

## Chapter 17

### A Lake in the Woods



**B**eginning in 1977 a rising chorus of voices broke the decades of silence that had surrounded the evacuation. Unangaꣳ from the Pribilof Islands, Unalaska, and Atka led the effort to document what had happened. Evidence accumulated based on village size and the extent to which government agencies and non-Native personnel were represented. Testimony from St. Paul and Unalaska dominated the record. St. Paul was the largest Unangaꣳ community and had an entrenched government presence. Unalaska had a diverse Unangaꣳ population, economic and military importance, and a sizeable non-Native presence. Another factor that influenced documentation was the degree to which participants spoke fluent English. All of these factors worked against preservation of experiences from Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. While no one denied that testimony from these village residents was valuable, their testimony was harder to gather and eventually irrelevant as the quantity collected from larger communities grew to the critical mass needed to pursue effective action.

The result was that specifics from these villages are often missing. Nowhere is this truer than in documenting what happened in southeast Alaska. Imbedded among the far greater numbers from Akutan and Nikolski, the handful of residents from the three villages all too easily slipped past unnoticed and in subsequent publications were either omitted or generalized. *Personal Justice Denied*, the report of The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, included neither testimony from nor incidents involving people from the three villages. It even mistakenly identified Chernofski as an Aleut village in 1942. Kohlhoff's *When the Wind Was a River*, created primarily by a masterful synthesis of documented evidence, suffered from the same lack of specificity. The evacuations of Makushin and Kashega were treated in a single sentence while that of Biorka was hypothesized.<sup>1</sup> His treatment of the years in Southeast

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1 Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 81.

rarely distinguished the five villages that arrived on the *Columbia*. Something like that will happen in this chapter where testimony from Akutan and Nikolski dominates descriptions of what occurred between July 1942 and April 1945 and hints at the experiences of people from the three villages.



Sophie Kudrin [Pletnikoff] and her daughter Eva Kudrin [Tcheripanoff] at Ward Lake. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

Unlike the Pribilof and Atka evacuees, who were taken directly to their camps, the residents of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin aboard the *Columbia* first arrived at Wrangell. On July 13, the 160 passengers were trucked to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' boarding school, Wrangell Institute. Built in 1932, backed by a steep mountain and surrounded by a dense forest of Sitka spruce, the three interconnected buildings brooded over the landscape about five miles south of the city. Families were assigned to used military tents pitched on the front lawn. Showers and medical check-ups followed. "Taking a shower was a shock for most of us," recalled Lavera Dushkin. "At Nikolski we had bathed ourselves from a small tub, but mostly we took steam baths in our banyas, so showers were new to us."<sup>2</sup> She served as an interpreter for members of a medical team that discovered "virus, pneumonia and shock," as she put it. Overall, the health of the evacuees was good, apart from tuberculosis.<sup>3</sup> Any child or adult who was found with head lice had their hair cut short and kerosene rubbed into their scalps. This

2 Dushkin, Lavera, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

3 Statement of Captain F.A. Zeusler before the Ketchikan City Council, as reported in *The Alaska Fishing News*, May 24, 1943.

was left on for twelve hours after which the scalp was washed. Dr. John H. Clements of Wrangell inoculated for typhoid, gave initial immunizations, and vaccinated for small pox “all 159 of the refugees.” (Pete Olsen had already left the group and was seeking housing in Wrangell.)

“From that day we started eating dog salmon,” said Leonty Sovoroff about arrival at the Wrangell Institute, “tea and bread, day in and day out. We were fed three meals a day, but the food was not fit to eat, but we ate it because there was nothing else to eat. There was no meat, only cheap fish. It was always boiled, not cooked any other way.”<sup>4</sup> Remembering the fish, Lavera Dushkin remarked, “It had an awful smell to it, not like the good salmon at Nikolski.”

For the younger crowd, the older teenagers and young adults who would later reflect on the implications of the evacuation, excitement and discovery filled the air. “Aleuts take it smilingly,” declared an article the week of their arrival. The weather was too hot but people got “a thrill out of the automobiles.”

