

#### 4. Nicholai S. Lekanoff

June 8, 2004

[Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory (his daughter) and Bobbie Lekanoff (his daughter-in-law) assisted with the interview.]

Ray Hudson: Nick, let me just start with some preliminary stuff. When were you born?

Nicholai S. Lekanoff: I was born at Makushin, 1925. That's what my birth records said.

RH: Ah.

NL: 1925, June 4<sup>th</sup>.

RH: Oh, that's right. You just had your birthday.

NL: Like I said, the village, ah, the village didn't have anything there, but only ones we used to play with was John Borenin. Of course, you know Nick Borenin, his brother.

John was adopted by Pete Olsen. They were the only three of us, anyway, we used to play around, right in the village there. We didn't have no place to go up, just stay in the village, and play around. We don't go up on the hillside or nothing.

RH: Oh, yeah?

NL: We don't even go out there to look around, what was going on. And I think, if I'm not mistaken, he came into the village 1926 or 1927. That Pete Olsen did and his family. Well, he had his wife with him, that's all. And he adopted John Borenin. There was another guy—there were so many John Borenins! They named them one after another.

[Laughs] There was John Borenin was married to a Tina Petikoff, from Saint Paul. She was up here. I don't think you know her.

RH: No, I don't think so.

NL: Anyway, she was one of the womens that lost her husband there. There was 3 lives were lost. And the only one that knows the story, I think, that seen it all. The people didn't see the rest of it. There were only 3, there were only 4 people left there, I think. But Elia [Borenin] was working on a gate there with his sons, I mean, a fence, so their

sheeps won't run away, those watcha-call-em. Those three guys were out with that fishing or they went out there to get— They went out fishing or trapping, halibut fishing, I guess is what they were doing. It was the month of April. Well, compared to their story or I never did ask Nick Borenin. They took off on our Good Thursday and they never did come back. According to Nick Borenin and Nick Galaktionoff they were shooting all day long, he says. I don't know where they could be getting all that ammunition to shoot all day long. Only thing they would have was about ten or twenty rounds for those people. And what they were shooting at, I don't know. And Pete Olsen's story was that they got into wild animals, I mean sea lions or something.

RH: Or walrus?

NL: Walrus. They said their boat was all shot up and everything. None of those guys never come out of it. That was the story I heard. I never did ask Nick Borenin. And he wouldn't talk about it anyway. And, ah, Elia was his godfather, and they lived right in the village, and the old lady, she died down in Southeast, Mary Borenin.

RH: Now this happened, ah, like in 1939 or so?

NL: No, she died—

RH: No, I mean the men that got lost—

NL: '49, no—

RH: '39?

NL: '39, '39, yeah, they were here. That's not right. '38, when they died. I mean, when they disappeared. And Elia was here, '39.

RH: Okay.

NL: That was after my dad bought that area down there. He came down to see us. He came back on the *Penguin* on month of September, end of September. He told us he had come to see us and he never did come to— [Laughs]

RH: Now, what was your dad's name?

NL: Simeon.

RH: Simeon. Okay. And was he, was he involved in the church in Makushin?

NL: No, he was the reader in the church there, in Makushin. That's when he went there. He was born here and went to the Russian School down there and his brother ended up at St. George. Got himself a nineteen year old girl and got married. That's why there are

Lekanoffs still at St. George. And my dad was sick. He had a kidney—he had the same problem I had, had a kidney problem. He never lived. The doctor said I was lucky I passed my stones. He didn't and he died at the age of 68 or 69.

RH: Would you go over this photograph and tell me what the houses are that are on it? I've got a drawing here. I can—

NL: I will start from [1] this one here, the white one, Akeef Galaktionoff and [2] his brother John Borenin.

RH: Right next to it. That's 1 and 2 for John Borenin. 1 for Akeef Galaktionoff.

NL: The next white one [3] is Matfey Petikoff.

RH: That's number 3, Matfey Petikoff. Okay.

