

Chapter 18 The Return



The most dramatic account of the voyage back to the islands appears in a letter Marion V. Benedict wrote.¹ She was a “special assistant” assigned to Akutan; that is, she was the village school-teacher. Just as the *Branch* was about to sail on April 15, George Dushkin approached her and her husband and requested a telegram be sent to the administrator of the church in Sitka, Archimandrite John Zlobin, to pray for them while they traveled.² Benedict was impressed by this request. “Did I ever tell you,” she wrote, “these are the nicest people we have ever worked with? They had burned their altar from the church at Ward Lake and were taking the ashes with them to be buried under the church in their own village.”

As a matter of fact, Zlobin had written to Anfesia Shapsnikoff at Burnett Inlet on April 9. “Also I calling on you and your children,” he wrote in halting English, “Bless of God befor you move from Burnett Inlet and during you move from Burnett all way till you come to Unalaska, let God and Mother of God help you and save you....”³ In a postscript he sent a blessing to the church committee and to the entire congregation.

Despite the illness of Chief Mark Petikoff, joy pervaded the ship as it pulled away from Ketchikan. Children flooded the decks and explored every cabin and corner, to the alarm of the captain who soon arranged to have certain areas made off limits. Unanga assisted preparing and serving meals and helping with other chores. When the *Branch* arrived at Burnett Inlet about 7 a.m. Monday morning, the Coast Guard began transporting people out to the vessel. A coffin

1 Copy from Jeff Dickrell. NARA, RG 75. Marion V. Benedict to Don Foster, June 15, 1945.

2 Kohloff wrote that April 15, 1945, was Easter Sunday. However, Orthodox Easter 1945 fell on May 5 (or April 23 in the Julian calendar). Western Easter fell on April 1.

3 Archimandrite John Zlobin to Anfesia Shapsnikoff, April 9, 1945. Anfesia Shapsnikoff collection.

with the body of Martha Newell was lifted aboard for its journey home. Benedict noted that a few people carried small trees, their roots carefully wrapped. That evening was filled with songs, from *The Old Rugged Cross* to *Don't Fence Me In*.

Tuesday at Killisnoo, the Atkans joined the passengers. In the evening the movie *Little Old New York* was shown, and by noon the next day the *Branch* was on the open sea. Blackouts were enforced at night; smoking was not allowed on deck. That night “we heard that Ernie Pyle had been killed,” Benedict wrote. “Then we remembered for a little while that we were at war.” The rough waters sent a few to bed with seasickness. For Philemon Tutiakoff and others, the death of President Roosevelt on April 12 still weighed heavily.⁴

On Saturday they entered the Bering Sea. People “hung over the rail looking for the first glimpse of Akutan, which was the first village we would come to,” she wrote. “We felt their excitement as they sighted Akutan Island.” The church came into view as they entered the bay. A crew of men went ashore first, followed soon afterwards by the Akutan people along with those from Makushin, Biorka, and Kashega. It had been decided that people from the three villages would not return to their home villages—at least not immediately. Crates and boxes of belongings were “piled helter-skelter all over the beach.” The weather all day Saturday was “lovely and sunny” and the homecoming should have been joyous. As people entered their homes, however, they saw the ravages delivered by three years without care or maintenance. Compounding this was the theft of personal property. After church services on Sunday, the *Branch* left the harbor about 1:15 in the afternoon. Mark Petikoff was still aboard as it had been decided he should go to Unalaska for medical attention. The people at Unalaska would find even greater looting and destruction. The Atkans would find ashes.

Over the next few days and weeks, the Akutan people scrambled to repair their homes. The supplies that had been brought were quickly used up as was anything serviceable found on the beach. On May 23 word arrived from the military hospital at Dutch Harbor that Mark Petikoff had died from heart disease and pneumonia. His body was brought home for burial.