One chap hailed a taxi out near the Institute with ‘how much to town?’ Driver quoted his rates. ‘Too much,’ said the Aleut. ‘I’ll walk.’ He did. Later in town, after joining one of his friends, he approached the cab driver with ‘take us out to the Institute’ and hauled out the necessary fare. Curiosity had gotten the better of him. Driver learned it was the first time he had ever ridden in an automobile.<sup>5</sup>

The people off the *Columbia* occupied all the tents so when 137 Unalaska people arrived the first of August aboard the S.S. *Alaska* they had to camp out in a bunkroom of the school. Eventually, women and children were given tents while men stayed in the bunkrooms. A few days after the Unalaska people arrived, the clerk of the local draft board drove out from Wrangell, registration cards in hand. “Many of the men wanted to know when they would get their rifles,” an article in *The Wrangell Sentinel* reported. The men remarked, “We know how to shoot and we want to get as many Japs as we can.”<sup>6</sup> The list included the following—from Makushin: Nick Borenin; from Biorka: Alex Ermeloff, Peter Galaktionoff, Andrew Makarin, George Yatchmenoff, Ruff Ermeloff, and Willie Yatchmenoff; and, from Kashega: Carl Borenin, Sergie Borenin, George Borenin, Mike Kudrin, Cornelius Kudrin, and Sergie Kudrin. Feddie Yatchmenoff would sign up as soon as he was old enough. Alex Ermeloff, Andrew Makarin, and George Yatchmenoff had to register as “old men” born before 1897. We get a slight indication of their build from the cards. Andrew was 5’ 6” and weighted 140 pounds. Alex was two inches shorter and weighted five pounds less. George was only 5’2” but weighed 160 pounds.

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4 Sovoroff, Leonty, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

5 *The Wrangell Sentinel*, July 17, 1942.

6 *The Wrangell Sentinel*, August 7, 1942.

Within two weeks of arrival, the Unalaska people were transported to Burnett Inlet on the western side of Etolin Island. Here, in the ruins of a burned-out cannery, they dispersed among eleven cabins and one large bunkhouse until they were able to construct additional small dwellings. Heavy rains swept Southeast all that week.

Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin people, along with those from Nikolski and Akutan, were the last to be settled although a site had been selected by late July.<sup>7</sup> Scrambling to find a location, officials chose a Civilian Conservation Corps camp that had been constructed inland from Ward Lake, a small recreational lake eight miles out of Ketchikan. Abandoned at the outbreak of the war, the site was being used by a unit of the Air Corps Marine Rescue Service that was then transferred to the Annette Island Army Air Field. It was immediately clear that the camp did not contain sufficient housing. The Unanga men set to work constructing a barge to carry lumber along with their few possessions the ninety miles from Wrangell to Ketchikan. An Army transport took the majority of the evacuees to Ward Cove and then they traveled to the camp on August 23. They arrived about two in the morning. The remainder, including Dorofey “Rusty” Chercasen, arrived a few days later on the *Penguin*, towing the barge full of building supplies. The barge was then hauled overland to the camp. “My first impression,” said Rusty on seeing the camp with its two bunk-houses, two cabins, a latrine, and a mess-hall, “was that of being put in prison.”<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, they had brought tents from Wrangell Institute. People set to work despite their oppressive surroundings. Pauline Whitfield, the teacher from Nikolski, said “the CCC boys left the cabins in a filthy condition.... Aleuts right away made repairs and worked hard to make them habitable.”<sup>9</sup>

“All were glum,” reported Fred Geeslin, with the Alaska Indian Service, noting that it was the only time he had seen the people distressed.<sup>10</sup>

Ward Lake sits a little inland from Ward Cove. The cove opens to the northern end of a long channel, one of the innumerable waterways weaving through the Inside Passage. But despite all that water, the camp itself was land-locked and shadowed by forest. “My first impression,” said William Ermeloff, “was that it seemed dark, because of the trees surrounding it.” Dark and damp. As much as anything, the dampness troubled Luke Shelikoff of Akutan. He referred to the camp as “a damp old thing” where the “ground was wet all the time.” It was oppressive and unhealthy. “But talk about damp, we stayed under the woods, up here [at Akutan] we see the sun every day, nothing blocks the [sun] because there are no trees up here.”<sup>11</sup>

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7 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, July 31, 1942:2.