NL: Petukoff.

RH: Petukoff.

NL: And the next one [4], my godfather, Matfey Petukoff again.

RH: Another Matfey Petukoff.

NL: Uh-huh. [5] And the next, Matfey Borenin.

RH: Number 5 is Matfey Borenin.

NL: [6] The next one, his brother Elia Borenin.

RH: Elia Borenin. That's number 6.

NL: [7] And my dad is out at there. It's not a white house, but it looks white.

RH: It looks white in the picture, but it's not. That's number 7 at the very end.

NL: Yeah.

RH: And this was the church. And the name of the church?

NL: Ah, Nova. That's the second day of Christmas, our Christmas. I'm still going after the whatcha-call-em. I never got an icon for that. Elia, I don't know what Elia did to the icons from the chapel [at the time of the World War Two evacuation] but we don't have them. We don't have one here except the big one. One hanging over the doorway, that's from Chernofski, I think. And the one that's out now [for conservation]. It should be in pretty soon, I'm pretty sure. That one came from Makushin.

RH: Now what are these little buildings back in here?

NL: That's [8] a steam bath. It looks like a big house there.

RH: That's number 8, a steam bath way in the back.



NL: And the next to it [9] is the Borenin, nah, Galaktionoff warehouse.

RH: Okay. Galaktionoff warehouse, number 9.

NL: And [10] Elia Borenin's warehouse up there.

RH: Oh, right below the church. Elia Borenin. That's number 10, his warehouse.

NL: My daddy's should be right in the corner there someplace behind.

RH: Okay, right in the corner by the church, number 11 here. And then this [12] is the store here, or what is this big building?

NL: That's Pete Olson Hotel! [Laughs]

RH: Pete Olsen's hotel! Number 12. [Laughs]

NL: Pete Olsen's house. And this is the barn.

RH: Number 13 is the barn, for the sheep. Did he have anything else? No.

NL: No. Yeah, the store is right behind this house [12] here. So you can't see it.

RH: Oh, the store is behind the house, okay, on the church side of the house.

NL: I don't see those HUD houses there neither! [laughs]

RH: What's this little thing here? It looks like a bird house or something.

NL: Yeah, he had a pigeons. He used to have them. Oh, he must have put that at the end of his store. They must have took it off of there and put it at the end of his store there. His house was right behind the whatcha-call-em there.

RH: It looks like a little boat. Right here, like a toy boat almost.

NL: Yeah. He had a boat, toy boat, for his adopted son John. That's the one we used to play in. We never go out on that water with it but used it on dry land. We'd play with that.

Bobbie Lekanoff: What year is that?

RH: It's either 1932 or 1933. This photograph is from the Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory: Tell 'em what you told us when the Coast Guard come in, what did the people do?

NL: I was telling you yesterday, the people, they all hide away. They'd stay inside. Nobody goes out 'cause they can't speak English. The only one that could speak English was Pete Olson's wife and was her helper or housemaid or whatever you call 'em, Borenin's sister, Dora. She learned to speak English. Pretty good, I think.

RH: Now this must have been after they installed the electric lights, because—

NL: Yes. Yes.

RH: 'cause this looks like electric poles.

NL: Electric poles. The pole was right across the creek. I mean, the power house.

RH: So it was a water generator ah— And where did you get water from at Makushin?

NL: Oh, we used to pack our water from down below. There's a creek down there, right behind the church there. There's a creek there, all the way down there. Everybody used to pack the water from there or there down below here. And the power house water, they had a hand-made whatcha-call-em, dam up on the hillside. And that's where the water was coming from.

RH: Ah, like a spring.

NL: Yeah. And behind that Pete Olson's house, this pipe here [in the foreground], I think, that's the smoke house pipe. It came down and drained there.

RH: Oh. Okay.

NL: There's something there. That's a cess pool. Cess pool. Heck, you can dig all the way down to China if you have to. You can dig all the way down without no problems. It's nothing but sand and mud.

