

5. Nicholai Galaktionoff

June 2, 2004

[John Galaktionoff (his son) was present at the beginning of the interview.]

Ray Hudson: June 2, 2004. A recording with Nick Galaktionoff of Unalaska. Okay. I'll see if this is going to work here. Yeah, it's recording. It's picking up. Ah, ah, I need to have you sign this oral history release agreement. It says. . . . [See copies of Oral History Release Agreements] So, is that okay? [Laughs]

Nicholai Galaktionoff: I think it's okay, I guess. . . .

John Galaktionoff: I'm his power of attorney.

RH: Oh, are you? Okay. So, why don't you sign there, then, for that. Sure. Sure.

Being signed by John Galaktionoff. Nick, why don't you say something and let me check to see if this is coming through. Go ahead.

NG: Well, I don't know. I'm going to say something about these Aleuts start to grow up here.

RH: That's great. Now let me, let me just check this and see if it's working. Okay. We're all set.

JG: I'll be in my room, dad.

RH: Okay, it's working. Great. So, Nick, let's start out with just some fundamentals.

When were you born?

NG: I born in Makushin.

RH: And what date?

NG: 1925, December 19.

RH: All right. And who was your father?

NG: My father Akim Galaktionoff.

RH: And your mother?

NG: Perscovia Lekanoff, but they come to Galaktionoff.

RH: Ah-ha. And you were raised in part by your grandmother?

NG: Yeah, my grandmother her name Marva.

RH: What was her last name?

NG: Ah, Borenin, I knew, before. But before that they got different last name anyway. Before she got married. [In 1978 Nick recalled that her name was Marva Petikoff and that she had been born around 1865.]

RH: Was that your mother's mother or your father's mother?

NG: My father's mother. My dad he got different dad, got a funeral. And Borenin, that's my uncle, my dad's brother. Same mother but different dad, so he's got a last name that's Borenin. And Japanese drowned it. There was 3 people: Matfey Borenin and John Borenin and,— I can't—forgot the other one. That Matfey Borenin was Elia Borenin's brother. . . . three of them disappeared in one day. But we find out they must be drowneded, 'cause Elia Borenin he find a halibut line all the way down the bay. He didn't have no boat. Walk all the way there, beach combing. He find that rope and he try and pull it and break it. God-damn, I don't like it. I don't like Japanese for that.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: And my father's mother died in 1939, here in Unalaska after we move up here.

RH: Marva.

NG: Marva Galaktionoff. Her last name was Borenin then because she was married to Borenin, second time. And my mother died 1946. Real mother. Died from TB up in Juneau. Came to the hospital, but didn't stay there. Died.

RH: So she didn't come back after the war.

NG: No. We bring it back as far as Juneau from Wrangel. So. That's it. The last time I seen him. My brother died in Petersburg. My youngest brother.

RH: What was his name?

NG: Anatoly. That was Borenin, he got from second husband. And my mother is buried down in Juneau. My mother, yeah. And my other brother, John Borenin, Innokentii Borenin's son, that's my stepfather, he died in Seattle. The doctors tried to—. I could have made money on it, but I didn't say nothing about it, too late. When they working the pipes come down on his head.

RH: Oh.

NG: Way after the month he died from his head.

RH: He was in construction then?

NG: Yeah. That's it. And my brothers and my sister's up there in the graveyard.

RH: Here in Unalaska.

NG: Yeah. Two brothers. Named, first one is Paul and my brother, other brother, is Peter. His wife is Gussie. And my mother—my wife, Irene. And my daughter Marva. I named her after my grandmother. She was the first girl to have surgery down in San Francisco. Take her to the heart specialist. She got a heart valve leaking. I don't know how much time it take 'em to Anchorage from here. She didn't want to go with nobody except me, so I do it. Last time I went out to have a dinner with her and after about four months she died.

RH: Marina was your sister, too?

NG: Yeah. Her [Marva's] sister Agnes died in . . . Kodiak. . . . I lost all those loved ones I had. . . . I lost two boys and two girls. Marva, Agnes, other one is Michael. First boy is named Michael. Other one didn't have a name; he died on the plane. Reeve.

RH: And was Molly Lukanin your sister also?

NG: Oh, yeah. Molly Lukanin was my sister.

RH: So, Nick, you grew up in Makushin pretty much.

NG: Yeah, we all grew up in Makushin until 1939 when I was 14 years old when I come up here.

RH: Was it a good place to grow up?

NG: Not here.

RH: No, but I mean Makushin.

NG: Makushin that's a good place for young kids. On the sand. Because Makushin face south, sunshine hit em every day. But lot of grass right in the front. Grass tall enough to play under, but somebody always scared us. Old Yakeem, Matfey's brother. All dressed up with a horns on it, making funny noise. We run like hell from the beach to home. I remember that. He didn't want us to be on the beach too late but kids we'd stay on the beach and play around in the sand.

RH: Was it a sandy beach or a gravel beach?

NG: Nothing but sand. At Makushin Village part; but half way it's gravel on the west end. I supposed it's changed, too, on the beach. Because sometimes, west wind—the only thing west side is, the waves come in 'cause Anderson Bay right across. That Anderson Bay used to be Bristol Bay cannery.

RH: Ah.

NG: They moved the Makushin cannery there. The Makushin cannery quit— Anderson Bay. But that's a good place to boat, any boats, smaller boats. Even a storm there but no waves go in there. That's why Pete Olsen keep his boat there all the time.

RH: Oh yeah. Then how would he get to Makushin? There was no dock at Makushin, right?

NG: No. Anchored in Makushin. But Makushin Bay village has big sea running from west, all way to the top of the bank. That's why boats they can't anchor there. That's why he kept his boat in Makushin, I mean Anderson Bay.

RH: In Anderson Bay.

NG: After that he take a dory and go to Makushin Village. He wanted to go to Unalaska, he got to take a dory and go out to Anderson Bay he went to his boat. Sometime he come in to Unalaska with a few people. Not really big boat, but a 35 footer, double-ender. Come and get some few groceries anybody want it. Well, we got a little store in Makushin. Didn't have no candies. But he got mixed candies. We didn't know what a bar of candy looked like.

RH: Where would people get the money from to buy at the store?

NG: Only fox and work up at St. Paul every summer. First people start working St. Paul \$20 a month. Way long time ago people. After that come up to \$40 a month. My dad started working in \$40 a month and after that \$80 a month and I would start working. I was 15 years old. My mother get the money from out there all the time, every month. But \$20 it can't support us. We got 9 of us, 9 kids. So my mom needed money all the time so I went up to St. Paul. I was 15 years old, but I signed my name and I said 15 years or 16 years old. But I'm been sorry afterwards. [Laughs] Got to St. Paul, gee, [unclear, perhaps *southeaster*] every day.

RH: What job did they give you?

NG: Well, I was work on the road. Shoveling, and shovel sand up in North East Point way. Just like snow, blowed in some wintertime. All the way to North East Point, not on this side of it, as far as Half Way Point, just sand. One lake there, no creek but rain water, that's all, you know. That's the place we used to cook kettle and drink tea outside, 3 o'clock. They told us to do it anyway, so. St. Paul laborers, really, you can't play with them. Pretty strong people. The time I started working there, a guy named MacMillian.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: He died in 1944. Died by table, heart-attack. After that Dan Benson take over. Jesus Christ, that guy was worst than anybody else. He's at St. George. Somebody got shot gun one time and shot him from window, but didn't hit him, though. Breaking glass, that's all that hit him.

RH: Now, when you were in the Pribilofs, that would be just in the summer time.

NG: Summertime.