Official reports are silent about the families from the three villages. Where did they live? How did those who remained at Akutan integrate into the community? Elia Borenin, the chief and starosta of Makushin, survived the war and in 1945 he was nearing fifty-five. Having served in the choir at Ward Cove, he chose to remain where he could participate in services at the Chapel of St. Alexander Nevsky.⁵ Its modest size reminded him of the Chapel of the Nativity waiting with its icons and furnishings at Makushin. He preferred Akutan to Unalaska, still swollen with a military presence. Two new homes were constructed and one of

4 Tutiakoff in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish One*, 55.

5 Lydia Borenin Vincler, conversation with Ray Hudson, August 29, 2012.

these was for Elia and his two adopted sons, Nick and Akenfa (Matfey).⁶ Akenfa would not live long and he died at sixteen. Nick Borenin and Marie Petikoff traveled to Unalaska to be married. Their family became an integral part of Akutan. The boys' younger sister, Matrona, had returned with them from Ward Lake but, ill with tuberculosis, she was soon sent to the sanitarium in Sitka. Once cured, she stayed in Southeast to attend school. She eventually married Vincent Abloogalook of Nome and settled in that region.



Makushin after the war.
Alice Moller Collection,
courtesy AB Rankin.

Of the residents of Makushin who had left the village before the war, some—the Lekanoffs and Galaktionoffs—returned to Unalaska while a few remained in Southeast. The lives of the three widows of 1937 varied greatly. Natalia Borenin had succumbed to tuberculosis in 1941. Parascovia “Polly” Galaktionoff had married Innokentii Borenin in 1938 and become part of the Unalaska evacuation. She died in Juneau shortly after people returned from Southeast. After Valentina “Tina” Borenin was widowed, her son Ignaty had been adopted by her brother and his wife, John and Angelina Hapoff, in St. Paul. Valentina married Simeon Petikoff (originally from Makushin) at Unalaska in 1938. This marriage did not last and when the war began and the *Delarof* arrived at Dutch Harbor with her relatives from St. Paul, she went aboard. She remained with them at Funter Bay for only a short time before moving to Burnett Inlet with the Unalaska people. After the war she settled at St. Paul where she died in 1989 at the age of 74.

Tatiana and Pete Olsen remained in Wrangell where she died from burns in a house fire in November 1948. He became “a familiar Wrangell personage” and

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

died from coronary thrombosis in February 1954.⁷ Neither ever returned to the Aleutians nor was Olsen able to secure compensation for his lost sheep ranch.

The residents of Kashega were scattered. Peter and Nellie Yatchmenoff were terminally ill with tuberculosis and died in 1947 and 1949 while still at the sanitarium in Sitka. Not long after arriving at Akutan, George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin made their way to Unalaska. It was closer to Kashega and they had dreams of reestablishing the village. But younger families would be needed if resettlement were to succeed and the younger generation saw possibilities elsewhere. George Gordaoff was serving in the military. This would lead to a maritime career after he married and settled in Cordova. The children of Efemia Kudrin remained in Akutan and were soon woven into the fiber of that community. According to Olga Kudrin, who married John Mensoff, Sr., her family intended to go to Nikolski when they learned they couldn't return to Kashega, but her "brother Mike signed us up for Akutan"⁸ George Kudrin arrived in Akutan two years after the resettlement because he served in the army until May 1947. In 1952, while fishing on the west side of Unalaska, he visited Kashega. The church with all its icons and furnishings was still in good condition.⁹ He married Anesia Mensoff but his two brothers—Sergie and Michael—remained single. Michael spent several years in Southeast Alaska before returning to Akutan for his final years. Peter Kudrin, now divorced, never remarried. Carl Borenin had also married during the evacuation—to Anna Mensoff of Akutan—but he had died in October 1944 and she returned to Akutan alone. Sophie Kudrin stayed at Akutan only a month or two before she went to Unalaska to find work. That same summer her daughter Eva married John Tcheripanoff of Akutan but they began spending more and more time near Sophie, settling for good at Unalaska in 1957. Sergie Borenin, the somewhat elusive resident of Kashega, had married Kleopatra (Clara) Kochutin of St. Paul Island and, if he returned to the islands, it was not for long.