RH: Really. That's nice. And it looks like they've done something to make a road along here, a walk way, you know.

NL: Yeah, they had a handmade road, about 10 - 20 feet wide. Us kids, Pete Olsen used to line us up there and go out there and go and pick up the grass and all the way around the church-house and when we came back and quit, done with that job he used to give us a pound of candy.

RH: Now, Nick, what did the men do at Makushin in the summer time? Did they go up to the Pribilofs to work?

NL: All the people goes to the Pribilofs, yes.

RH: What did the women do then? Did they just stay in Makushin?

NL: They just stay in the village there and go fishing or gaff. They used to gaff a fish out of the creek there and make a dry fish. And, ah, seine. Pete Olsen had a seine so he let the biggest use it and go out seining right on the beach there. Get all the fish you

want. It was a lot of work to it. Stay there and dry them and clean them out. Blue flies would get into them.

RH: And when they came back from the Priblofs then, ah—

NL: They'd go out. Getting ready to go out hunting. Get their kayaks out. In the barn there I counted, I think, they have 5 baidarkies there one time. Borenin and his brother had a baidarky, two man baidarky. And my godfather and his brother, he had a one.

RH: What was his name?

NL: Matfey. Matfey Petukoff and his brother Yekeem. Called him Jack. And Peter Petukoff and his son, Simeon Petukoff. He was Bonafusia's dad. And I already said Matfey. Another Matfey and his brother Elia had one. And my dad and Kusta was the kayakers.

RH: Would they take the skins off them when they stored them in the barn?

OPLG: Did they take the skins off from them?

NL: Yeah. They do take them all off, and hang them all up. I mean, put the baidarkas in the barn there. That was a good thing about him. He let them take care of their whatcha-call-ems. And the skins, they put them away. They dry them and put them away in the storage there in the warehouse.

RH: Now, a long time ago, it used to be the women who would sew the skins on. Was that true when you were young?

NL: Yes. Yes, they would sew them together. After they put them on the boat, I mean, the baidarka they'd go out there and they'd sew them together. And they'd use lots of seal oil.

RH: Oh, yeah, to make them waterproof and—

NL: Yeah. Waterproof.

BL: May I ask a question?

RH: Sure, yeah, please.

BL: How did they tan the hides that they used?

RH: How did they tan the sea lion hides?

NL: Sea lion?

OPLG: How did they prepare them? How did they tan them? After they blubber them? To dry.

NL: [Nick doesn't hear the question and answers about making seal oil.] They didn't even do that back there.

BL: They just used them the way they got them off the animal?

NL: They'd just take the fat off of the meat and melt it down on top of the stove, all you can, then put them in a sea lion stomach or you freeze them and keep them that way. Course they get ranky if they go too long. That's what they'd use on the kayak. You'd use a lot of that. You'd soak the skin for at least about 20 hours or 4 or 5 days, before they put them back on the boat.

RH: In salt water or fresh water?

NL: Fresh water. They used to soak them right there in the creek there, so it was fresh water.

RH: Where did they go to get sea lions?

NL: Sea lions, they— How far is that Volcano Bay from Makushin. It was only 9 hours. No. Nine miles.

RH: Maybe 9 miles. Yeah, I've got a map here.

NL: Whatcha-call-em? Cheerful.

RH: [Unfolding maps. Unalaska C-3, Sheet 4128 I, and Unalaska C-4, Sheet 4128 IV, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army Map Service] These are not very good because this goes over here and that one like this.

NL: This is Makushin Bay.

RH: Yeah. Here's Makushin Village and Volcano Bay over here.

NL: Oh, that's quite a ways.

RH: And the lakes. Where's the scale here? This is about a mile, so it's only about three miles.

NL: Yeah. That's what I figured, but Kusta told us it was nine miles. I said it can't be that long. Because Cheerful, is it Makushin here?

OPLG and RH: Volcano Bay.

RH: And Makushin over here and the volcano's up here.