RH: During the seal harvest.

NG: Six months or three months. 1943 I was there in St. Paul

RH: Oh, during the war when the men went back to harvest?

NG: Um-hmm. Traveled all the way from Juneau all the way to St. Paul. We stopped there and fueled up though. Wearing goddamned life jacket, take it off and put it by you when you go to bed. Stand up and eat by a table. Wear your life jacket.

RH: Life jacket or a vest?

NG: Life-vest. Anyway, just like a jacket.

RH: Yeah, right, right.

NG: Wearing it everytime. Bathrooms outside. Guard outside. Everytime you go outside check your vest if you tied it good and everything. Otherwise they holler at you to tie 'em good. Well, it was tough. Winter, St. George people can't land there so take 'em to St. Paul. Got at St. Paul, we landed there. Army guys come out and take us in, over 100 of us, about 150 of us. From St. Paul, from here, from Burnet Inlet, I mean Ketchikan, Ward Lake.

RH: There were other Unalaska people who went—

NG: Um-hmm. Akutan people, Kashega, Biorka people. Nikolski people. And those people I was up in St. Paul with I don't think none of them livin'. One did live for awhile but he died. Name is Alec. . . .

RH: Yeah.

NG: Me and him was the young guys working there, but he was in St. George and I was in St. Paul. . . .

RH: Yeah.

NG: Army guys working different hours. Coast Guard working different hours. Pretty soon stage players got in. No woman there. Only three womans got there from State-side. Goddamned, you can't stay in the window! These people pile up on you! [Laughs] You can't breathe. Goddamned. They got different shows for us, civilians, and Coast Guard, Army guys. Goddamned, those woman, I don't think they got bones on 'em. They play with us, playing every night till two weeks all gone. [Laughs] I have to laugh. Every time somebody open a window, stay in a window, people pile up on 'em. I remember all these. I been there six months, 1943. We stopped here on the way, unload the stuffs we picked from St. Paul, Unalaska then at Captains Bay dock and from there all the way down to Wrangel. Well, they stopped us in Juneau anyway.

RH: Now, back in the time when your dad worked up in the Pribilofs, he would be there in the summertime and then when he came back to Makushin, what would the men do when they came back to Makushin?

NG: Well, them guys start working, get some woods, pile of woods for winter, and from there trap season open they start go trapping. 'Cause didn't have much money. Three months sometimes those guys make a hundred-and-twenty dollars. \$40 a month.

RH: Where did they trap fox at Makushin? Where would they go for that?

NG: Pete Olsen take it.

RH: Hmm.

NG: He didn't give money but people would buy groceries.

RH: Ah, give credit?

NG: Um-hmm. But if you want to sell it, bring it up here, sell it to N.C. Company. N.C. and Alaska Salmon Company there. They tear it down, right in front of that, little ways up from that Russian School, used to be there. Guy tried to make a restaurant out of it

after we come in [after World War Two], but don't make much money. Ten cents a cup. After them young girls anyway, that guy. I think he died anyway. So he worked in there a while and then he quit. Can't make money. But this Russian School, other end, used to be a restaurant there. And the Shoreline down there, Patterson owned it.

RH: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

NG: Used to be restaurant running the war-time.

RH: There were quite a few places running here during the war I guess.

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. In front of that Chiplap's house, used to be on the beach, used to be restaurant and baking bread there. Mr. Patterman, I think, owned it. Pop Hortman?

RH: Oh, yes.

NG: He owned that place, making bakery bread, bakery shop. And that bar, that Elbow Room, used to be there all the time, but they got Blue Fox. That's the name of it that time. That was the Blue Fox name 'cause Patterson owned that Unalga Island. He got blue foxes on there.

RH: Oh, okay. Unalaska must have seemed like a pretty big town when you moved here.

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. In Makushin, I think, only nine houses there. Pete Olsen's house, ten. One barn for sheeps, sheep ranch. Power house long ways from the village.

RH: Now the power house that was, ah, that was run by, that was a water generator?

NG: Um-hmm. Water, yeah. That's why they got it below the cliff.

RH: There's a thing in the records that in 1932, I'm reading this, J. P. Olsen and Makushin Native Community join to purchase and maintain an electric light plant. There were 14 shares. Four owned by Olsen and ten by members of the community and these are the people that had the shares. And I don't know if I'll get these names correct.

Akenfa Galaktionoff.

NG: That's my dad, yeah.

RH: Philip Galaktionoff.

NG: Yeah, that's my uncle.

RH: John Borenin.

NG: That's my uncle, too.

RH: Peter Petikoff.

NG: That's my grandfather—grandmother's brother. Lived right next door to me.

RH: And Simeon Petikoff.

NG: That's his son.

RH: Ah. And Matfey Petikoff.

NG: Next to him that was Matfey Petikoff, was here before.

RH: Yes, I remember him.

NG: His brother named Yakeem.

RH: Yes, he's in this list, too. Yakeem Petikoff. And Matt Borenin, Mathew Borenin, or Matfey Borenin.

NG: Yeah. Nick Borenin's dad.

RH: Okay. Elia Borenin.

NG: That's Matfey's brother.

RH: And Simeon Lekanoff.

NG: My grandfather.

RH: Nick Lekanoff.

NG: That's my godfather.

RH: And Arthur Lekanoff.

NG: My uncle.

RH: And Frank Galaktionoff.

NG: Yeah. All of them. Yeah.

RH: Yeah.

NG: That was how we lived then.

RH: Yeah.

NG: My dad take me out in a baidarky one time when I was about three years old.

Barely had my head sticking out. My eyes about brought up to there. I turned around to watch. Just give me a ride to the creek and come back. My poor grandmother holler at him, "Don't take him so far out!" I used to have a lot of fun riding out in baidarky.

Take me all the way to the creek and turn back up to West End, come back and he landed. My poor grandmother, boy, she sure liked me. She never forget me.

RH: How many baidarkies were there in Makushin?

NG: Only four. Four baidarkies.

RH: Who owned them?

NG: My dad and—no, five baidarkies. Yeah. And Peter Petikoff. And Matfey Borenin with his brother. Elia Borenin with his brother. And Simeon Lekanoff with Kusta—that was his oldest boy. My grandfather married twice. First time he got two girls and two boys. One of them is my mother, Periscovia. Natalia is another one, just buried up there. Bring ‘em out from Sitka.

RH: Ah.

NG: Body. With his husband Peter Yatchmenoff from Kashega. ‘Cause Kashega’s not too far from Makushin.

RH: I know. I was listening to a recording of Sophie Pletnikoff and I guess after her father died they moved, they were in Chernofski, and they moved to Makushin for a short time and then they went back to, ah, they went to Kashega.

NG: Who is this?

RH: Sophie Pletnikoff.

NG: Sophie. Yeah. Sophie born in Chernofski. That’s what I hear. That little Sophie used to be right over here.

RH: Right, right. I think her uncle was Elia Shapsnikoff?

NG: From Kashega, yeah. Shapsnikoff was from Kashega and Attu. That’s why Anfesia Shapsnikoff was from Attu. But she learned our language. Long time ago people didn’t know where them Attu and Atka people come from. Different part of the mainland. ‘Cause these Aleuts here come from mainland.

RH: Uhmm.

NG: That ice age?

RH Um-hmm.

NG: ‘Cause it can’t save no more food. Animals come around bothering people, taking food away from people. Sometimes they kill somebody. So chiefs talk to them. They got chance to go on the ice, but they got no way to—the kids want to know how they are going to survive. But they got about 20 baidarkies from mainland. Put the seal skin in the bottom and pull it on the ice all the way. People together, all two or three thousand people come from mainland. But I don’t know why. People ask where we come from. I don’t know. If they ask me, I told them tomorrow I come from Makushin! [Laughs] I come from there anyway. I was right, ‘cause I was born there.

