

A Young Boy's Experience During World War II

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—Nick Golodoff

*T*HERE ARE MANY BOOKS about the Aleutian Islands in Alaska during World War II, but hardly any books about the invasion of Attu Island and the personal experiences of those who lived through it. In most books that I have read about World War II in the Aleutian Islands, there is some truth, but there is a lot of dishonesty in the books. I know this because I have been through it. I am also talking about Aleuts in this book because I never saw any true stories about Aleuts. Not all the books that I have read and seen are all true. Some books I have read about Aleuts in this region from Attu to Atka contain false information. I'm talking about my own experiences so people will know what happened to me. I also want to sell my book in Japan. Some people there are interested in what I did during and after the war.

The stories in this book are personal to me, as are the feelings I have felt through this unexpected, frightening, and life-altering ordeal. I have told these stories to many individuals and in their expressions and questions they were perplexed by what I have gone through. After telling my stories I was asked if I was going to write a book about my life, and so here it is. Please, know that I am going to be 76 years old by the end of 2011 and I don't remember everything about my childhood but I do remember well my experience during World War II.

I was born December 19, 1935 about 30 miles southwest of Attu during trapping season. It was winter and my parents were fox trapping

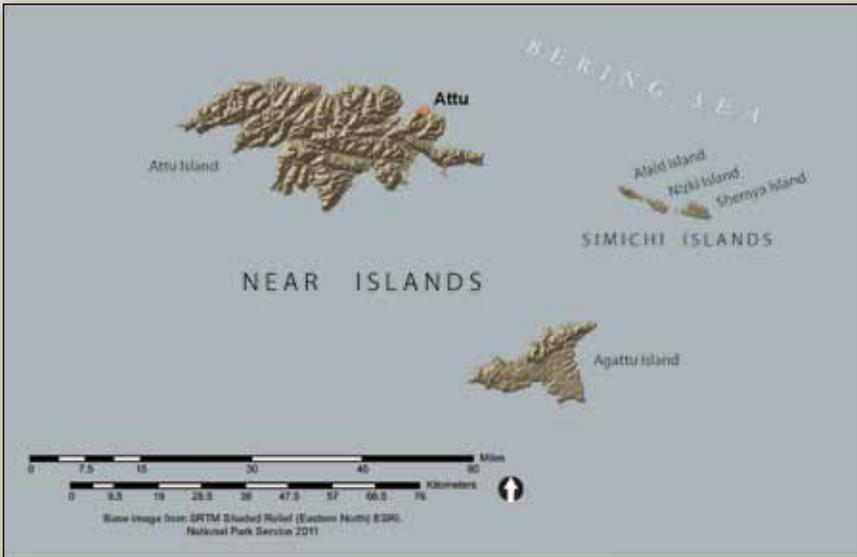


Fig. 3 Map of the Near Islands

on Agattu Island. Dad made most of the family's living from trapping. Before the war they used to trap on all the islands. They trapped white, gray, silver and blue fox. The trappers took their furs to the store and traded them for things like flour, sugar and other food. There was a boat that used to come from Seattle to collect the furs. Before people trapped for fox they used to hunt sea otters and fur seals for the furs. There was no trapping during the war.

While they were trapping they lived in a mud house, like a barabara. My dad's name was Lovrenti Golodoff. My mom's name was Olena Horisoff.¹ She was from Atka and my parents met in Atka. My father's brother Innokenty was with them on Agattu Island when I was born. Aleuts have Russian names because the Russians gave the Aleuts family names and new names when they baptized the Aleuts.

My uncle told me that when I was a baby he used to let me suck on a sea urchin. At that time babies didn't have any milk other than from their mom. We would pick up sea urchins at low tide. We ate seaweed too.

¹In lists of Attu residents, Nick's father's name is usually spelled "Lavrenti" and his mother's "Olean."

Nick's Extended Family

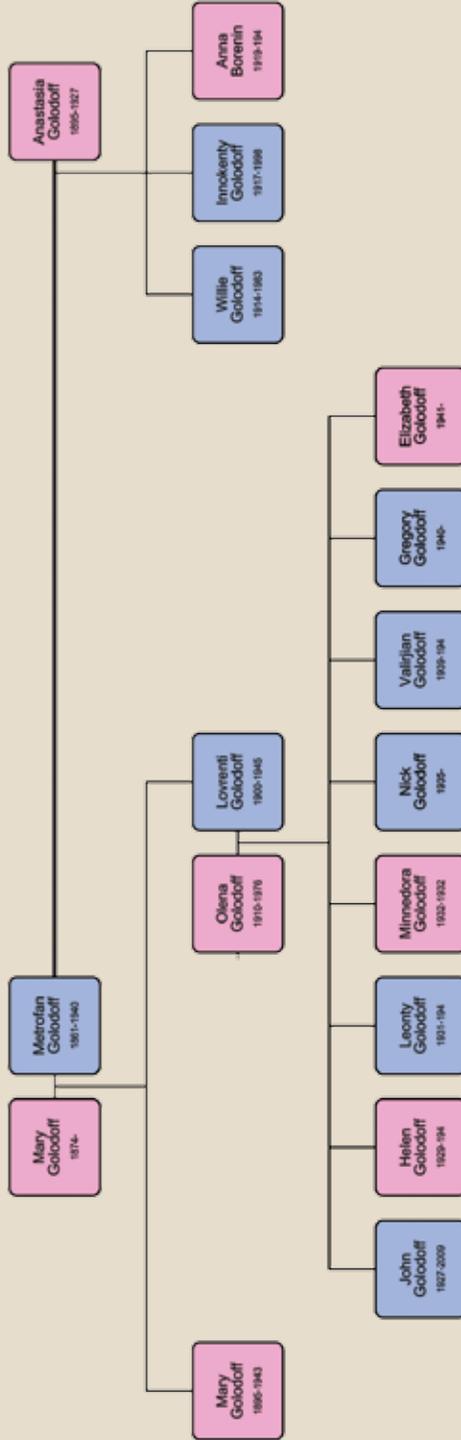


Fig. 4. Nick's Family in 1942 (Kinship Chart).
Created using Family Echo-<http://www.familyecho.com/>



I was only six years old [in 1942] so I did not have nothing much to do besides walking the pathways. There were only a few of them, and they were nothing but gravel.

—Nick Golodoff



Photo 1. Attu in 1938, mislabeled as "Kiska." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Christine M. McClain Collection)



Photo 2. "Wide view of village and harbor," taken before World War II. (Source: Alaska State Library, Dora M. Sweeney Collection)

After the winter I was born neither my mother nor I ever went back to Agattu after that. I lived on Attu till I was a little over six years old. When the Japanese invaded the island of Attu I was taken as a prisoner of war to Japan. I was in Japan for more than three years. On the way back from Japan to Atka we stopped at a few places like Okinawa, Manila, San Francisco, Seattle, Adak and then Atka. I have been living here in Atka ever since. As an adult I did go back once to work on Attu, but I didn't see the village again.