NL: That's about the only two places they would go out sea lion hunting. Right there—

RH: Right out on the point or near the point.

NL: Yeah. They had a cave there.

RH: Oh.

NL: I never was in that cave. And Makushin Bay, I mean, Volcano Bay they had on the top of this side here, I guess, they had the sea lions in there.

RH: Ah, right at the corner there at Volcano Bay. When you went from Makushin to Volcano Bay, I think you were saying at senior lunch that you could hike on either side of the lake?

NL: You could go on either side. They told me it was shorter going this way.

RH: On the outer side it's shorter. It looks shorter.

NL: And it was longer on this side.

RH: Ah-ha, up against the mountain.

NL: That's the place where they'd get their wood from out there to whatcha-call-em.

RH: Over in Volcano Bay?

NL: No, on the other side of the creek there. There's a lot of wood there and Cheerful.

RH: How would they bring it back?

NL: Boats. We used a dory.

RH: And come around the outside or would you go through—

NL: Outside. Outside.

RH: Outside. It's pretty rocky along here, isn't it?

NL: We used to row all the way over there.

BL: Did they hunt the sea otters or the sea lions with spears then or with guns?

NL: By guns. The spears, they quit that after the Russians took over.

RH: This is a little bit more of Makushin Bay. Here's Anderson Bay. [Unfolds map Unalaska B-3, Sheet 4128 II, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army Map Service] Thanks.

NL: The island, they probably call it Pete Olsen Island, that's the island he was on.

RH: You mean he lived there? No.

NL: Pete Olsen got that island. Did I say I was born in 1925?

OPLG: Um hmm.

NL: He got there about '26 or '27. It's almost like Captains Bay up there, ice up in there, the whole bay, so the fox took off [he had stocked the island with fox], off of the island and got onto the mainland. And that was the end of that.

RH: He stocked blue fox on it? Yeah.

NL: Yeah. . . . He had a house there. That's where he built first. Then he moved into Makushin. And after he lost everything off that he moved into the village there, tore his cabin down and took it back to the village there. I think the people there was happy to see him, or something, because he would help them along.

RH: Now, it didn't freeze over like that very often, right?

NL: No. Not very often.

RH: Did you have a camp anywhere?

NL: Only thing I can think of was way inside of that. There was a creek coming down, along in there, I think. I think they had a cabin there. I don't know what they was doing.

BL: Your family? Your camp, did you have a camp?

NL: No. My dad had one inside of Anderson Bay.

RH: Ah.

NL: Way inside, just about here. And, ah, what's this.

BL: Naginak Cove.

NL: My dad had a camp inside Anderson Bay. No, Cannery Bay.

RH: Cannery Bay is right here. Yeah.

NL: This is Cannery Bay. Where's the portage?

OPLG and RH: Portage Bay is right here.

NL: This must be inside. This is Cannery Bay and this is—

OPLG and RH: Portage Bay.

NL: Portage Bay. All the way in there. Way inside, facing the north, that's where my dad had a camp.

OPLG: In Portage or Cannery? In Cannery?

NL: No, in Anderson Bay. In Portage Bay you can go up Portage Bay.

RH: They're saying this is Portage Bay and Cannery Bay and Anderson down here.

NL: Anyway, he got a camp inside of here, out of a mud house.

RH: Oh, okay, and he would use it just during the summertime?

NL: During the winter.

RH: Oh, for trapping.

NL: For trapping. They had a stove in there. They'd sleep on the grass on the floor, on the deck.

1. Volcano Bay
2. Makushin Village
3. Humpback Bay
4. Portage Bay
5. Cannery Bay
6. Anderson Bay
7. Peter Island
8. Udamak Cove
9. Naginak Cove
10. Skan Bay
11. Unalaska Bay
12. Beaver Inlet

OPLG: Did you go in there?