Yeah, they coming and the small kids in baidarkies only ones sleeping but crying. Somebody drinking his mother's milk once in awhile, but mother didn't have any milk, cause he don't eat, starving on the ice. But seal-skin/seal fat, before, 'cause cut the small seal fat and wood go right through and keep it in its mouth. He suck it in and quiet and go to sleep. Everybody start to do that with their kids. Sometimes people died on the ice, but can't do nothing so leave them there. Leave 'em by the ice.

This land, these Aleutian Islands, people when they were fishing in their baidarkies, when it was good clear weather, spotted one time. That's why they knew where the islands were on this side. And people know no mean animals on this side like on mainland. Kill a lot of Aleuts and can't even keep his food out, outside. They don't like them animals, come around and take it away. So they don't like it no more, so they started coming. They didn't know how many days they coming, but finally they reached on this side. By that time, ice started melting. By the time they come to the islands so they got baidarkies, way way long time ago, I guess, because, raspberries grow on this islands, from volcano acid, flying on the ground, from this something grow on them, finally grass grows another hundred years, I guess. Started making mud and grass. People started happy and built themselves underground houses more. The babies started getting bigger. That's why they can't tall houses no more, people can stay under it, stay warm wintertime, especially for the children.

RH: Did they have barabaras at Makushin?

NG: Well, Volcano Bay. Lot of them there. That's all underground houses from nobody's got woods. If you got woods, split woods and frame them inside. Well, last time I used to camp there, three houses left, good ones left.

RH: At Makushin? or at Volcano Bay?

NG: Volcano Bay.

RH: Volcano Bay.

NG: Nothing in Makushin. Well, after that, after Anderson Bay cannery started and they got wood from there. You know, make a little money from St. Paul, bring it in, buy some lumbers. Started building smaller house. Make them bigger after that. Wooden houses. You get after somebody died. After the Christian come out, that's what they do. But before Christian, before Christian, it seems on this islands, people started getting happy

because there's a lot of mud and a lot of grass coming out, grow after a hundred years, some people died. Some family died and got them rolled them under a seal skin and sealion skin and put them in a cave all the time. That's why a cave got a lot of people's bodies there. Unalga Island, I mean, ah, yeah, I think it is Unalga Island, past that Nikolski—

RH: Ah, yeah, ah, Kagamil. Kagamil?

NG: Some people there, this Unalaska chief sent people out there to talk to the other chiefs. Other chiefs come to town and have a meeting with that chief of Unalaska, tell 'em what to do. He wants to send some guys to stay on top of the mountain and—Four Mountains—and watch the west. Because the west people they don't like us. They want to fight the war with us. And they start to do that, down the Four Mountains, and sometimes they spot baidarkies long ways and baidarkies left Four Mountains and meet them. That's a long ways, that's why.

RH: Yeah.

NG: People starving. Baidarkies come from the west. So, even the baidarky come didn't have no weapon they want to know. Those people come from the west, they stand the paddle straight up and hold it. That other boats come from this side, they know they don't have no weapon. So they got there and talked to them, starving. Told them to go back to where he come from, said he's gonna give him some food. So he take some food and go back to Atka and Attu. That's why most of it keep watching it for years and years. That Four Mountain chief talks to them people—watchmen—but every week changing around. Lot of dead skeletons there, Four Mountains. Some of them Russians killed.

RH: Yeah.

NG: And the chief told them, "A different people somewhere else. They gonna come to us some day." So he watch it all around when it's good weather. One morning it was good clear weather, they spot a Russian sail boat, couple of 'em. One to the west side. He know they didn't have that kind of boats, Aleuts. So they come down and tell chief, "We spot a boat, two boats, one to the west, but it's not traveling good weather. Got sailboats." The chief sent the four baidarkies coming this way to Unalaska, so Nikolski, Kashega, Makushin, Chernofski, one baidarky there, one baidarky come in, one to the

southside, one to Akutan and False Pass, King Cove. "Something coming from somewhere else." So, he keep watching it and he call people from other places, Biorka people and Akutan people come in. Lot of people. When the boats come in they got only four man on the beach. Second chief on the bank. That's what chief tell them that. He been that way for a while, pretty soon one Russian boat come in. Pretty slow, but it come in. Pretty close to the beach and it dropped its anchor. Them Aleuts can't say anchor in its own language. *Qayux^tan*. *Qayux^tan acheeko*. That's what they call that *qayux^tan*, using it for line all the time, sinkers. [retrieving hook]

RH: Yeah.

NG: Anchors. And watch people. They said there was over 3,000 people hide away on this side with baidarkies.

RH: Hm hm.

NG: Wait for that second chief's signal with his hand. If he do it, all them baidarkies going to go to launch their baidarkies and go to the boat. Let them know how many guys left on the boat, only four guys left on the boat. There were nine people launch that life boat off the boat. They counted how many people got in the boat, life boat. The life boat is five people got in there, started row coming in, one guy back, three guys in the front. No, two guys and two guys row. Those guys on the beach, four guys on the beach, one of them, too, supposed to signal this guys. Waive his hands. He do it first time, no one waved. "*Tayax^kusutuungin*." The one guy say this off the beach to that chief, second chief. "Mad people." Finally, getting closer again, another guy raise his hand. Them two guys got a rifle in his hand waive. "Well, it's okay now." The boat come in on the beach, this guy grab it. This Aleut start talking to him. The Russian guy talked to him, he can't understand it. He gets the gun out and shoots the two guys. Kill 'em and second chief waive out his hand. This guy taking off to the other boat and he got all two guys, saved three guys, tie his hands and take him up to the chief. The chief happy for it. Going to keep 'em and learn from him, learn his language. Let him learn her language. That's what they do. And them other baidarkies out there, killing people off the boat. Four people, only three they say they killed them, cause they shot one and have to work on their gun, you know. And Aleuts got in the boat and two guys, two guys baidarkies, one guy in the boat and killed them other ones. They didn't find one of them. One guy

told 'em, "Hey, there's another guy on the boat I can't spot it." And watch it—pretty soon he come out from the front. He got a big knife. He wants to kill this Aleut but the Aleut spear him and kill him. Aleut wants to save the knife. He happy for that knife. And he got to take it up to the chief first. And he looks around on the boat and finds nothing but groceries, few groceries. Fifty pounds flour, few boxes of cans. He went up and let the chief know. Chief said, "You guys don't eat nothing off the boat. Dump it and save the boxes and bags." That's what they do. And way after that save all those sails, ropes, take 'em to the beach. Knives. Still got the guns, too. Gunpowders. 'Cause they know how to fill 'em. Aleuts watch them how to fill the guns up. "How am I doin'?" One guy bend down, fill his gun up, and put the beebee in there pull the trigger and almost shot his head.

RH: Umm.

NG: Other guys laugh at him. And the chief told him to take em, fill em up with the gravel, take him out to Priest Rock and put a hole in it. So he did. After he sank the boat, he come in and happy and another boat come in.

RH: So, this happened here at Unalaska?

NG: Unalaska, yes. Another boat come in and find out what going on. From a Russian priest come in. Bishops and priests. Ask these Aleuts what they do, if they kill anybody. Said they killed about 20 people. That Russian priest he don't like it. And second boat come in was the war ships Come in and start shooting people but priests stop it. "Don't do that. We'll learn from them and they'll learn from us." So, they start do that war one and they killed over 20,000 people in Attu and Atka. Lot of islands out there, this side of Atka and Attu.