George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin eventually returned to Kashega. At first, they merely visited, inspected buildings, and made certain that the church was secure.¹⁰ Based on the December 13, 1948, entry in the diary of Milt Holmes, supplied by Cora Holmes, the two men had established permanent residence by 1948. In 1954 Ted P. Bank II from the University of Michigan made an archaeological reconnaissance of western Unalaska Island. In mid-August he and his crew visited Makushin. "The tattered, rain-soaked wooden buildings," he wrote, "including the old Russian church, stood in the gathering fog like specters out of the past, the wind whistling through them—an eerie Aleutian ghost town." As they approached Kashega the next evening, they expected to find the same desolation. Out from among "the ramshackle buildings of Kashega village," however, came George Borenin to meet them. "To our surprise, as we pulled in to the cobble beach," he wrote, "an Aleut stepped from the shadows and directed us

7 Information from Pat Roppel and Rachel Mason, e-mail September 1, 2012.

8 Olga Mensoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 181.

9 George Kudrin in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 175.

10 Walter Dyakanoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 9, 2004.

to a good anchorage.” Borenin helped the anthropologist in other ways, describing Split Rock where mummies had been found in 1928 and showing him the locations of ten village sites, including three of good size.



George Borenin visiting Carl Moller at Unalaska, 1946. Photograph courtesy Ray Hudson.

George Borenin... was waiting hopefully, with almost child-like faith, for the day when people would return and live in the empty, ghostly houses he watched over. As we got to know George better in the days that followed, we discovered that he was a remarkably brave and deeply religious person. Even if people didn't return to Kashega, he had decided to remain so that the small community church would be cared for. Once a week, on Saturdays, he held services with only the wind to join him in chanting the liturgy and only the shadows as congregation. He confided to us that one fear plagued his mind, that of dying alone where no one would find him and no one would bury him.¹¹

Bank photographed the last chief in the church and before a large radio that he used to communicate with Dutch Harbor. By 1956, after living alone for some time, he was joined by Cornelius Kudrin.¹² According to Alfred Stepetin, the two men used earnings from the Pribilofs to buy needed supplies and materials.¹³ Popular rumor had it that a feud developed between them and that each would row his own dory out to the mailboat when it arrived. Cornelius returned to

11 Bank, "The Past Ages of Unalaska," 36.

12 *The Mailboat Monitor*, September 1956.

13 Stepetin, Alfred. January 21, 1988. Elders in Residence Program Collection. Oral History Collection of the Alaska and Polar Regions Department. Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Unalaska first, settling in a small house the Kudrins provided. He died in April 1964. During one of his trips to Unalaska, George fell ill and was sent to the Alaska Native Hospital in Anchorage.¹⁴ He returned, but failing health gradually forced him to move to Unalaska permanently. Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell gave him the use of a small cabin across the street from where his niece Eva Tcheripanoff lived. The church was now clearly in danger of being plundered by fishermen. Father Basil Nagoski had arrived at Unalaska in October 1960 as the first permanent priest since the war. He was energetic, systematic, and deeply devoted to the people. He arranged to visit Kashega where he collected the chapel's icons and placed them in the Church of the Holy Ascension. In February 1965 George Borenin again entered the Anchorage hospital. He died there on June 8 and was buried at Unalaska.

George Borenin inside the Kashega chapel. photograph by Ted P. Bank II, uaa-hmc-0068-series16-f7-12 Bank.



14 *The Mailboat Monitor*, November 1956.