NL: Yeah. I was in there sleeping in the cabin. My dad took me. I was surprised he took me out there and [to] that cannery. He used to go there and camp there every now and then. My uncle Philip and my brother Tim was out there, camped there. They were still there until everybody moved out of there. I guess they caved in or the army caved them in.

RH: Now, why did your dad move into Unalaska?

NL: They had a mail boat about every month from here all the way down to Nikolski. And come back and go back to Seward. I think that was where their main station was. And Atka, Nikolski, all those places, I guess, they were taken care of by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

RH: Right. Yeah, yeah.

NL: Once a year. They took their grub out there for them.

RH: So, Nick, when did your family move into Unalaska?

NL: If I'm not mistaken, 1937.

RH: Okay. Why did they come here?

NL: Came in on the mailboat.

RH: Did your dad come here to work or—

NL: No, we moved here because Pete Olsen kicked him out. That's what Nick Galaktionoff told me once. He kicked him out because. . . my dad went to work and he gave a generator to, ah, or sold a generator to Johnny Yatchmenoff. That's what he was mad about, I guess. So he told him to come back and get his groceries from Johnny Yatchmenoff and I guess my dad had enough guts to stand up to him and say, "Okay, I will." Well, good thing, he probably would be still there. If Moses Galanin wasn't there. He was there, with us. He used him as an interpreter when the mailboat got in there so they, the whole family, moved in here. That's how he came in.

RH: So Pete Olsen was sort of a dictator in that town, that village?

NL: Yes. He was. He was running everybody because, well, he had a good business because the people there can't talk for themselves or they can't fight for themselves.

RH: Yeah, yeah. Right, right. [Speaking to Bobbie Lekanoff] You mean how many children in Nick's family?

BL: No, how many lived in Makushin Village around the time when his family moved to Unalaska?

NL: If I'm not mistaken I think there were eight of us. On Mom's side. There were Vassa, Marva, Steppy. Brother Steve, Tim. Florence was born here so that—

RH: When you came here, where did you live? That's a lot of people.

NL: We stayed down in our Uncle Galaktionoff's house there for awhile. Then I spotted that house by the creek there. I told him about it and he decided he was going to buy it. We got it from this guy named [George] Gardner.

RH: Oh, yes. I've heard of him.

NL: We got it from him, but he didn't pay it all up so they told him to move out of there. So he didn't have no place to go, so he decided to raise him another \$400. Gardner said it was okay then, so they keep them there. So we moved in there. 1938, I think, we moved in that cabin by the old second bridge. . . , where Nicky's staying now.

RH: Were you here when Bishop Alexei was here?

OPLG: Were you here when Bishop Alexei was here?

NL: Yes. I was his alter boy.

RH: Oh, you were? Now, what was he like? Because, when he was a young priest he was here, in 1910, in Unalaska. But then he would have been an older man.

NL: He was all gray, but I don't think he was that old. That's the first time I ever learned to be, I mean, to be an alter boy, for him and Father Theodosia. He was another one. He was here when we got here, 1937. Then from here they shipped him to St. George and Alexei came up and he stayed here another year then he went back out. And that was the last time I seen him. He wasn't a big guy. He was a little guy.

RH: . . . So, Nick, that's how you started in the church then?

NL: Yeah. I started about 50 years ago. 54 years ago. I started helping my uncle along in there. He was a helper here and, ah—

RH: What was his name?

NL: Andrew Galaktionoff. That's the one was married to Sophie's mom [Augusta Galaktionoff]. I think that was her second husband or third husband. And I think he passed away about '49, somewhere in there.

RH: Now, after the war, after people were evacuated and after they came back, was there any thought of going back to Makushin?

NL: No. No. I don't think so. They probably could have gone. I'm sorry that I never did go back. Course the house was already—

RH: Right, already here. Oh, already wrecked at Makushin.