8 Chercasen, Dorofey, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

9 “Aleut Camp at Ward Cove Causes Much Discussion at Meeting of City Council,” *The Alaska Fishing News*, May 21, 1943.

10 Quoted in Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 105.

11 Luke Shelikoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 182-188.

“The only things they gave us,” recalled Bill Ermeloff, “were a small camp wood burning stove, a few pieces of cookware, pot skillet, some pieces of heavy china dishware and some eating utensils. No furniture of any sort was provided.”<sup>12</sup> People remembered the better cooking ware, dishes and tableware they had left behind.<sup>13</sup> Ten houses, 16 by 16 feet, were constructed for the smaller families. A skilled electrician from Akutan wired the buildings. The men “had accomplished a surprisingly great deal in a short time,” Fred Geesling told the local Rotary Club on September 11.<sup>14</sup> By October 2, according to the local newspaper, sixteen houses and quarters for the teacher had been built. Nothing could relieve the overcrowding, however. Feddie Yatchmenoff recalled that there were five in his small cabin, and Irene Makarin remarked that she and her parents had lived in a single room.<sup>15</sup> The laundry building, with its long tin basin with four cold water faucets, was the only building with running water. There were two shower stalls at one end. Water for homes was drawn from a hydrant located in Heritina Sovoroff’s house. Sanitation was inherently poor with a single large “outhouse” that Lavera Dushkin called “our village toilet.”

In it there was a long trough, with no seats whatsoever. It was open all the way across. There was always water running into it, to keep it somewhat fresh, I guess. We had to use commodes at home, and dump them in the toilet. All that stuff exposed was not sanitary nor healthy. It made bugs a problem.<sup>16</sup>

“There was not much to do at the camp after the cabins were built and we settled down,” recalled William Ermeloff, “if you could call it that. Some of our younger people organized games and dances.”<sup>17</sup> One Sunday, shortly after arriving, a group of young people walked the eight miles into town and back to see a movie. Elementary school was taught by Pauline Whitfield, while a few older students returned to the Wrangell Institute. George Gordaoff, having stayed in Wrangell on a building project, was ready to go to Ward Cove when he was sent to school in Juneau, where he found part-time employment. He remarked that the children who attended high school boarded away from the camp and this both lessened the crowded conditions and insured health care for those students.<sup>18</sup>

Men needed to find jobs because they were expected to support their own families. To get jobs they needed to find a way into Ketchikan and to use a telephone. The telephone installed in the school building at Ward Lake was off-limits, and there was no public transportation that covered the nine miles into town. Enter Eugene Wacker, a kind-hearted entrepreneur, who started a taxi run and charged 35 cents a ride. “He was a great help to us in finding jobs around

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12 Ermeloff, William, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

13 Dushkin, Lavera, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

14 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, September 11, 1942:6.

15 Feddie G. Yatchmenoff and Irene Makarin, Vol. VI, Depositions at Unalaska and Nikoliski.

16 Lavera Dushkin, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

17 Ermeloff, William. WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

18 Quoted in Arnold, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan*, 112.

Ketchikan,” recalled Leonty Sovoroff. Dorofey Chercasen added, “As soon as he knew of a job opening, he came to our camp to tell us about [it] and drove those who wanted the job into town. He then would also drive us back to the camp after work.” Shortly after starting his taxi service, Wacker and a passenger were on their way to town when, entering a sharp curve, they met an on-coming car with its lights on bright. Wacker swerved, his car rolled over, and his passenger exclaimed, “What the hell, Bill!” Fortunately, there were no injuries.<sup>19</sup> Wacker eventually bought a small bus, but even that was sometimes so crowded that teenagers would have to hold on to the fenders for the ride back to the camp.