In the early 1980s John Moller, a grandson of Alice Moller, stopped at Kashega while fishing on the *Shellfish*. The church had collapsed and the cupola was lying in the high grass. “I rolled it down the beach, towed it to the fishing boat,” he wrote. He and his crew “lifted it aboard with the crane. You should of seen the *Shellfish* coming into Unalaska Bay with this big cross standing with authority on the bow.”¹⁵

It is possible to date the resettlement of Biorka to the summer or fall of 1945. Marion and Harry Benedict opened school at Akutan on September 4. They had nine boys and nine girls identified as Aleut along with three who were listed as white (Nick McGlashan, Helen McGlashan Gilbert, and Axel Svenson). By the end of May when the term ended, three of the students had withdrawn. Margaret Yatchmenoff, age 12, Fedey Yatchmenoff, age 13, and Irene Makarin, age 14, had “moved to Biorka.”¹⁶

Having seen the condition of homes at Akutan, the Biorka people must have worried about their own village. They had cause to expect the worst. In late summer 1944, Simeon Oliver had joined two geologists on Sedanka. His book *Son of the Smoky Sea*, about being raised at Unalaska in the Jesse Lee Home, had been published the year before. “The little village was a sorrowful sight to me,” he wrote in a sequel, *Back to the Smoky Sea*, “for the natives had been evacuated and the houses stood broken and empty with indications of having been ransacked. The church was intact and had been boarded up.”



The little native village there was a picture of desolation. When the natives were suddenly evacuated they left many of their goods behind. Their looted houses were almost lost in two seasons’ growth of petrusky and the long, coarse grasses that were reclaiming the village to the wilderness. The island was swarming with foxes that had been planted there in peace-time and had not been trapped since the war began. They had eaten everything imaginable, even the hide coverings of the bidarkis, which lay like skeletons on the beach. The foxes had made themselves at home in the deserted houses, tearing up furniture and beds in their voracious search, breaking open the pillows and scattering feathers everywhere. Biorka won’t be a nice place for my Aleut friends to come home to.¹⁷

Icon from the Kashega Chapel iconostasis. This icon can be seen *in situ* in photograph on preceding page between the holy doors. National Park Service.

15 John Moller, e-mail to Ray Hudson, December 22, 2011. The cupola was placed inside the churchyard. Plans to enclose it in a small memorial were never finalized and it eventually made its way to the city landfill.

16 NARA RG 75. School Census of Indian Children, Akutan, Alaska, May 23, 1942.

17 Nutchuk, *Back to the Smoky Sea*, 216-217.

George Borenin at his table in Kashega. Photograph by Ted P. Bank II, courtesy Ray Hudson.



Nevertheless, it was home, and the Biorka people were determined to re-establish it. As with so much of the story about these three villages, Nick Galaktionoff is our primary source. He told how Andrew Makarin and Alex Ermeloff took a dory from Akutan to Biorka. After making an inspection of the village, they crossed to Ugadaga, hiked into Unalaska, and stayed with Andrew's brother, Elia. They approached Verne Robinson, the U.S. deputy marshal. Verne, in turn, went to see a military official who promised a power barge. Andrew and Alex returned to Akutan—only after stopping at the Unalga Island outpost to explain who they were. The barge eventually arrived and took the people with their few possessions to Sedanka Island. Once set ashore, Nick said, they were pretty much forgotten.

“There was no help, nothing, no lumber, no groceries,” Nick said.¹⁸

And, he might have added, no real knowledge of conditions on the part of government employees. An example of this is found in a letter George A. Dale, the director of education for the Alaska Native Service, wrote to Ted Bank II in 1948. “It happened that I participated in the planning and carrying out of the rehabilitation of these people in the Islands,” he began, “and I can now advise that there are now communities of Aleuts at Atka, Nikolski, Unalaska, and Akutan.” So far, so good; but then he added a sentence with no basis in fact: “There are smaller groups and scattered families at such locations as Makushin, Kashega, Biorka, Chernofski and other points west of Unalaska.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Nick Galaktionoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 3, 1993.

¹⁹ George A. Dale to Ted Bank II, May 28, 1948. Archives and Special Collections Department, University of Alaska Anchorage, Theodore Paul Bank, II, Papers. HMC-0068, Series 2, Folder 3.