RH: Ah um-hmm.

NG: All got families living there.

RH: Yeah.

NG: So, them Russian boats out there and rowed them, took them out of Kashega and let them jump overboard. Drowned them. They got 300 of them take them to Russia, young ones. That's the ones I seen when I went up in Russia.

RH: Ah. Um-hmm.

NG: They like to hear me. See, they are from Atka. He know that place, his great-grandfather come from, but he don't want to tell the story about it. He's not supposed to. Pretty strong with an American. Not supposed to tell what we done to the Aleuts before here but [unclear] making Christians out of them. One Russian boat come in got Christians. Now they travel with three men baidarkies. Go to place to place, making Christians. Put them Aleuts in one place, and families live in a different places.

RH: Yeah, there was that relocation of villages and moving of Aleuts.

NG: Yeah. Even Aleuts in different villages.

RH: Now, in Makushin, the Makushin people were whalers. Is that right?

NG: Akutan people. Not Makushin.

RH: Not Makushin people?

NG: No. That's why they call them *Qawalangin*. Akutan people. I told these guys about it, but they made that place [tribe headquarters] *Qawalangin*'s place, that other place down there.

RH: Yeah, yeah. The tribe.

NG: Hm hmm. *Qawalangin* are Akutan people. We're *Qigiig^un*. *Qigiig^un* Makushin and Kashega people. Biorka people.

RH: Biorka people are *Qigiig^un*?

NG: *Qigiig^un*. And Atka, Atka's *Sashiinan* and Attu was different, too. I forgot the name. Unalaska people are *Tayag^ungin*. That's Unalaska Aleuts' name before. But they made them *Qawalangin*, not so good. [Laughs] Something to pronounce good anyway.

RH: Yeah. So Akutan people were *Qawalangin* because they were whalers.

NG: That's why they call that *Qawalangin*. All the way down False Pass and King Cove. *Qawalangin*. *Sashiinan*. *Sashiinan*, that's Attu.

RH: Attu, yes.

NG: I couldn't understand it. One old guy, Nick Levigne, Nick Lekanoff, when I was out there. I was in one room with Nick Lekanoff. Two rooms, two people in each room.

RH: You know, in this list of, talking about Attu, this is a 1940 census, it mentions Mike Borenin from ah, let's see if I get this right—

NG: Mike Lukanin

RH: Ah, this one says Mike Borenin, ah, Innokentii Borenin and then Mike Borenin. And Mike Borenin, it says, Mike Borenin has two sons, Sergie and John.

NG: Yeah, yeah.

RH: And John lives at Attu with the chief. That would be with Michael, Mike Hodikoff, I guess.

NG: Yeah, Mike Borenin used to be here. Lived down there next to that Lekanoff Jr. place. He passing there. Right over by creek bank. Mike Borenin, I don't know when he come here, but he was here when I come. He died way after that. Yeah, I knew the guy named Mike Lukanin that's from Attu, related to Peter Lukanin from Biorka.

RH: Okay. And Peter's the one who married your sister, Molly.

NG: Yeah. That's why she hung around with my wife because she know that Peter Lukanin's sister. Because she was Lukanin and afterwards got adopted by Ermeloff. I had to ask him to get married to her. I like that girl. I got about over 100 girls that time. That's why I make one extra girl. That was not my wife, but my girlfriend.

RH: Okay. [Laughs]

NG: St. George.

RH: Back to Akutan and the whalers. How did people go, What did people do when they went whaling? How did they hunt whales?

NG: Well, not Attu people, but—

RH: But Akutan.

NG: Akutan is, ah, they got big boats, whale hunting there. They bring a whale there, six at a time. Used to be anchored right outside of Makushin Bay, with the whales floating, when they got enough, three on each side, tow them right to Akutan.

RH: Oh, this is when they had the whaling plant over there.

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. In Akutan. Yeah. So they start butchering, Akutan people start butchering 'em, and they go through all different ways, cooked that fat different, cook the meat different.

RH: But I was thinking more, Nick, more about the long-time-ago people.

NG: Yeah, long-time-ago people just use their baidarkies, that's all. But pretty hard in the beginning of the baidarkies. No drift wood on the beach. After building one baidarky, one baidarky traveling around, one-man baidarky, he gets some little wood,

loads his boat up and brings it in here, gives it to his chief. If he makes enough, I think, chief give it to somebody, make baidarky out of it. Finally started making two men baidarkies. Two men baidarky go a long ways, get more woods. Bring it to them, bring it into town, village, and start making three men baidarkies. The three men baidarky, the chief used to be taken to other village for a meeting. That's the same way when the Russians come up here, priest would be in three men baidarky, take him to different village. Some places it's pretty hard to come to a village. They don't believe in God. They don't believe what the bishop, priest says to them. He don't understand him, but these Unalaska people understand him. So let them explain, you know, let them know, just read a Bible to them, and bless them with holy water, make them Christians out of them. They let them do that. Them Aleuts say, "*Wan tag^agin!*" It means, "I'm going to try!" [laughs] They don't trust. [*tag^a-lix* means to try, test, or check something.] After that, name 'em and bless 'em, and use holy water on 'em, let 'em kiss the Bible and cross. They'd turn around and ask, those Aleuts, "*Alqut maludg/umchulix?*" He wants to know why he kissed the cross and Bible. "I'm pretty sure you're going to find out about it." That's what the Russians told him. And from there, they're Christians all the way. They want to stay together. And from there they found out where the families stayed. So, they'd send a baidarky there to get them and put them in a baidarky and bring them to the same village to be made a Christians. That Wislow was pretty hard. That's the only one that was pretty hard for the priest. Whale hunting, trying to sink baidarky, using harpoons, almost did it once and finally Christians from here stopped. They talked to them. "They're just want to make a Christians out of you guys."

RH: These would be the Four Mountain people or, ah, further west?

NG: No, Wislow.

RH: Ah, Wislow.

NG: That Four Mountains, he takes a long time to come to Christians, too. He don't believe a god. He never see God in his life, anyway. But the old timers used to have a pole at the end of his house, in the camp, always talk to them before he go out hunting. When he come in to the beach and bring something, he'd land in his place, his camp, take some stuff he find off the beach, take it up to that post. "*Wayam haqaasax^nkin.*" He'd hold that post for awhile, give me that thing by himself. Leave it by himself. Because he

told him, “I bring this to you.” “*Haqasukin*.” “Oh, we’re running it for the chief, or the big boss.” Because in the Aleut, they knew this chief, but people never think about a god. The Russian made it.

And a one, after that one guy hide away and disappear in Wislow. Never did find him until after Christians. That guy starving, got to come out. When he come out of his—he got a name, already named—he going to bless him, bless him and name him, and this guy run away. He was, I understand his last name was John Sherebernikoff. I asked Sophie one time if this was her grandfather! [Laughs] He didn’t know it either. Finally, he come to a Christian. After Christian come out everything start good. That’s why that Bible had been, story, built John Veniaminov and Innokentii something. Because he looked at the people; they don’t live right. But he want to live right, that’s why he make a note, stories in the Bible.

RH: I know Veniaminov spoke very highly about Aleuts. He said they were excellent people, good Christians.

NG: Yeah, that’s the one that be there.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Yep.

RH: Now, who did you hear the story about the Russians fighting here.

NG: That was from that Shelikoff.

RH: Luke Shelikoff? [This was, I think, a wrong assumption on my part although Nick repeatedly referred to Luke Shelikoff. Luke Shelikoff was the last chief of Akutan. He was a noted story-teller. Luke’s father was Kyril Shelikoff. The 1900 census gives his birth date as February 26, 1874, which would have made him 73 in the summer of 1947. Luke Shelikoff would have been only about 40 years old and Nick states below that the story teller was about 80.]

