'm just crying. I want my daddy, you know. Couldn't see my daddy. Then they brought us on a big big ship right there. It was just dark and they took us downstairs. Then they gave us our

room, one just like this [her room at the Unalaska Senior Center]. Just like all those Biorka womans and the kids, that's all.

RH: All in one room.

IM: Then the men they got their own room. Just the boys, that's all.

RH: Did they have beds or bunks?

IM: Then they had a watchman by the door. 'Cause kids like to go out there and play, that's why. That can't go home, you know. Then they brought us in June 12<sup>th</sup> and they left from in here June 13, midnight. I never ride on a big ship but they did, you know. I was just crying and I want my dad. Mama get mad at me. Somebody go out and I go out and looking for my dad and can't find him. Then a big guy come over and picked me up. I said, "I want my dad. I want my daddy." Mama gets mad at me. Finally, I don't know how many days they took us to Southeast on that big ship.

RH: Yeah, that's a long ways.

IM: They never go out or anything, just stay in their room because they don't trust those Japanese, that's why. Just the men, they outside, they watch, help those army watching, you know, watchmen.

RH: The Biorka men, the Biorka men were watchmen.

IM: Yeah. To go to Southeast. The next day, mama, daddy, and Alec Ermeloff, George Yatchmenoff, Ruff Ermeloff, they went to their wives's bedroom, you know, and they told his wife and kids to get up there, we're going to eat the breakfast. I never see a beautiful breakfast before. No. If I'd get up in the morning I'd just have boiled fish for breakfast. Then all those husbands took his wife and took her downstairs. We went downstairs and long tables, just a full one. And daddy sat right here and my mama sat right here and me, I sit right there. All the Biorka people they got one table, you know. All the kids, they don't know nothing about the breakfast.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

IM: I don't either. Mama eating. My daddy told me to eat, I wouldn't eat anything. I never see cereal before, you know. All the foods right there, I never seen anything like that.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

IM: They tried to let me eat, I wouldn't eat anything! Just cry! My daddy come over. "You better eat something." He talked Aleut to me. I turned around and told my dad, "I want my fish, boiled fish!" [Laughs] "So you can't have boiled fish. You got to eat." I wouldn't eat. He have a hard time. All the Biorka kids, they have a hard time to eat breakfast.

RH: Yeah.

IM: Then noon time, twelve o'clock, he took us down there and all the kids, they don't eat. [Laughs]

RH: Getting pretty hungry.

IM: Because they don't know. They never seen the good food before. They are growing up on Native food, that's why. It was really pretty hard for us, you know.

RH: Yeah. Yeah.

IM: Margaret, Marina, and Nick Galaktionoff, I mean, I forgot Irene Ermeloff, used to be married to Nick Galaktionoff, that's from Biorka. She died; I forgot what year.

RH: A while ago, yeah.

IM: She died. All the Biorka peoples and the kids, the kids are still alive, though. All the mens they died in here. They're all of them, they're way up there.

RH: The cemetery here.

IM: My daddy, Andrew Makarin, he passed away. . . .They put him by the church-house because he's a reader in church-house. And Alec Ermeloff is reader for church-house. He's by that church-house, too. And all the rest of them, mens and womans, they are up here.

RH: Up here in the cemetery. Now—

IM: My mama's up there.

RH: What was your mama's name?

IM: Uh?

RH: What was your mom's name?

IM: Ester.

RH: Ester.

IM: Makarin. Yeah. That old lady?

RH: Yes. Yes.

IM: That's my daddy's first wife. Mama's first husband, my dad.

RH: But Andrew's wife—

IM: That's what I said. Ester.

RH: Ah, okay.

IM: They adopt me. I was two years old. My mama died. I was about two years old. I don't even know my mama. I have three sisters. I don't even know them.

RH: So you were the only child with Andrew and—

IM: Yeah. Andrew and his wife came in here and they asked my really dad, Mike Borenin. They asked my dad if they could adopt me. My daddy said, "Yeah, I guess."

RH: Yeah.

IM: Gee, cry, huh?

RH: Yeah. When you were in Southeastern and then you came back and when you came back from Southeastern, I understand that they dropped the Biorka people off at Akutan?

IM: Yeah. They come back 1945. That's why they had us coming on that, ah, I forgot the name of the big ship.