NL: Yeah, ripped out. And the rest of the houses were all right, except rotten and [they had] bad spots. There was Borenin's, John Borenin, and Matfey, my godfather's, and my dad's house. Their roofs were all blowed off of them. Otherwise everything was still there. No stoves on anyone of them. Everyone of them I guess they used. Everybody moved out of there, they took the stove out their house and used it for their stove. That Pete Olsen had a really good stove in there, in his house. And it was still there when we moved in there. It was still there during the winter, '46 I think it was we went camping there. No, '45 after Christmas season.

RH: Right after returning.

NL: Yeah. He left everything in there. Art Harris, he claims he bought the sheeps and the house so we didn't bother the house. We were staying in that Borenin, I mean the Galaktionoff house there.

RH: Ah hah.

NL: Nick Borenin's daddy's house there.

RH: And you were over there to, like, to trap fox?

NL: Yeah, we stayed over there trapping, and after trapping we came back in on the mail boat.

RH: Who went over with you?

NL: I don't know. There was Arthur and Uncle Philip. You probably know him.

OPLG: Arthur Lekanoff, his half brother, and Philip. What was Philip's last name?

NL: Philip Galaktionoff. You know him. I think you know him.

OPLG: Yeah.

NL: Bald-headed guy. [Laughs] He was a comical guy. He had everything—for every little word you said, he had something to make you laugh.

RH: I wanted to ask you about Kashega because I've heard a couple of different stories and I'm not clear. I thought George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin moved back to

Kashega. But Eva said they didn't really move back. They just went to visit, back and forth, to visit sort of to Kashega. What's your understanding.

NL: Well, they moved here because they, well, they tried to bring the village back up on its feet but they were only two of them left there so they decided to come back and make a home here. That's what they were. And they were taken to Akutan from World War Two. Kashega, Biorka and Makushin—left over at Akutan. Borenin and his family was the only one from Makushin. And Biorka moved in there, too. They said they couldn't get along with the Akutan people, so they have to come over. They decided to make their living here only to go back to Biorka. And they stayed there until, I don't know how it happened, but they lost their chapel and one of the houses. It blew off of. I don't think it was any bigger than Henry Swanson's house, that little house over here.

OPLG: Messersmith's.

RH: Oh, yeah. Yeah. The small one.

NL: Your old house.

RH: My old house! [Laughs]

NL: The wind blowed that house. They never did find it. Peter Galaktionoff, Peter Lukanin said he had everything in that house. He was married to Molly.

RH: Right. Okay.

NL: He bought everything for her, and everything, the whole cabana blew it off. And, ah, George Yatchmenoff's house was blowed off, right on top of the bank, going down on the bay side. And the church, they moved them, blowed them from the one side all the way back to the creek bank, I mean beach bank.

RH: Must have been a really huge wind.

NL: That's how they left their homes. They decided to come here and make their homes. They came over and see, ah, Nick Shaishnikoff was acting as a chief here so they went to see him. . . .

RH: I want to ask you another question about Makushin if I may. Who . . . was the midwife in Makushin?

NL: Well, Eva Borenin, Nick Galaktionoff's grandmother. And, ah, the other one was Mary Borenin, Elia Borenin's wife.

RH: Okay.

NL: Those were the only two that I knew they were, housewife.

RH: Was there any one in particular who was good with Aleut medicines?

NL: [Unclear, perhaps *Oh, I don't know*] Medicine, for or not, naw. They had their own medicine or they don't have no medicine.

RH: Yeah, yeah. Right, right.

OPLG: They didn't use the plants or anything for medicine?

NL: No. Some roots they used. Some kind of a root for whatcha-call-em. There was bushes we used for steam bath. *Sixsiqan*. That's what they used for medicine. That's one of 'em. And putchke root.

RH: The strong putchke.

NL: Yeah. That's another whatcha-call-em, used for medic. You had a pain or anything you can't stand, they'd heat that root up and they'd rub it on your back there and they'd cover it back up and they said it would draw that pain out.

RH: Yeah. Well, thank you, Nick.

NL: Oh, You're very welcome.

RH: This was good. This was good.

NL: I hope your whatcha-call-em is still going.