NG: Um-hmm. We used to give him ten dollars a night. Not every Saturday, because we didn’t work Saturdays and Sundays.

RH: In the Pribilofs?

NG: Um—hmm. He was there, last time he was there, 1940—‘47. That time he was 80-some years old. He said he heard those stories from other old people. Those other old people told me they got them from the other old people to the beginning of the Aleuts.

Those really old people they didn't know. He wanted to tell stories, tell other people, younger people, keep 'em going. So that's what I'm trying to do, but gee, I don't know. But I teach a lot of people.

RH: Yeah, you did, you have. Yeah.

NG: I teach a lot of people that story I hear before. That's a good story, them Four Mountains, started, Russians coming all the way in. Start coming visit. Still watching Atka but he finally find out boat come in from—Russian boat come in from Atka and Attu, plain Attu and Atka. That's why that Atka got different language, different dialects. That comes from brother and sister, small, been hide away from the Russians people taking people, drown them and killed them. Shoot some of it. Two or twenty thousand Aleuts, they took three hundred of them out of there. One Russian I talked to said pretty close to 400 Aleuts there in Russia now, kids—

RH: In the Commander Islands, yeah.

NG: We stayed in that Petropavlovsk. That Russians Second World War Two is pretty hard there in Russian, still starvation. And I think to eat, Russian give them one cabbage a day for three-days' supply. Cut it four places, pieces, and cook it and boil it, eat it with a soup, piece of cabbage. Got nothing to eat; they don't give away. It's not like American, you know, give some food away for people. They don't do that there. Still do that, anyway, but there's a store there. You can't buy two at a time, got to buy one thing, that's all. Goddamned big bottles of goddamned pop. Goddamned, that one girl was with us from Anchorage, she can't even carry the bottle. I have to carry it for her, goddamned heavy. . . .

RH: How long were you over there?

NG: Ten days.

RH: Ten days.

NG: Goddamned, I loose ten pounds.

RH: [Laughs]

NG: When I left, 170 pounds, 73 pounds. When I come in I try myself, 160 pounds. That girl coming this way asked, "How much hamburger are you going to buy?" She wanted to get a dozen hamburger pieces.

RH: I want to ask you a different question about, ah, about Makushin. Why don't you think people tried to resettle Makushin after the war? After the war they went to Biorka and to Kashega. But they—

NG: Well, they don't mean to. They don't mean to leave Makushin. They don't mean to leave Kashega. But Chernofski was empty before the war.

RH: Right.

NG: Sickness going on. They were only left with Korella Borenin, Innokentii Borenin, and Sophie [Pletnikoff]. I think five people left when they moved into Kashega. My step-dad, Innokentii Borenin, he said he remembered all that sickness that time, 19—, nineteen-hundred something year. People dying off. That's what he told me that.

RH: And your step-dad, Innokentii Borenin, moved to Kashega?

NG: Um-hmm. From Chernofski. That Kashega people go there again and burn the church-house. They got a small church. They burned it up. Took some old pictures out of it. Goddamn, that a goddamned good place, that Chernofsi. That's the only place the army built a dock, there. And a big warehouse, end of the shore-side of the dock.

RH: They used it to take supplies over to Umnak.

NG: Uh huh. In that cove. That's where we used to take a horse, from the horse and wagon, from that sheep ranch side to go around inside the bay and load our wagon up with that coal, take it into the village. They were using it for firewood. For steam-bath, not steam-bath, but shower. They got it goddamned good there in Chernofski. . . .

RH: Nick, I don't want to keep you talking too long.

NG: That's okay.

RH: Is it okay? I mean, I don't want to wear you out. [Laughs]

NG: I'm not doing nothing anyway.

RH: Okay. Good. After, let's see, after the war, you went back to, you came to Unalaska after the war?

NG: Um-hmm. Because I'm from here.

RH: Right, right.

NG: But the boat bringing us stopped in Akutan first.

RH: Okay. And did, where did the Biorka people, did they get off at Akutan or—

NG: Um-hmm. Akutan, too. Kashega, Makushin. They didn't have much people in Makushin, this family, Borenin family.

RH: Yeah.

NG: And Kashega [unclear] ten or nine families, but they got five man and six woman. We got on, later on that goddamned boat, I told him to talk to them and tell them we didn't want to live in Akutan. We wanted to come over from Akutan. They pick them up from Kashega and Nikolski. Nikolski used to be different name before the war. Biorka. 'Cause Andrew Makarin didn't want to stay there, Akutan.

RH: Ah.

NG: He didn't get along with that, you know, Nick, Nick McGlashan.

RH: Oh, yes.

NG: He used to be up here, that time. Used to live here. He died. He died in Anchorage, at a home.

RH: And so Andrew wanted to go back to—

NG: Yeah, he come from Akutan with his own dory. Landed over Biorka, check it first. Check them houses. Then me and Alec Zharaoff, Victor Tutiakoff—I guess, Victor, Tracy's brother—

RH: Oh, yes, yeah.

NG: They was over there trapping, for the church down there, because they got a fox island over there. Biorka's got a longer fur from those red fox. So they were living in Andrew Makarin's house. Andrew Makarin's house okay. Well, four houses was okay. So they come in and talked to that Verne Robinson. Verne Robinson talked to them army boats. So the army boats, them barges, was going to Akutan and was going to take the rest of the Biorka people to Biorka. So Andrew went back to Akutan again. After three days barge got there and most of the people got in the barge, food, mostly Army food they were going to give anyway. And a few lumber, take 'em over to Biorka. So when the Biorka people come back, then I told Nick Borenin, but Nick Borenin got a girlfriend there. Don't want to go back. There was only three Makushin guys there then. Ilia and Nick Borenin, other guy named John. No, no. Victor, Victor Borenin. That's Nick's brother.

RH: Okay.

NG: And his mother died in Makushin, I guess around, or else down by the Ketchikan. Goddamned, he should have got chance to take it [her body] home. Never do it for St. Paul people, too. More people died in St. Paul people. St. George has got about two or three. And Nikolski people—Jesus Christ, more fucking people died in Nikolski, man. By TB. One goddamned family got six brothers and loose them all. One of them maybe lived for awhile. He married and then he died. Die with his wife. Husband got a cancer, Martin, that's his name. He used to be living, working with Reeve Airlines.

RH: Ah, Martin Krukoff.

NG: Martin Krukoff, yeah. He's married from St. George. Those people married from St. George, I know his wives. Because I got there before them guys. But I don't want married. I don't want stuck with a girl because I'm already married. . . .

RH: So, the Biorka people, ah, when they got to Biorka the military hadn't been over there, so their houses were pretty much okay?

NG: Okay, yeah. They gave us more lumber. So we got an extra another house. We built another house for Peter Lukanin. That's why they got five houses there.

RH: Peter was married to your sister.

NG: Yeah. My Molly. . . .

RH: How long did the people stay at Biorka after the war?

NG: Till 1965, I think. Some people move 'em over here.

RH: Uh-huh.

NG: Good thing, I think, moved in. Some kind of tornado hit the Biorka. Peter Lukanin's house, goddamned heavy, it's a bigger house, wind lifted it. I see it hit the bank and fell in a little bit.

RH: Wow.

NG: And blow out to sea. Akutan people find their roof on Akutan, Akun Island. That old George Yatchmenoff house, half in the water. Goddmaned, that's a pretty long house, too, two houses together.