Andrew traveled to Unalaska again, probably after the decommissioning of the Unalga outpost, and received permission to salvage lumber from the island. He tried to persuade Paul and Alice Tutiakoff to move to the smaller village, but they remained at Unalaska. Using the material from Unalga, people further strengthened and repaired their homes. A new house was constructed for Peter and Molly Lukanin. The next summer, when the men traveled to St. Paul to work in the seal harvest, the women and children came to Unalaska. After sealing was over, the families returned to Biorka. That winter, with one of the heaviest snowfalls in memory, the men trapped cross and silver fox for which they received between \$30 and \$40 each.

On April 1, 1946, Nick was at Ugadaga Bay with Ruff Ermeloff, Andrew Makarin, William “Coco” Yatchmenoff, and Akenfa “Candy” Ermeloff.²⁰ They were collecting coal that had been left behind by the military. The tide came in and went out several times. When their dory was left high and dry, the men rushed to load the coal before the tide returned. Nick was puzzled, but Ruff knew what was going on and just kept laughing. An earthquake, now measured at a magnitude of 8.6, had struck south of Unimak Island, generating a tsunami that wiped away the Scotch Cap Lighthouse, killing the five attendants. It then traveled south to do extensive damage in the Hawaiian Islands and along the Pacific Coast. When the men returned to Biorka, “it was like something had been pounding the houses,” Nick said. Later he hiked over to the Pacific side of Sedanka Island and found logs 100 to 150 feet up in the hills. At least two sand spits had vanished.²¹

In 1947 Irene Makarin married William Yatchmenoff. It was an arranged marriage that took the concerted efforts of the entire village to complete; and, despite Irene’s objections and delays, it lasted many years.²² By the time Biorka was resettled, Peter and Molly Lukanin’s son Moses had been adopted into the extended Makarin family. With both Peter and Molly undergoing treatment for tuberculosis while in Southeast Alaska, it became impossible for them to care for their son. Elia and Agrafina Makarin were prepared to adopt him, but when it came time to formally sign the papers, Agrafina could not write her name. Her daughter, Myria, stepped in, signed the papers, and became Moses’ adoptive mother. His first memory of meeting his birth parents was when he was thirteen.²³



Cornelius Kudrin (left) and George Borenin at Chernofski ranch. ASL H. D. Catron Collection, Cap160-08.

20 “Candy” Ermeloff died June 3, 1951, at Unalaska, at the age of 39. He had been married to Kathryn Yatchmenoff [Tutiakoff], daughter of Helen Golley and John Yatchmenoff II of Kashega. Murray, *Mini-biographies*.

21 Nick Galaktionoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 3, 1993.

22 Irene Makarin in *The Beginning of Memory*, 197-198.

23 Moses Gordieff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 206-207.

Nick Galaktionoff spent three years at Biorka after the war. In 1948 he married Irene Ermeloff. Although this marriage was not arranged, he had to ask Alex Ermeloff's permission.²⁴ Their first child, a son, did not live long and was



Moses Gordieff at a bentwood hat workshop at Camp Qungaayux̄. Photograph by David Gregory.

buried at Biorka.²⁵ Nick preferred life in the village over life at Unalaska. The people at Biorka, he said, didn't make much money, but they got by all right.²⁶ One summer he chose to forego sealing at St. Paul and instead helped catch, dry, salt, and smoke fish that was then brought to Unalaska for sale to troops who were still at the base. Anna Jean Bereskin, Irene and William Yatchmenoff's eldest daughter, remembered playing on the beach at Biorka with her younger sister Kathy, whom she pestered. She recalled looking up and seeing the gray houses standing nearby. She also remembered the hike from Ugadaga Bay into Unalaska. She recalled the steep climb and how she, her sister Kathy, and Johnny Ermeloff would play along the way. "I guess because we knew how long the trail was," she wrote.²⁷

Undoubtedly this hike was one of the deciding factors when people weighed the pros and cons of living at Biorka. The military had used the trail during the war as a route to the outpost just outside Ugadaga Bay. They had run a communications line along it. After the war, the route from the bay to the summit still followed a narrow winding trail, but the hike down into town was now on one of the roads that veined Unalaska Valley.