“We owe a lot to the kindness of this dear man,” recalled Dorofey Chercasen. “The BIA nor other government agency provided us with transportation into town nor helped us with finding employment. Eugene Wacker did this for the three years we were at Ward Lake.... He would help bail our people from the city jail and then drove them home to the camp, or to their job.”

Men found employment at a variety of jobs. Leonty Sovoroff worked at the Ketchikan Cold Storage during the summer and for most of the winter. Occasionally, “a halibut head or two” could be brought home from the plant for food. Jobs were found at the Coast Guard station at Point Hagens. “The Creek Street Bridge was mostly constructed by Aleuts,” Leonty said. Twenty-six men traveled to Juneau to work for the Guy Atkinson Construction Company in the spring of 1943.<sup>20</sup> Sophie Kudrin, not to be outdone by men, found work as a housekeeper for several homes in Ketchikan. She lived in the town itself for three years.<sup>21</sup>

Eugene Wacker and his bus. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rasmuson Library Archives, T#7.



19 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, October 5, 1942:3.

20 *The Alaska Sportsman*, April 1943:17.

21 Hudson, ed., *Unuguluḥ Tunusangin*, 223.

A chapel was soon constructed. According to John Tcheripanoff, it was attached to the messhall, while Lavera Dushkin recalled it being in one of three larger buildings; the other two being the school and a laundry. It was furnished with icons taken from chapels at Akutan and Nikolski because, unlike the three villages, both of these villages had time to crate church belongings prior to the evacuation.<sup>22</sup> Services were conducted by readers, of which there was at least one from each village. Father M.A. Baranof, the priest from St. Paul, who took up residence in Juneau, visited periodically. In February 1943 he spoke before the Wrangell Rotary Club and said that the Aleuts found Southeastern weather severe compared with what they had been accustomed to in the Aleutians.<sup>23</sup>

Left to right: Vassa Kudrin, Eva Kudrin, John Tcheripanoff, and Sophie Kudrin [Pletnikoff] at Ward Lake. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

The church calendar with its cycle of services gave shape to the years. Easter and Christmas, of course, were the most important and elaborate occasions. There is a photograph showing a group of adults and children from Ward Lake with two Christmas stars. The caption says they were at the schoolhouse entertaining guests from the Ketchikan USO.

Part of the festivities of these innately musical people is the *a capella* singing, in Old Church Slavonic, Aleut, and English, of old Russian hymns. During the singing, the huge eight-pointed stars, with lighted candles in the center, are twirled constantly. The stars, hand-made and carefully decorated, are handed down from generation to generation, and are highly valued.<sup>24</sup>

One of the oddest newspaper articles that appeared after people arrival at Wrangell told how two women, Mrs. Frank S. Barnes and her daughter Doris Ann, went to the Institute to sell insurance. They were astonished by two things. First, that Unanga had money. Second, that the first things they wanted insured were their home chapels and the items left in them. "It seemed rather foolish to me," wrote Doris Ann, "for them to insure for money something that was priceless, like



22 Smith with Petrivelli, *A Sure Foundation*, 45.

23 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, February 17, 1943:3.

24 *The Alaska Sportsman*.

the art work—but who am I to stand in the way of a policy sale?” She went on, “They say the Aleuts have very beautiful services out here on Saturday nights, so mother and I think we may go some evening and hear the music.”<sup>25</sup>

Close proximity to Ketchikan provided employment possibilities not readily available to those in the other camps. It also made it easy for individuals to escape the camp by frequenting local bars and for bootleggers to sell alcohol in the camp itself. People who went into town and had a beer or two risked arrest. “Our people were put in jail and fined right and left,” recalled Dorofey Chercasen. “The Ketchikan City Police many times picked up us Aleuts for no reason. These were times when we would not even have had a single drink of liquor or beer. Other times were when we had some, but were not staggering nor drunk.” He concluded by remarking, “It was hard enough earning money to feed ourselves and our families without having it squeezed out of us by the law.”