RH: This was after people left.

NG: After. Nobody there. That Andrew Makarin house, half of it all tear down. My wife's house and Ruff's house, there's nothing wrong with them. I was there. It was after that I got there. Ruff with us. He spotted, good anyway. Laughing away. We

wanted to know what the hell he was laughing about. Finally I get a little closer and I see what the hell they're laughing at. Laugh at George Yatchemenoff's house on the beach. The Church. Church. Wind blow it away, Jesus Christ, pretty high. Push this gravel, push it all the way right up to the window.

RH: Wow.

NG: All the way part even blown away. Last Andrew Makarin was there was in '46. Andrew Makarin he was still living, '45 or '46. No, '50, '66.

RH: Oh, yeah. Because I remember him. Yeah. Yeah.

NG: He tear down church and burn it all up. And that middle table. That's big for us, anyway. Middle table. Not supposed to touch it.

RH: Oh, the altar. Yeah.

NG: Um hmm. Make a house over it and cover it all up. Goddamned someone put a hole in it. Want to peek in it; want to know what's in it. God. They do the same way in Makushin. Wind blow 'em away I think right now.

RH: Do you remember what the name of the church was in Makushin?

NG: Makushin church. I used to go there. I know that. He got a name, but. . .

Blavaseenveh, I think is the name of the church. Kashega, I mean Biorka people Nicholai. And Kashega is Vasillii, I guess. They all got names.

RH: Yeah. Yeah. Now, was Andrew Makarin, he wasn't the chief at Biorka or was he? Was he the chief?

NG: No. Alec Ermeloff was the chief.

RH: Okay, but, but—

NG: Andrew Makarin was running the service.

RH: Oh, the reader for the church. But Andrew seemed to really the leader there in getting the village resettled.

NG: Um-hmm. That's what he do. Now all Biorka men died, now. Last one was living down in Petersburg, Fede. He was Coco's brother, younger brother.

RH: Yatchmenoff?

NG: Um-hmm. He got pneumonia and he died. He supposed to move here. Before that he died. . . . He got two kids. He got two girls. The two girls old enough to get married. But he buy a house, that Fede, 'cause he got settlement money. He work in the cannery

20 years. Some Norweigan pay him so he retire. That's why he bought himself a house for his daughters, and live in it.

That Kashega, [unclear] fought for it, but they didn't get it. All these men they can't leave the girls in Akutan, but two are. One guy named Mike Kudrin and guy another, named Borenin.

RH: George Borenin?

NG: Ah ha. George Borenin and the third one is, ah—

RH: Cornelius—

NG: Cornelius Kudrin. Yeah.

RH: I didn't realize that Mike Borenin went back to Kashega, too.

NG: Yeah. Mike, Mike Kudrin!

RH: Yeah, sorry, Mike Kudrin.

NG: He died of heart problems. He went to Anchorage, let them check his heart lot of times. Didn't have them heart protectors. Didn't have them that time. Walter got one of 'em. And Larry Shaishnikoff, he got one. That Lottie's husband got some. Got heart problem. Larry, his heart almost killed a couple times without one. On his boat. Fall down and he can't stand up and got to stay. Take him all the way to the doctor's. Take him to Kodiak and shipped him to Anchorage. Lucky he's living anyway, that guy, Larry. Rich people, they don't want to die, I guess. [Laughs] I told some girl a lot of times, that a girl work down there, the bar. Don't work today. I went down there and seen him yesterday. The one girl is nice to me, the one that left. She went to Ketchikan, I mean Juneau, forgot her name. Kid knows her name. Her mother got sick, she got to quit and go out. I told that girl quit, too. Goddamned, they're young but they inhale cigarettes. Don't have to smoke it, you know. Piles up in your lungs. Lot of people died from his lungs.

RH: What did people used to do for medicine around here?

NG: Way before called "Medicine, Medicine Man." Used to have a lot of medicine but not for TB, not for cancer. He could work on people. Only thing is, he can't operate on people. Because of his headaches, because of his pain on his side, back. All kinds of plants grew up here, on Unalaska. Makushin, mostly. All kinds of medicine grow there. I understand people used to saving it, but people they don't save it no more. Them roots

they used to use, some Biorka people used, some of 'em, used. Goddamned people, used to be heavy pack, take it over the trail all the way. Used to be pick some from up there in the valley, going up. Looked like real putchkies but it's not real putchkies.

RH: Oh.

NG: The roots is pretty big but about this long. Pretty thick.

RH: A strong putchkie. [*Angelica lucida* L.]

NG: Un-huh.

RH: Yeah. Bitter.

NG: That's what people are using in the steam bath. And you can't touch the skin with it because that milk come out of it. Got thin grass over your skin and put it right on, keep it really warm. I know they used it, the front of me. I know a lot of medicine to be used before but I can't tell people. I don't know how to fix it. Anybody use it, get in trouble and I get in trouble.

[CD 1 ends here and CD 2 begins in mid-sentence.]

NG: . . . boil them and after you boil them drink it like tea, drink one cup.

RH: Now, what do you, what do you boil?

NG: Them stuff. I don't know the name of it.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: That's why I was going to— people they didn't know it. I was going to pick some for little Sophie down there, some time got sore breathe—

RH: I know Jennie Krukoff used to pick, ah, ah, oh, I can't say it in Aleut.

[mispronounces] *ulngig^dagan* or something It's yarrow. It's a very fuzzy, hairy, little plant. It smells really good when you rub it, when you break it up in your hand.

NG: Yeah, I think I know them. I'm not sure though.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: Them plants I'm talking about are about this long.

RH: Ah. About 2 inches. [I think Nick was referring to *Leptarrhena pyrolifolia*, Leather-Leaved saxifrage – *alix^siisix^*.]

NG: Just like airport kite. Grow right in the small creeks, edge of the small creeks. You can keep them, they live all winter long. So, I know my sister used to pick it. 'cause my sister got one lung. She used to take it. She told me, "You going to cook your whiskey

again!” [Laughs] Laugh at me. People used to make a tea. Long time ago tea called kipriyan [fireweed, *Epilobium angustifolium*] That’s a good tea.

RH: How did you move from Makushin over here? How did you get, you didn’t walk over. You must have come by boat.

NG: I did before, I walked, but the Coast Guard bring us here. I’ve been through there one time.

RH: Through the pass there, yeah. It’s a long pass.

NG: Four hours walking. Could be faster but we didn’t know which way to turn. This side, okay, but other end—

RH: Ah.

NG: —you got to turn to the village. Me and my brother, my brother’s not big, but we used to go through it. Anyway, it’s got a name. The name of that place is Portage Bay and Anderson Bay. I was there. Dug on the beach for awhile, no cabin. People used to use tent anyway. Long ways Makushin way, from there on the beach. One climb hill, one hill, climb it over, from there you got to walk sand all the way. Below that volcano?

RH: Yeah.

NG: Goddamn, a lot of hot spring water there. That’s the one people used to get kids get some water from there, five galleon. Bring it to me. They’d use it on me ‘cause I got sore all over. My hair, can’t heal up. I’d have to wash my face from it.

RH: This is when you were living in Makushin?

NG: Um hmm. I used to, I was a kid anyway, goddamned crawled on the goddamned ground, hide away. Play hide out, other guy looking for us. Sometime looking for half a day. Called him *Kuukalax*[^] in Aleut. *Kuukalax*[^]. Funny them Aleuts named things anyway before. Yeah, the way before people living different people before Russian Orthodox now. Yeah, people pretty tough living. But happy for them could be tough for us if we didn’t know it.