RH: Yes, I don't know either.

IM: They came on an army boat. I forgot the name. And they brought us in here. No, they stopped by Akutan. 1945. That's why they drop us in there. I had just turned to fifteen years old in April. I know they have a big service on the big army boat, Easter. And they took us over there and dropped us over there. Then my daddy and the Biorka [people] from Biorka they stayed there with his wife. The rest of them they came in here, I guess, and stayed 'till they fix up Biorka.

RH: Yes. Yes.

IM: My daddy, Andrew Makarin, his wife and I stayed in Akutan for almost a year, I guess, stay in that Akutan after World War Two. Then they came over, my daddy and his wife and Candy came over. And Andrew Makarin stayed with his brother, Elia Makarin. He used to have a house over down there, that's where that Rendezvous is there. I think it's Rendezvous.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

IM: My daddy talked to Alice, I mean, Paul Tutiakoff and his wife to move to Biorka. I think my daddy moved to Biorka and all the Biorka people they moved to Biorka 1946.

They're okay, I guess, all the houses are okay. They stealing lot of stuff, though, from in there.

RH: The army stole a lot of stuff?

IM: Yeah. They moved to Biorka in 1946. Summertime, I guess. Just like this. Summertime. Then all the mans go to St. Paul for hair seal hunting. Working over there.

RH: Fur seal hunting.

IM: Yeah, hair seal. They stay there 'till September, 'til the season is over at St. Paul.

RH: Umhmm.

IM: And all the womans they come in here waiting for their husbands to come home.

RH: They come to Unalaska during the summer?

IM: Umhmm.

RH: And wait here?

IM: Yeah. After they come home in September, then all of us go back to Biorka again. Yeah.

RH: And then would they trap fox in the wintertime over there?

IM: Huh?

RH: Would they trap fox? in the winter time, over in Biorka?

IM: Ah, I got married 1947. I was 17 years old. Coco and I they don't know nothing. Coco don't even bother me and I don't even bother him. He lived in the Biorka and I don't even know him. . . .

RH: Irene, here's a picture of the church at Biorka. [Photograph in Simeon Oliver and Peter Hatch's *Back to the Smoky Sea*.]

IM: Oh, yeah. That's pretty! Wow! That's nice. That's beautiful. It's beautiful.

RH: It is. What was it like inside?

IM: Inside? You don't got that inside picture?

RH: No, I don't. Maybe you can tell me what it was like.

IM: Ah, wow. It was really pretty. Just beautiful inside.

RH: Hmm. And your father was the reader there?

IM: Yeah. My father Andrew Makarin and Ruff Ermeloff.

RH: Ruff Ermeloff or Alec Ermeloff?



IM: Ruff Ermeloff. That's Alec Ermeloff's son.

RH: Ah.

IM: That's Anna Mercurieff's father.

RH: Father. Yes.

IM: And Alec Ermeloff is Anna Mercurieff's grandpa.

RH: Okay, yeah, yeah. What was the name of the church?

IM: I don't know! [laughs]

RH: I don't either! It's written down someplace.

IM: They used to call 'em *Sedanka kamгаа ulax*^, Biorka church house. That's what they called them in Aleut. *Sedanka kamгаа ulax*^.

RH: Sedanka for Biorka.

IM: Yeah. I think it has a name. I don't know it.

RH: That's okay. There's another picture in here. Let me see if I can find it. These are pictures from *Back to the Smoky Sea*. I think. It's a pretty small picture of Biorka Village.

IM: Oh, yeah.

RH: Now can you, ah—

IM: This is other side.

RH: Oh, from the other side. Is this a lake?

IM: This is a lake right here. This is Biorka over there.

RH: Yes. Right. And which are these—

IM: Never have much light here. [She turns additional lights on.]

RH: Okay. Great. And it's not that good a picture, but it's pretty good. Now can you tell me which houses these are?

IM: This is Biorka over there now. Yeah. This is lake right there.

RH: Okay.

IM: They got no house. They used to have a house over here.

RH: Whose house was this? [Far right]

IM: This is Biorka church house. [1]

RH: Okay.

IM: This one [immediate left of church] is my daddy Andrew Makarin's house. [2]



RH: Okay, right next to the church.

IM: And this one is Alec Ermeloff's church house—I mean, Alec Ermeloff's house.