RH: It is actually. We still have 34 minutes. [Laughter]

[To Okalena and Bobbi] Did you have any other questions or anything?

OPLG: Did they have a chief then?

RH: Oh, yeah, Who was—was there a chief in Makushin?

[Nick mishears and thinks we are asking about sheep.]

NL: There were until '46 or '47, I think. [Bill] Ermeloff—I heard he's coming here to make his living here now.

OPLG: Oh, cool.

NL: He was there at Makushin with, well, he called him his dad. Step-father. He's the one that brought him up from a teenage. [Afenogin] Ermeloff.

RH: Ah ha.

NL: They were there in 1946, I think it was. It must have been about '46 or '47. I was working over Dutch Harbor side then. They were taking that, stripping that Dutch Harbor down.

RH: Now I saw in some of the records there was an Elia Shapsnikoff who was, ah— He was from Unalaska but he served as the chief at Makushin for ten years. It might have been, it was probably before you were born. I don't know.

NL: Well, he probably could. Well, I remember they bought the sheeps down— He must have got some of the sheep from the whatcha-call-em. Pete Olsen did, from Chernofski. Yeah, they'd bring them up

RH: From Chernofski. The sheep started in the early '20s, I think. Out of Portland, in part, I think.

OPLG: Who got them?

RH: I can't remember the name of the company, but it's fairly well documented. They tried it a couple of different times. There was a doctor involved who was part of it, the business. Then they ventured off to Nikolski a bit, in that area.. Nick, who were the leaders. Was there a particular leader, you know, other than Pete Olsen, you know. Was there an Aleut leader?

NL: Elia was, Borenin.

RH: Elia Borenin.

NL: And there was a guy before him, was—now wait a minute, you was speaking about Elia—

RH: Elia Shapsnikoff.

NL: Elia Shapsnikoff. He was the leader. Or Elia, that's what I heard. I guess he made a smart move. He decided to come here and make his living here. So he come here and make his living and let his kids go to school. That's what it was. They built a school in every village they could get to, but the only one they left out was Biorka and Makushin. Well, the way I heard, Pete Olsen was the one behind it. He's going to teach the kids himself so the school teacher decided not to bother with it anymore.

RH: Yeah, 'cause I know they had a school at Kashega.

NL: Kashega school closed in 1936? or '35, somewhere in there.

OPLG: How many kids were at Makushin?

NL: They were about 12 kids there then.

OPLG: And how many in Kashega?

NL: Kashega ran out of kids so they closed the school.

RH: Yeah, that's what Eva said. She was the only kid there.

NL: And the Kudrins. They were the ones keeping the school there for awhile. Until they all grew up.

OPLG: So where did you go to school?

NL: Here. I was scared the first time I came to school. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't speak English. . . . The only thing I used to say was, "Yeah." [Laughter]

BL: Was there a flu epidemic in Makushin?

NL: Yes, I guess they did. That flu.

RH: Yeah.

NL: 1914.

RH: 1919.

NL: 1919. Okay. That was before I was born.

RH: Yeah, you know, I don't know, ah—

BL: His father's first wife and ten of their fourteen children were killed by that

RH: Really?

BL: I think that's what he told me one time.

RH; Wow. Did that flu hit Makushin?

NL: Yeah. They had a flu there, that's what they said, practically killed all the whatcha-call-em, people, there except the Lekanoffs and wiped out Chernofski, out completely, left-over came here to make their living. That was another Borenin. That's, ah, Innokentii Borenin. Sergie Borenin, you didn't know him, probably, but his uncle, I think, or it could be his uncle, Innokentii Borenin. He was from Chernofski. John Gordieff, he was from Chernofski.

RH: Okay.

BL: Did your father's first wife die from that flu?

NL: Whose wife?

BL: Your father's first wife.

NL: Yes. He was married twice. He had 12 kids from his first wife; 10 from his last one.

[Okalena serves tea.]

OPLG: Dad, how do you become the chief?