Eva Borenin and her aunt Evdokia (Eva) Borenin at Wrangell Institute. Both died at Ward Lake and are buried at Ketchikan. National Archives.



There were cases of men arrested for domestic assault and battery after drinking sprees. The newspaper reported “drinking rampages” and “difficulties with soldiers.” As winter set in, alcohol abuse led to cases of exposure. Pauline Whitfield “was more or less the camp health aid,” according to Leonty Sovoroff. With minimal health care available, any illness—whether or not related to alcohol—became a serious threat. “We were not used to that weather down there,” said Luke Shelikoff. He blamed the high mortality rate on the dampness. “If they keep us on the dry camps probably we might be alright,” he said, “but where we stayed was swampy.”<sup>26</sup>

Ward Lake became, in Kohlhoff’s words, “the second deadliest camp in Southeast, behind Killisnoo” where the Atkans were housed.<sup>27</sup> In July or August, the two Eva Borenins from Makushin were photographed in front of a tent at Wrangell Institute. The photographer wanted youth and age. Both women were dead within nine months. Elia’s wife died in her early sixties; his niece was about sixteen. They were not the first from Ward Lake to die. That had been thirteen-year-old Timothy Bezezekoff of Nikolski on September 14, 1942. He had been ill with tuberculosis for almost a year. By the end of the year, three other Nikolski people had died. Three children and three adults followed in 1943. Eight died in 1944. The total deaths from Nikolski numbered at least eighteen.

25 *The Wrangell Sentinel*, September 11, 1942:6.

26 Luke Shelikoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 184.

27 Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 128.



Akutan fared better, but Mark Petikoff's wife, Sophie, died in November 1942. Astonishingly, the Biorka people survived with no deaths, even though both Peter and Molly Lukanin were hospitalized for tuberculosis and each lost a lung.

The three elders of Kashega died within a year. Laressa "Susie" Yatchmenoff, the widow of the former chief, was first, dying in early April 1943. At the height of summer, in mid-August, Nikifer Denisoff passed away, the oldest of the Ward Cove evacuees. Efemia Kudrin, crippled with arthritis, survived until the beginning of May 1944.

Carl Borenin died in October 1944, not long after marrying Anna Mensoff of Akutan. Stricken with tuberculosis, Peter and Nellie Yatchmenoff were sent to the sanitarium in Sitka. They survived the evacuation, but Peter died in June 1947 and Nellie followed two years later. Each was interred in a bunker mausoleum reserved for TB victims, and their children were adopted by non-Native families.

Although Pete and Tatiana Olsen had secured permission to live in Wrangell almost as soon as they arrived, their son John was unable to escape the scourge of tuberculosis. He was sent to the Laurel Beach Sanitarium in Seattle where he died March 18, 1944. Pete Olsen traveled to Seattle and brought his body back for burial.

Irene Ermeloff of Biorka was a year younger than Irene Sovoroff of Nikolski, and they became friends at the camp. In May 1944 Irene Sovoroff sent for Nick Galaktionoff who was with the Unalaska people at Burnett Inlett. They had been romantically involved and she was pregnant with their child. Nick, now nineteen, had difficulty finding transportation, but he hitched a ride on the mailboat to Ketchikan. He arrived on May 29 and made his way to the camp where Irene Ermeloff met him. "I know you're looking for something," she said. After a while she added, "She's gone." Irene Sovoroff had died in childbirth and been buried with her infant four days earlier. Four years later, Nick would marry the other Irene. "Maybe that's what I was after," he said, "why I went there."<sup>28</sup>

By May 1943 the mortality rate at the "Aleut colony" was noticeably high and was used as one of the arguments employed by some in Ketchikan to have the camp closed and the residents removed as a threat to public health. Or, if that were not possible, then to have the government construct a Native hospital in a nearby community. On May 19 Harry G. McCain, "Chairman on Police, Health, and Sanitation," wrote a virulent letter to Governor Ernest Gruening. He castigated the people as rotten with gonorrhea and syphilis, honeycombed with tuberculosis, unsanitary, diseased, and obnoxious. "Even the wild animals, such as deer, fall under their scourge." He recommended isolating them or moving them to "a dead town" where they would no longer menace "established communities of white people."<sup>29</sup> Three days later he

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28 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 184-185.