RH: That's the dark one right in the center. [3]

IM: And George Yatchmenoff's house is right there.

RH: Okay, that's the next one. [4]

IM: Then, over here, Alec Ermeloff's house over here. [5]

RH: Hmm?

IM: I think they had only five houses. Then Peter got married, then they got a house right here.

RH: Oh, right in between your father's and the next one, closer to the lake?

IM: Yeah.

RH: Well, they say this [a photo of a barabara and drying rack below the Biorka Village photograph] is at Unalaska, but I don't know where it is. It just says it's a barabara and a fish rack. This was the only one of Biorka I've seen and it's nice.

IM: Yeah, the lake over here, a long one.

RH: And this must be like a fish rack or something over here.

IM: Oh, yeah. This one is Peter Lukanin's house, I guess.

RH: Oh.

IM: It's really small. Smaller than our Biorka house.

RH: Oh, yeah.

IM: Just him and his wife, they livin' there, that's all. Then after they moved here from Biorka, Andrew Makarin, Alec Ermeloff, George Yatchmenoff, and Ruff Ermeloff, Peter Luakanin and Candy Ermeloff, they moved here 1952. 'Cause they couldn't take that, can't help that stuff no more.

RH: They would carry food all the way up—

IM: Yeah.

RH: Up from Unalaska.

IM: Mostly all the men, they're getting old. They can't carry their groceries on their backs no more.

RH: Weren't there any young men?

IM: [Laughs] Only one, the young one, was, just Coco. [Laughs] He was the only young one. Then Peter and, ah, Peter Lukanin and Alec, Candy Ermeloff, they're the only ones from Biorka. I guess they were 50-something or 60-something. I think they died here. All of them died here.

RH: And they were too old to carry the food all that way.

IM: Yeah. Me, after I got married in 1947, then I stayed with my daddy for a month and a half. He wanted me to go back to my husband. I always say, "I'm not married." I don't know what that "married" means. I told him, "No. I'm going to stay here."

[Laughs] Then George Yatchemenoff's adopted son came to my daddy's house. They talked in Aleut, you know. They don't speak English. They talk in Aleut. I heard them talking and I heard George Yatchemenoff say, "My son is married—" talk in Aleut, you know — talk to my daddy Andrew Makarin. "Why don't you let your daughter go back to her husband?" He'd talk Aleut. He asked my dad, "Why don't you let your daughter go back to his husband? My poor son is married. He don't look like he's married." I don't know what they're talking about. Then nothing I have, my daddy's talking to me. He took me over to George Yatchemenoff's house. Then Elsie was there; then her son, Willie Yatchemenoff, was there. That Willie. I just snubbed him. I never liked him. Then George Yatchemenoff asked me, "Why don't you go back to my son? You're married to him?" I turned around and I said, "I'm not married! I'll stay with my daddy." [Laughs]

Then daddy talked to me, "That's your husband. You'd better go back." I told daddy, "I'm not married. That's not my husband. I want to stay with you, dad." Talking Aleut to my dad. He had a hard time. I stayed with him, instead of my husband.

[Laughs]

Then finally the next day—evening, afternoon—George and Alec Ermeloff and my husband Coco [Laughs] they came over to my dad's. They're talking to my dad and my dad is like, "I keep talking to my daughter. She don't want to be married." Talking to me. Alec Ermeloff, he talked to me. I was 17 years old. I told Alec Ermeloff because I don't speak English, all the Biorka people, only one, Candy, speaking English. My mama Ester Makarin, she could understand some words, you know. And I told Alec, "I'm not going to go out from my daddy's house. I stay with my dad. I stay with my mom." Then Alec Ermeloff said, "You're married." In Aleut they call me Irina. That's

Irene. In Aleut, “Irena, you’re married.” “No. I’m not married. I’ll stay with my mom and dad.” Because daddy’s packing my clothes, I was standing there crying! [Laughs] That’s because I don’t want to leave my mom and dad, you know.

Then daddy and mama took me over to aunty’s house. They had only one room in aunty’s house, the living room. They got living room bigger than this one. Then they got a bed in there. Boy, I got scared. I wouldn’t go to bed. Coco went to bed. Elsie Yatchemenoff went to bed and his husband went to bed. Margaret and kids went under the table and playing, you know. I heard George Yatchmenoff got up and he talked to the kids in Aleut, “It’s time to go to bed.” He looked at me. He told me, in Aleut he told me to go to bed with my husband. “What does that mean, husband?” Because they never told me what, that’s why.