NL: How did I become a chief?

BL: How do they decide who will be the chief?

NL: Oh, that's up to the community to do that. And the whole people get together. They have a meeting, they gonna decide who they want to use as the leader. Then they vote him in.

RH: When you came here to Unalaska, Alexei Yatchmenev was still alive, I guess, huh?

NL: Yes. I was. He died about 6 months after I got here, something like that. '37, I think. It's marked on that stone up there. November. And his son died out at the camp, out there. He had this sickness. He knew what was coming to him so he begged his brothers to go out camping with him. So they took him out overnight and came back. Next day he was, he was gone, he was dead. He died out there at his camp. Month of December.

RH: Now after World War Two, ah, Bill Zaharoff—he was the chief here? And then Doc?

NL: Ah, at Makushin?

RH: No, here, here. Unalaska. After the war.

NL: No. No. There was no sheeps here.

RH: No, no, not, a chief.

NL: Who was chief here then? Ah, what the heck was his name?

RH: Bill Zaharoff?

NL: Yes, he was acting as a chief here. Yes.

RH: But then he left, huh?

NL: No, he stayed here until he passed away.

RH: Oh, oh, okay.

NL: Whatcha-call-em was acting as a chief. Who in the heck was it? Old Man Doc was, no, he was second chief during Alexei time. So he decided to make a chief out of old man Zaharoff, so they did.

RH: But that would have been tough because things had changed.

NL: Yes. And, ah, Old Man Zaharoff. And after Old Man Zaharoff passed away, I think they put that what-cha-call-em Nick Shaishnikoff was a chief there for awhile, about two years, I guess, and he decided to give it up.

RH: Here in Unalaska?

NL: Yeah.

RH: Oh, yeah?

NL: Then Bill Erm—Bill Berikoff was the second chief until they made chief out of him and he decided he'd give it up. So they put me in there.

RH: Ah—

NL: I was the chief for a couple years or so, but then I decided I'd give it up. Somebody else took it over.

BL: Was it a tough job?

NL: Yes. You couldn't make the guys to work for you if you wanted to or not. [Laughs]

BL: I didn't know you were a chief once.

NL: That's where I got my whatcha-call-em from— [Laughter]

RH: And then Bill Dyakanoff, Doc, became the chief finally, huh?

NL: Yeah, he was the community chief up here. [Unclear, perhaps *A lot of people liked him.*] Him and old man Gordieff. I stayed with those two guys. In 1946 I went out trapping with them. In Carlisle, about 40 miles. I think it's just about 40 miles from there to Nikolski facing north, south. Nikolski was on the north side. You used to [see] Nikolski Island in nice weather. Right across Chuganadak.

RH: Was Carlisle a pretty good island to trap on?

NL: Yes. It was. Right up on top. We had lots to eat. I used to go out there shooting ducks every day. Seals. You don't hook them right away, they'd get away from you. We had a boat, but it was too big for us to handle it.

RH: Did you get many fox?

NL: Oh, I think I got 20, and the Old Man Gordieff had 30. And Old Man Dyakanoff got skunked. He didn't get anything. [Laughs]

BL: They had skunks here? [Laughter]

NL: Yeah, that poor guy. After that Second World War though everything dropped down. All the skins and hides all gone, so they quit trapping.

RH: Nick, when did you go out to Carlisle?

NL: '46 I was out there.

RH: After the war.

NL: Yes. I came back from St. Paul. I stayed here about two weeks or a week then they wanted me to go out with those two old mans so I decided, well, I might as well go with them and try trapping.

RH: And the one was Bill Dyakanoff and the other was—?

NL: John Gordieff.

RH: John Gordieff. Okay. That was probably a good experience.

NL: Yes, good, good. The Old Man Gordieff used to teach us how to play a crib. That's how I learned to play a cribbage.

RH: Well, I think I will stop this recorder if I can figure out—

OPLG: No, that's good.

RH: Thank you very much. Let's see—

NL: You're welcome.