29 Harry G. McCain to Governor Ernest Gruening, May 19, 1943. *The Relocation and Internment of the Aleuts During World War II, Vol. III—Conditions at the Camps*. 1981:73-75.

wrote again, moderating his tone, but the damage had been done. At a city council meeting the next day, McCain made a motion to ask the governor “to either provide proper medical attention for the Aleuts at Ward Cove or endeavor to have them moved to another location.” Only one councilman voted against it. A letter was sent to Gruening.

The local paper briefly summarized comments by those present at the meeting, most of whom supported the refugees. Eugene Wacker was characteristically blunt and accused the council of using “high-handed proceedings” to kick the Aleuts out of their homes. Pauline Whitfield, Rev. George Beck, and Captain F.A. Zeusler all spoke of the deplorable conditions the refugees had faced and how dramatically living conditions in the camp differed from their homes in the Aleutians. Among those who expressed support was Hugh McGlashan of Akutan. This was Hugh Julian McGlashan, eldest son of the original McGlashan. On his way to Seattle for his first visit since 1909, he was traveling with his son Nick and his granddaughter Helen. He deplored the haste with which the people had been evacuated and said he was hurt when he read in the local paper that they were “a menace.” A longer article a few days later quoted him as saying “there were no finer citizens any place than the Aleuts; that honest and thriftiness was ingrained in them and that no Aleut ever went back on his word.”<sup>30</sup>

The paper also carried a letter from Mark Petikoff, the chief of Akutan and recognized leader of the Ward Lake residents. “Many of our men are already in the armed forces,” he wrote.

Others are employed in and around Ketchikan and buying their share of war bonds. We did not come to Ward Cove of our own will, but fell in readily with war plans of those over us, and we now demand the same treatment as any other group of citizens, and are not asking any special favors.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the impending invasion of Attu in 1943, the fur seal harvest in the Pribilofs became a priority for the Fish and Wildlife Service. A crew of 151 men assembled at Funter Bay on May 6, 1943, including men from Ward Cove. Once on the Pribilof Islands, the crew was expanded by nine St. Paul men who had been serving in the army. The seal harvest was the largest on record. George Gordaoff of Kashega had joined the army by this time and he was sent to Attu, arriving after the May 1943 battle was over but in time to be sent out with a team to find and bury the decomposing bodies of dead Japanese soldiers.<sup>32</sup> George Kudrin also served in the Aleutians.

The workers sent to the Pribilof Islands returned to southeast Alaska, and by the spring of 1944 arrangements had been made for the St. Paul and St. George

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30 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, June 7, 1943:3.

31 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, May 21, 1943:5.

32 Quoted in Arnold, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan*, 112-113.

people to return home. They left Funter Bay on May 4 aboard the army transport ship *William L. Thompson* along with men from the other camps again hired as temporary workers. From the three villages the men included Carl Borenin, Sergie Borenin, Cornelius Kudrin, Sergie Kudrin, George Borenin, Nick Borenin, Akenfa Ermeloff, Mike Kudrin, Peter Lukanin, and Willie Yatchmenoff.<sup>33</sup> Akenfa or “Candy” Ermeloff, a son of Alex Ermeloff, was not originally listed among the evacuees, but he had joined his family by this time.