RH: Yeah

NG: We didn’t know it. People living on ducks, seals. Summer come, they live vegetables grow. Did you try pickled salmon—pickled putchkies?

RH: No. No.

NG: I tried some last time. Goddamned, it was good.

RH: Was it? Yeah?

NG: First time, too. One lady and one guy, one Aleut guy, lady. I told them to go Eider Point because Eider Point putchkey long before it gets stiff. They give me jar of it once. I tried once, but I finished it all! [Laughs] It was good. I like it. I told them people use it for vegetables. Petruskies. Same kind petruskies in Russian. Putschkies. I don't know if they got salmon berries, but blueberries. Different shape, though. Ours are round. Those Russian blueberries from Russia look like little candy, those bent ones.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: Same kind. Make jam out of it. Families, how many people in your house, you get a pound. He gave one to Nick Lekanoff, that Attu guy. Nick Lekanoff, he don't understand him but smiles all the time. Make me laugh. [Laughs] Well, I know some of it, but I can't talk it.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Yeah. But he told Nick Lekanoff, "*Qawaalimax*." I know that word, anyway.

Qawaalimax. Sea lion flipper. Sea lion flipper. Sea lion flipper in dry fish.

Goddamned, everybody making dry fish. Good dry fish because there are no flies, not really windy, not really warm. Goddamn, dry fish dry good. Like up in north. I wondered when it was going to dried up, I was thinking, but no it don't take long. Take one week, take 'em home. Goddamned, keep it good winter. Not moldy. I used to get from the north, one lady. Must be died or somebody quit em. Used to send me some dry fish. Forgot his name anyway. When I was up in north, I find it.

Goddamned that Fede was taking my place on a boat. I was a cook on a boat, Alaska Housing boat. I used to cook for 20 people. That's all I'd do on the boat. Didn't anybody like em cooking, so that's okay then. The goddamned, the Norweigan skipper, the skipper was on the boat. He wanted boiled fish. I have to boil fish for him. I got to boil potato for him. Give it to him, boy, he liked. He don't like to clean 'em by knife. He'd pulled the skins off.

RH: Ah, yeah.

NG: "You're thrown the vitamins away," I told him. I should have give him seal oil but I didn't! [Laughs]

RH: Where did people in Makushin get their salmon from?

NG: Volcano Bay.

RH: Ah ha.

NG: In that Pumicestone Bay. Pumicestone Bay got nothing but dog salmon. One bay between Kashega. People, ah, big dory used to go there, rowed up. One time, my grandfather inboard engine used to run. Two of the dories go there, seining.

Goddamned, the only other kind of fish we got there for seining. I didn't go there that time. Nothing but mans go there fishing. Jesus, boat load of goddamned fish, good for salting and drying.

RH: They'd bring them back to the village then?

NG: Um-hmm. Everything we get we deliver to the aged's house. But after he [Pete Olsen] come in I don't like it. Sometime, ah, sometime bald out. Come in I watched him coming in, so, I helped him pull his boat up. Goddamned, what he get he put it in a bag, take it home. He didn't give me nothing. I didn't like him. I always said, "*Tayamiklinax*" —stingy man. Yeah. I used to sit down on the beach, eating bar of candy. I used to throw half of it in the water, for my dad. Pretty hard to get over it. He used to teach me. Goddamned, he used to read Aleut books.

RH: Your dad used to read Aleut books? Yeah.

NG: If forgot all about it. He teach me. After Russians, Aleut talk, made it, John Veniaminov, Innokentii.

RH: Who read the services at the church in Makushin?

NG: Simeon Lekanoff.

RH: Ah.

NG: Simeon Lekanoff, my dad, Matfey used to be running it. Whoever wanted go, do it, you know. That's the way the people used to do then.

RH: And who was the midwife in Makushin? Did you have a midwife there?

NG: What do you mean?

RH: To help with babies, delivering babies.

NG: My grandmother and Nick Borenin's grandmother. Because they've been training way before from other people. Yeah. She born me, too, I know—I didn't know!

RH: Right.

NG: [Laughs] That's the way they do it, all along. Everybody can help. Anybody help. They used to teach them other young girls, two young womans. They told the other young womans we're not going to be that way all the time, we might be gone. . . .

RH: In Makushin, who was the chief in Makushin? Was there a chief when you were growing up?

NG: Elia Borenin.

RH: Elia. And the second chief?

NG: My dad.

RH: Your dad. Did they have third chiefs, too, or mostly first and second?

NG: First and—them chiefs used to come in and talk to this chief. Unalaska chief used to be the big for other people

RH: Alexei Yatchmenev.

NG: Um-hmm. His other son named Alexei Yatchmenev, his youngest son?

RH: Um-hmm.

NG: He died. Goddamned, he been out, his brother John Yatchmenov and Nick Lekanoff. Nick Lekanoff is not really big. Went down in a skiff. That's the time I went out, too, that day. Matfey and Steve Lekanoff. We went halibut fishing. I mean, fishing over there in the pass. Them east wind picked up so we turned back and we got home. I don't know when he left but I heard him he didn't come back. When you come this way from that dock, so he stopped in his camp, that's old Kusta's camp, used to be Alec Yatchmenev's for fishing ground. 'Cause way inside [at the head of Captains Bay] is Nick Lekanoff's—Nick Shaishnikoff's dad's fishing grounds. That Alexei Yatchmeev used to camp over at Eider Point.

RH: Yes.

NG: I told Ruthie about it. She just now find out about it. Must be a lot of village over there, big village before.

RH: Yeah, that's what I've heard. Yeah.

NG: Yeah. Goddamned, lot of skeleton under it, way under.

RH: Nick, at Makushin, when you were a child, what was your house like? I mean, ah, you know, where was the door? Did you have an entry way?

NG: Yeah, we got almost like this next house. Our roof we got a bedroom, two big rooms and no living room. Living room was where we used to eat, kitchen stove there.

RH: How did you, what kind of, was it a wood stove or coal?

NG: Wood stove.

RH: Wood stove. Uh-uhh.

NG: We didn't get no oil. Pete Olsen used a wood stove, too.

RH: Where did you get the wood from because—?

NG: Lot of wood on lot of bays. That's the place we used to go. Makushin didn't have no wood. People used to, ah, whoever find wood first they hauled it. That's what it seemed like it in Makushin. Long as I been in, I liked it 'cause it's the only one I know, when I was a kid. Go in there and go to bed. Go in there and eat. Hang on to my grandmother. I don't like people. Maybe I was jealous, jealous of other boys. My dad come around sometimes, "That's not your mom. That's your grandmother!" I don't like it! [Laughs] "No, that's my mom!" I used to call my real mom *ayagax*^, 'cause I'm daddy's atcha. "Ayagax^, that's my wife."

RH: Ah ha.

NG: I used to call her my wife. [Laughs] Well, anything I call anybody something.

RH: Did you have a steam bath in Makushin?

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's better than these. Really good steambath.

RH: Was it owned by everybody?

NG: Everybody, yeah. Whoever started it first. This family clean it the next morning. That's how they do that. Sometimes there's no wood so everybody donate wood. Cook 'em. I used to take bath there, I know. But I can't stay inside with those big guys, too Goddamned hot. People said one time Pete Olsen, goddamned drinking, he wanted steambath. "I'm going to steambath." And he got there and laid down and he went to sleep. And I got up and hurry up and took off. Too goddamned hot in there when they use it.

RH: Did it have different levels?

NG: Yeah. Used to have two beds and one different place you can put hot water on it. Man take a bath first and woman take a bath next but when woman take a bath, got to

have a watchman. These people used to watch around there. We don't trust those goddamned gold-miners.