RH: Yeah, yeah. O my goodness.

IM: In Aleut they say *chixtikux*, you’re married. You’re married to Coco. In Aleut they told me, “Vasilli, that’s your husband.” Willie. [Laughs] I’m too scared. I won’t go to bed.

RH: Wow.

IM: I stayed in that kitchen. Table right there; window right there. I sit down in a chair, wearing my coat and everything. Finally George Yatchmenoff got up and he told me to go to bed with his boy. I said, “No. I’m going to go home. I want to go home.” She went to bedroom. The outside door locked, you know. I put my shoes on out in the hallway, looking for the lock to open the door. I don’t even know what time it is. I run over to my dad’s. Asking for my dad and crying. Knock on the door. I don’t know what time it is. My daddy open the door. “I want to go in my bedroom, daddy!” [Laughs] They let me go in my bedroom that night. Ah, it took me almost a month before—

RH: Before you became his wife. Yeah. Wow.

IM: That long time people were really strict.

RH: Tell me about your mother because I remember meeting her.

IM: My really mother?

RH: No, no. Andrew’s wife. Because she was such a wonderful lady.

IM: She had a one eye. Really blind. She was a really good old lady. [Irene goes to look for a photograph.]

RH: Looking for a photograph, I think.

IM: She was one year or two years, I guess, she's older than my dad, Andrew Makarin. My mom was from Akutan. Before she got married to my daddy Andrew Makarin, she was a Sovoroff.

RH: Sovoroff. From Akutan.

IM: I don't even know them. I was not even born then.

RH: Right, right. How did she go blind?

IM: After they got married then they went to the Biorka, I guess. Because my daddy, these guys used to [be] making home brew at Biorka, long time people. Then daddy was over there drinking, I guess, and my mama Ester drinking with him, drinking over there. She woke up and started screaming and hollering, looking for his husband. And some guy from Biorka, he woke up and he heard that woman holler. Then my daddy was home sleeping, I guess. That guy he got mad at my mom and he opened the door and lift her up and opened the door and throw her out. She fall off on a pile of wood. That's why she got a wood inside.

RH: The eye was blinded that way.

IM: Then they brought her to here and took it off. That's what my daddy used to tell me.

RH: So could she see in one eye?

IM: Just the left side. Right side, I guess. No, left side. She could see on the one side.

RH: A little bit.

IM: Then she got really blind. She can't see nothing no more. But she could see a little bit after they adopted me. I guess, going to adopt me.

RH: But she used to do lots of things. She used to sew.

IM: Oh, she used to make a dress for me, used to make me dress. Then they got a sewing machine. They used that one. The Biorka people all used that one. Sewing machine. Then after they come back from the war, they lost this sewing machine. Never find it.

RH: That was lost during the evacuation.

IM: All the Biorka people used a sewing machines. They don't use that electric one.

RH: Right, it was all a hand machine.

IM: Yeah. They have a long-time record. [Laughs]

RH: Yeah. I know, my mama would start drinking and she wants to listen to this song and puts the record on and, “How can they do that?”

RH: And turn the phonograph wheel.

IM: Turn that thing and start.

RH: So you thought Biorka was a good place to grow up?

IM: After they come back from the war they lost everything in the Biorka. They couldn't find anything. Yeah. Akutan people and Nikolski people and people from way out they go to the Biorka and took all the good stuff. After they went to Biorka, they never have anything.

RH: Was Biorka a good place to get salmon berries and blue berries in the summertime?

IM: Oh, my golley, they got lots. They got big blue berries and big salmon berries, moss berries. All over Biorka. Holy Smokes.

RH: Yeah.

IM: I like to go over there in the summer time for berries, you know. And they got lots of silvers. This is Biorka right here and on the other side—

RH: The north side.

IM: —the other side, they call 'em. They changed this. This is the Biorka. It's not a Biorka. That other side, you go out the other side, what they call 'em Biorka. This one is *Borka*. Then they changed it.

RH: Ah, so the new one is *Borka* and the old one is Biorka.