That same spring, pollution was discovered seeping into Ward Lake, halting recreational swimming for Ketchikan residents. The pollution was blamed on overcrowding at the camp where 142 residents used sanitation facilities designed for not more than 65. To help correct this situation, according to Kohlhoff, 46 people from Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin were sent to Burnett Inlet in late May. Kohlhoff does not say whether they volunteered to leave or were selected for removal. Nor does he comment on the impact so many arrivals had on an already crowded Burnett Inlet. This was, he wrote, “the only action of its kind in the whole [evacuation] episode.”<sup>34</sup> The source for this transfer, a report submitted to Governor Gruening, is rife with errors and ambiguity.<sup>35</sup> A non-existent Peter Dirks is said to be the former chief of Atka. Charles and Alice Hope of Unalaska are said to be “one of the most influential couples in the Nikolski community” while William Zaharoff, chief of Unalaska, and Anfesia Shapsnikoff, also of Unalaska, are identified as Nikolski leaders. The letter gives no date for the transfer from Ward Lake to Burnett; in fact, it implies that in the case of Kashega this may have been done at the time of the evacuation.

The collected testimony from Burnett Inlet evacuees never mentioned this arrival of people from the three villages. Recent direct inquiries produced no memories of the event. In fact, when Mary Diakanoff was asked if Andrew Makarin had moved into Burnett, she emphatically answered, “No.” Andrew was well-known and an important leader in the church. His arrival would have made an impression. I suspect that the letter sent to Gruening was either a case of a proposed plan that was never carried out, or, more simply, a case of an overworked official confusing facts and allowing his ignorance to masquerade as fact.



George Gordaoff.  
Photograph courtesy  
Mary Diakanoff.

33 NARA, Pribilof Islands Logbooks, 1870-1961, St. Paul, Funter, Alaska. April 28, 1944.

34 Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 130.

35 George A. Dale to Governor Ernest Gruening. May 13, 1944. Alaska State Archives. RG 101, box 571.

APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO ENTER ZONE B OF THE  
TERRITORY OF ALASKA

I submit the following as an indorsement for the issuance of this permit:

1. Name (Print or Type) Alice Mary Moller  
 (First) (Middle, in Full) (Last)  
 Permanent address Unalaska Alaska  
 (Number) (Street) (City) (State)  
 Also known as (or registered under Selective Service as): Alice Mary Danisoff  
 (female applicants give maiden name also)

2. I will be accompanied by the following children under 16 years of age: 4

3. Citizen or subject of United States Alien Reg. No. ....  
 (Name of Country)  
 Naturalization Cert. No. .... Place: .... Country of former citizenship: .....

4. Father's name John Danisoff Alut-Quas Kashega, Alaska  
 (Full Name) (Nationality-Descent) (Place of Birth)  
 5. Mother's first and maiden name Peckla Danisoff Alut-Quas Cashoon, Ala  
 (Name) (Nationality-Descent) (Place of Birth)

6. Domestic Status: Single  Married  Widowed  Divorced  Separated   
 Husband's name or wife's maiden name Carl Moller Unalaska  
 (Name) (No., Street) (City) (State) (Husband's Employer)  
 IF husband or any other member of the immediate family is stationed in Alaska as a member of the armed forces, give his name, rank, and mailing address: .....

7. I intend to enter Zone B of Alaska at Unalaska for the following reasons: Resident  
 Employed by: Resident (City or Region) Alaska

8. Past Major Occupation: None from None to None  
 (Occupation) (Date) (Date)  
 (Employer) Female (Employer's address, City, State)

9. Selective Service Board No. .... at None (City) (State)  
 Residence given in Registration: None (Street) (City) (State)  
 Classification: None Order No. .... Social Security No. 578-3445-01



Sex Female Age 12 Date of Birth Feb. 6, 1932  
 Place of Birth Alaska (City) (State) (County)  
 Race Alut Nationality Alut-Quas  
 Height 4'11" Complexion Fair Hair Blond  
 Weight 75 Eyes Blue Build Slender  
 Scars and marks: None  
 The undersigned declares: I am the applicant named herein. I am not a person whose entrance into Alaska is prohibited by Par. 2 of the Regulations and Instructions stated on the reverse side of this application. I further declare that this application has been fully examined and is understood by me, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is a true and correct statement of facts. I further understand that I am subject to the penalties as provided by the laws of the United States of America for making a false statement of facts in this application.  
Alice M Moller  
 (Signature of applicant)



This application was signed in the presence of and witnessed by the undersigned authorized representative of the Commanding General, Alaskan Department.