RH: Ah.

NG: Stay there late. That's when they killed one lady in Makushin. Right after service. She went over to the warehouse, she was going over to the warehouse to get something. Dark. She never come home so people looked for her. They didn't find it. Find her next day, right in the creek. Somebody stop blood on the side of it. Goddamned, them Norwegians.

RH: What were they doing there?

NG: I don't know. Killing people, I guess. There was gold mining, but they're quitting but they didn't come in this way. I know a guy named John Reinkin.

RH: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

NG: I meet him in the Native Hospital one time. He was there. That's all. Everybody know him really because he'd come to town to get something to eat once in awhile. Pete Olsen not to give him food. I don't care about Pete Olsen. I'd give him some food. And those old Makushin people they could stay there that time. They don't like Pete Olsen, that's why my Grandfather and family go.

RH: I think John Reinkin was related to Henry Swanson, ah, because Henry's grandfather was a Reinkin.

NG: Yeah?

RH: Was a Reinkin, yeah.

NG: I think Henry Swanson Orthodox?

RH: Yes, I think so.

NG: Yeah, I think so, too, but he never go to church.

RH: No, no. Except to be baptized and buried, I guess.

NG: [Laughs] That's what he do! Like Larry's father. He never go to church. Wait 'till he died—he go to church.

RH: After the war, this, the houses in here, New Town—

NG: Yeah?

RH: How did people get this property?

NG: Well, some people had properties there anyway, you know, those old houses.

RH: Uh-uhh

NG: Some of them all beat up; most of them. Them army guys in there drinking, making a mess all over our house.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Some of the houses tear down.

RH: But here in New Town, these were people from the other villages, mostly, right?

NG: Makushin, Biorka, Makushin village. Not any more.

RH: No, no, but it used to be.

NG: Only two Kashega people on this side.

RH: So there was Mike and Dora Kudrin over here.

NG: Yeah, Mike Kudrin.

RH: And then next to them was Kusta and Helen Lekanoff?

NG: Kusta and Helen, Helen Lekanoff, that's Kusta's wife.

RH: Yeah.

NG: That lot over there used to be Henry, Henry, Henry Peter's.

RH: Oh, Ok.

NG: That's the one I took it away from him. The last one over there was Sophie's.

RH: And Henry Peter's. Is that where Molly lived? Molly Lukanin.

NG: No, it was my house last. He was there after my stepfather drowned and I took his place. My mother paid, my wife paid for it. But I can't prove it. I told her to get that pass, the receipt, from Mr. McNiece. McNiece was selling them, that's the time. And he paid only two hundred fifty dollars for his property. I think some said forty dollars.

RH: Ah ha. For the deed.

NG: From outside

RH: Now on this side there was Andrew Makarin down by the creek.

NG: Creek, yeah.

RH: And then—

NG: And next was Peter Samokinsky.

RH: Ah.

NG: Right next door.

RH: Where was he from?

NG: Peter Samokinsky I think was from here. Somebody asked me that. I don't know nothing about him. When he was young he used to go Makushin, go fishing, for that cannery. That time, Volcano — Makushin cannery is gone. My dad used to take me there, about this high, in a dory sometime but no local people working there.

RH: No.

NG: Philipinos and Chinese. He told me, "Watch Chinese after lunch. They're going to smoke a pipe." I don't know what "pipe" means. *Truuvkax*^, he told me then. After a while he, goddamned, he got a long pipe. Fill it up and light it up, put it between his tooth, nail it down and went to sleep. Couple puffs and he went to sleep. Sleep for a while, working hours, he wake up, clean his pipe and put it away, and start working. I think it's got some kind of drug.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: That's the way they do that.

RH: Wow. Then next to you, was that Arthur and Elsie Lekanoff?

NG: That's from Makushin, that's my uncle, my real uncle.

RH: Ah. Okay.

NG: That's his sister was my mother. Periscovia. Her sister was Natalia, the one who bring the body in. [The one whose body was brought in recently.]

RH: Oh, okay. . . .

NG: Goddamned, that graveyard don't have no place up there left.

RH: Up here?

NG: Um-hmm. The people on this side here are on top of the other people.

RH: Yeah. It's been used for quite a while.

NG: Oh, yeah. Well, one time, long time ago, I don't know his name, but the top box was open, open, opened it up. Nice clean box inside. All the meat come off from the body. Looked like somebody swept it on one side. I looked at him. Goddamned wondered who that skeleton guy in the middle, not even meat pretty close by.

RH: Wow. Wow.

NG: I don't know. Long time ago people buy books, said angel come around and cleaned them. That one, on both sides got look like meat in there. I don't know, looked

like mud. Some kind of plant grow on it, got water on it. I didn't touch it. I don't want to break it.

RH: Right.

NG: Last time I dig a hole up there for Hope, Charlie Hope.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: The whole family's up there. His wife and his daughter. I don't think they bring his son up here. Oh, yeah, he's got a son up there, too, the oldest one. . . .

RH: Hmm.

NG: But he got one brother died out there, somewhere. He wasn't married, too, but he died. He went out. Oh, somewhere around San Francisco.

RH: Oh.

NG: There's Russian Orthodox there, I guess.

RH: Oh, yeah, yeah, in fact, yeah.

NG: And the priest up there before, too, he died there. He the one married to Sophie. Yeah, he was blessing people.

RH: Hmm.

NG: After American got this from Russian, before Russians leaving from here, got nothing to give us, these Aleut peoples. So they give them that church, a present.

RH: Hm hmm.

NG: Ever since Aleut take care of it and use it.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: That's the way it's supposed to be.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: Same thing they do that up in Russia.

RH: I saw Father Bourdukofsky this morning—

NG: Yeah

RH: And he said that, ah, 300 people went into the church yesterday off of a tour boat.

NG: Yeah.

RH: Yeah. So I hope they, I hope they left an offering, that they paid to go in and —
[Laughs]

NG: Yeah. That's what a father do that, in Russian, and blessing people. People not blessing when I was a kid.

RH: Hmm.

NG: Second World War Two moved from that place, the Russian side. They moved in, oh, Jesus Christ, over 2 – 300 people.

RH: Ah. Now when you were in Makushin, did a priest ever come to Makushin?

NG: Once a month. Not once a month. He's supposed to but sometimes only boat running he go there. Yep. Only time bishop go there, bless the town. Ah, no one tell father about it. He used to bless this town. Go around the town, this side. Never do it for many years now. Doctor, I mean, priest done that after war. Bless them and everything. Even you better trust the blessing. That's what he told us.

RH: Ah. And that was Father Baranov?

NG: Uh huh.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Yeah, that Father Baranov, he's a strong father. Both died, too, after they got down there. [San Francisco] His wife. His wife holler at me in Russian one time and I don't know what the hell talking about! [Laughs] Chickens over there. Chickens in St. Paul.

RH: Hmm.

NG: Goddamn, one chicken, Jesus Christ, rooster, hollering like hell. He come out of his house and he talking American, I don't know what the hell he's saying. Maybe, "Who ate my chicken?", maybe. [Laughs] I told him, "Nobody bother it." . . .

RH: Well, Nick. Thank you very much.

NG: That's okay.

RH: I don't know if I can stop this machine now. I'll try it.

NG: I could tell stories. Maybe make a story some time. Maybe I'll send it to you.

RH: Yeah, or, you know, I'm going to be here for ten days. Maybe I could come back.

NG: Yeah, you could do that.

RH: That would be good.

NG: I want to tell you the story how them Russians come. How the people for the lucky charm they come in this Unalaska.

RH: That would be wonderful. Yeah. Okay.