IM: That old one, the long time people used to live in the other side long time ago. Then people grow up in Biorka and I guess they couldn't stand there another Biorka that's why they moved here. This is really *Borka* and the other side is Biorka. They tried to tell me this is Biorka and I said no.

RH: *Borka*.

IM: It's a *Borka*. I told them the other side is Biorka. . . . Well, I never talk about our home town.

RH: Where did you get water at?

IM: Uh?

RH: Where did you get water at, at Biorka?

IM: Oh, this water right here.

RH: On, in the lake. It's a fresh lake.

IM: Only one you could get water in there. In summer time, not enough raining and it gets dry, lake right there, it gets dry and then all the kids have to go up there and water going down.

RH: On the side of the hill—

IM: And get water there. They have to go up there and get the water for mom and dad.

RH: What did you carry it in?

IM: Oh, in a bucket!

RH: In a bucket, okay, all right, sure.

IM: People never used to let us use a big bucket. Little bucket.

RH: Little bucket, yeah.

IM: All the kids used a little bucket. [Laughs] Get the water for their mom and daddy. [Laughs] Yeah, I grew up on that. Little bucket.

RH: Did a priest ever come to Biorka? Do you remember a priest ever visited Biorka? A priest, from the church, ever go there?

IM: You mean, ah—

RH: From Unalaska.

IM: Oh, you mean to come here and get their groceries?

RH: No. Priest, you know, the priest at the church, did he ever go to Biorka?

IM: I think they brought that stuff from, some of that stuff from Biorka, 1954, I guess. Because I know my daddy had one big star. Ruff Ermeloff, he got one big star. And George Yatchmenoff, he got a small star. My daddy got a little, small star, Aleut star.

RH: Hm,mm

IM: And they brought it in here and they took it down to the church. Then, they can't find them.

RH: Ah.

IM: I keep telling those people. They know about it. They have a Biorka Russian star, you know.

RH: For Christmas. Yeah.



IM: I think that Father Gromoff has Alex Ermeloff's star. And Peter Lukanin, they had one, too. They brought it in here. They took it down. They used to have about four stars.

RH: That's a lot.

IM: They couldn't find anything. I thought to tell Nick Lekanoff about that. I tried to tell about that my daddy Andrew Makarin's he brought the church house, ah, one, church house book for kids born, you know, they take them to the Biorka and write them down there. And I tried to tell Nick about that. They have it down at the church house all this time. He said, "No. They don't have it." I said, "Yes, I know my daddy was telling us about that." They got a old Biorka church house [book] down church house. Some of them they give it to Eskimos I guess. I don't know.

RH: Ah, to other churches. I don't want to keep you too long.

IM: Yeah.

RH: Let me ask you one more question, though. You didn't have any doctors, of course.

IM: No.

RH: But who took care like when a baby was born? Who helped?

IM: Ah, my mama, Ester.

RH: Ester was a midwife.

IM: Used to let that that Nick Galaktionoff's wife have baby, in the Biorka. He died in the Borka. Then Elsie Yatchmenoff, she had a baby in a Borka. He died, that one, too. Anna, I think Anna Ermeloff. Maybe she born here; maybe in the Biorka. I don't know. I never asked her.

RH: And I know that you used to get some Aleut medicines here, too.

IM: Yeah. My dad, he knows the Aleut medicines. You know putchkies?

RH: Um-hmm.

IM: They got an under the ground, you know, that long thing, the round one, those are really Aleut medicine. If somebody, her back hurts really bad, my daddy used to dig in the putchkies and pull it out and they clean it. Then they cook the steam bath. The old timer's grass [Laughs], white grass—

RH: Yeah, the old grass, the dead grass—

IM: They took them over to the steam bath and they wrap 'em with that old time white grasses, really good, boy. They wouldn't let anybody touch that.

RH: That root. [*Angelica lucida* L., Seacoast Angelica, Strong Putchki]

IM: They'd wrap them up and wrap them up. Then they took it to steam bath, then they pour it on the hot water. They got hot water in the steam bath. Cook a steam bath and they get hot water. And they pour it in there. Then afterwards, somebody got trouble with his back, after that person take a bath, arrange himself, they open it and cut it, just like a carrot [?] and they put it on his back. About five minutes they keep it in there. They won't let him wear clothes or nothing, cause they're really hot, you know. The next day, after two days, the person that had trouble with his back, he's okay.