OFFICIAL - ZONE B ALASKA TRAVEL CONTROL  
 (Signature of authorized representative)  
 At Burnett Falls  
 (Rank and Title)

PERMIT TO ENTER ZONE B OF ALASKA  
 (Subject to regulations and instructions on the back hereof)

Applicant above-named is authorized to enter Alaska for the reasons set out in paragraph 7 hereof. When properly indorsed, this permit will be valid for travel within or departure from Zone B of Alaska.  
 Date 23 March, 1945  
 (This permit not valid unless it bears the seal of Alaskan Travel Control and signature of an authorized representative of the Commanding General, Alaskan Department.)

By authority of the COMMANDING GENERAL  
 Alaskan Department  
 ALASKA TRAVEL CONTROL  
Nicholas V. Moller  
 NICHOLAS V. MOLLER (Officer in Charge)  
 7/62 Alaska Travel Control

Alice Moller's permit to return to Unalaska. Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.

Back in the Aleutians, the war had entered a holding pattern. The Aleutian Campaign officially lasted from June 10, 1942, to August 15, 1943, during which approximately one thousand men had died or were missing in action. The combined American and Canadian force had numbered 144,000 at its peak.<sup>36</sup> Attu had been retaken at the cost of practically all its Japanese defenders; the Japanese force on Kiska had escaped what their government called “an honorable death” by slipping away while the island was shrouded in fog. For the thousands of U.S. troops stationed across the Chain, the months dragged on. “All we did on Umnak was wait,” one soldier remembered. “Nothing ever happened. Our only enemy was the weather.”<sup>37</sup>

At Unalaska, the non-Native city council continued wrangling over liquor licenses and electrical power, while making and warding off personal attacks. Harry Jacobsen, who voted in the city election on April 4, died on September 2, 1944, of cerebral thrombosis and pneumonia. He was 74 and was survived by a niece in Seattle. No minutes exist for council meetings between 1944 and 1947. A school board, however, was organized in June 1944, with the expectation that families would be returning soon.

Slowly and gradually, the evacuation that had been done with such haste was undone. Repatriating the Chain was more complex than the relatively easy return of people to St. Paul and St. George. There were bureaucratic delays, but by the end of February 1945 plans were ready. In March the residents of Ward Lake, Burnett Inlet, and Killisnoo were photographed, fingerprinted and issued travel permits that allowed entry into Zone B of the Territory of Alaska. Alice Moller’s permit named her father, John Denisoff of Kashega, and her mother, Feckla Burenin of Chernofski. She would accompany four children under 16 years of age and enter Zone B at Unalaska. She was married, a housewife, a resident, a female, an Aleut. After pressing her inked right thumb to the form, she signed the paper on March 23, 1945.<sup>38</sup>



*Blueberry Rain* (Alice Moller’s House, Unalaska).

Before long, the buildings at Ward Lake were torn down and the lumber given to Saxman village near Ketchikan. On Sunday, April 15, the army transport *David S. Branch* began boarding passengers at the Ketchikan dock. Mark Petikoff, the Akutan chief, had been hospitalized in Ketchikan with pneumonia. He was brought to the ship by a doctor and a nurse and immediately taken to the ship’s infirmary where he was made comfortable just before the ship pulled anchor and departed. The residents of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin were heading home.

36 Cloe, *The Aleutian Warriors*, 321.

37 Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Five*, 136.

38 Copy provided by AB Rankin, July 2009.



George Borenin at Kashega holding a kamleika. University of Alaska Anchorage, Ted Bank Collection, circa 1954.