RH: He's okay. Wow.

IM: They do that to my mom. Gee, I was crying. "What they do to my mom?" You know. They took her to the steam bath and then daddy picked one up and they wrapped it with that grasses, old grasses. They poured water in there. Mama couldn't do anything with her back and his husband took her to the steam bath and then they opened it and cut it—

RH: Did they put the root right on the skin or—

IM: Yeah.

RH: —something underneath?

IM: All that white stuff, just like a cream-like, they go on the skin. Then they let them stay in there for two days. And when mama wanted to get up, her husband wouldn't let her get up.

RH: They let them stay there for—with that on them.

IM: They let them stay there for two days and then after a while my mom was just nice and healthy.

RH: Wow. Excellent.

IM: I know Aleut tea. Used to pick 'em up from outside. 'Cause those Biorka people have a hard time to get tea in the winter time, cause the weather is bad, to come in here. My daddy. My daddy never used to be poor.

RH: Um-hm. Get everything he needed.

IM: All the people that were poor needed tea, flour, sugar. Stuff like that. My daddy give some to all the Biorka people.

RH: Ah. Very generous.

IM: Yeah. My daddy used to tell me that if there's somebody hungry, if there's somebody got no place to stay, you just help them. Give 'em food. Let 'em eat food. If they got no place to stay, let them sleep on the floor. I know that.

RH: Yeah. He was a wonderful person.

IM: Yeah. I learned a lot of stuff from my daddy, Andrew Makarin.

RH: Well, thank you Irene.

IM: But some of them I forgot though! [Laughs] I don't know how they do that! Yeah.

RH: Yeah.

IM: Yeah. I was talking about that Aleut tea. I think they've got some around here.

They pick them up in September. September or October. Aleut tea. Then they brought it in here and they dry 'em up.

RH: Yeah.

IM: Dry 'em up for one week. Before they have it. Those people, before they have that tea. And they'd put black tea in there, mix it with them.

RH: Ah, ah. Then it goes father.

IM: Yeah. My daddy never used to be poor. He had a lot of food, yeah. Helping those people in Biorka.

RH: I always got the impression in reading that the Biorka people—

IM: I forgot how you say that. They're talking about that in Aleut. Aleut eye medicine outside the summer time.

RH: Ah. Oh, oh, yes. The eye medicine, on a pond?

IM: Yeah.

RH: Like an oil or something.

IM: Like an oil.

RH: On the pond. And you'd put it on your eyes.

IM: If you ever do that, you have to wash yourself good. My daddy used to have a small teaspoon cause my mama had trouble with her eyes, after they got blind. Daddy used to

put it in a jar and after they brought it home and put it in a small jar and mama washed his eyes and rinsed it and used the—

RH: He'd drop it in. One drop?

IM: One drop. Looks like. I don't know how they do that.

RH: One other question and I'll stop. Your dad, Andrew Makarin, could read Aleut.

IM: Yeah.

RH: Who taught him? How did he learn to read Aleut?

IM: I don't even know! [Laughs]

RH: Okay!

IM: Ah, yeah, all the Biorka people, all the mens, they know Aleut.

RH: They all know it.

IM: And they used to write them down.

RH: Yeah, ah.

IM: I don't know what they do with them.

RH: Right, I don't either.

IM: That's pretty hard. I think, 'cause I know Anna Mercurieff's grandpa, Alec Ermeloff, used to have that thick—

RH: Thick book.

IM: —Aleut, write 'em down in Aleut. My daddy used to do that, too. I don't know what they do with it.

RH: Yeah, like a journal. Yeah. Yeah.

IM: And George Yatchmenoff. All the Biorka men, they're growing up, their daddy teaching them. That's why they know it, that's why. Even you go out hunting, they write it down in Aleut.

RH: Ah. So they'd keep a record of what they caught? What they hunted?

IM : Yeah. Sea lion, fox, hair seal, any kind of ducks, ducks. They write them down. I used to go over there watching my dad. "Whatcha doing, dad?" He'd talk Aleut to me, talk Aleut to me and say write 'em down. "I don't know what you're talking about!"

[Laughs]

RH: Well, wonderful. Well, thank you. I'm going to stop this.

IM: Thank you.