Nick Galaktionoff recalled that George Yatchmenoff, William's father, was the first Biorka resident to move permanently to Unalaska. "He came here and found a house right away," Nick said. "He didn't even tell Andrew he was moving, but went back to Biorka and got his wife and children and came here."²⁸ George was followed by Alex Ermeloff. "Alex said that if he were younger he could do this," Nick said, referring to the arduous difficulty of supplying food to the village. "But as he was now older, it was too hard.... Then, too, if you had children and they became sick, there was no one who could treat them." About a year later, Alex's son, Ruff Ermeloff, moved to Unalaska and finally Peter and Molly Lukanin came. There was never a school at Biorka. Even at Unalaska, where the population was much larger, staffing the school after the war was difficult.

Not long after people began moving away, Biorka was hit by a storm that destroyed some of the houses and weakened the church. This was likely the storm that struck on March 10, 1952. John Fletcher of Unalaska wrote that it was the most violent one he had seen in over twenty-five years. People watched

24 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 125. Irene Galaktionoff died in 1967.

25 Murray, Mini-biographies.

26 Nick Galaktionoff, recorded April 7, 1976.

27 Anna Jean Bereskin, e-mail to Ray Hudson, March 3, 2012.

28 Galaktionoff, Nick, "Memories of Biorka," in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 63.

cabanas “turning over and over, then falling apart and blowing completely off the island and into the sea.” Fletcher wrote that, “the wind tower at the Dutch Harbor air weather station across the bay was torn off when the blow reached 140 m.p.h., so the top speed remains a mystery.” The upper end of Unalaska Valley—that is, the area where the pass leads down to Ugadaga Bay, “was minus 21 buildings by actual count after the storm. In some instances the ground was completely cleared down to bare earth.”²⁹ Another observer noted, “Hundreds of buildings were blown off their foundations or collapsed.”³⁰

When Biorka people made a trip back to Sedanka, they found that wind had damaged the church and blown gravel up to the level of the windows.³¹ The Lukanins’ new home had been lifted off the ground, hurled across the bank and into the sea. Half of George Yatchmenoff’s home—actually more of a duplex—was in the bay while a good part of the Makarin home was destroyed. Only Alex and Ruff Ermeloff’s homes were intact. There would be no resettlement.

Although the former residents of the three villages continued to identify with their home villages, they began a slow integration into the broader Unalaska community. This was reflected in their participation in the life of the Church of the Holy Ascension. Alex Ermeloff and Andrew Makarin joined a series of local people who read services in the absence of a priest. Nick Lekanoff, after an apprenticeship following his move to Unalaska before the war, became third starosta in 1948 and second starosta in 1952.³² When repairs were made on the church immediately after the war, Andrew Makarin played a significant role. According to Tracy Tutiakoff, when the roof and bell tower were repaired Andrew Makarin and William Dyakanoff gave directions from the ground below while younger men did the actual carpentry. When the cupola over the altar was replaced, Andrew Makarin cut the intricate pieces prior to their assembly.³³

Icons from the three village chapels eventually graced the walls of the Unalaska church. In the summer of 1945, Nick Lekanoff and other men had fished at Makushin; and, when the season was over, they brought icons from the chapel to Unalaska. An icon of the Resurrection above the Royal Doors in the main nave at Unalaska may have come from Biorka although most of the Biorka icons went to Dillingham after the church there burned.

At Unalaska (left to right): William Dyakanoff, Andrew Makarin, Father Baranoff, Philemon Tutiakoff, John Golodoff. Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.



29 Fletcher, John, “The Big Blow,” *The N.C. Company Flag*, Northern Commercial Company, June 1952.

30 *Totem Telegraph*, August 1952:2.

31 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 131-132.

32 Nick Lekanoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1039.

33 Tracy Tutiakoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1053.

Six small icons from Kashega now reside on the iconostas in the St. Innokentii Chapel, one of two side chapels in the Church of the Holy Ascension. More Kashega icons adorn the walls of this church.³⁴

A real and personal property list prepared in January 1954 by E.E. Hortman, the Unalaska city assessor, listed several former residents of the three villages. A subsequent list two years later reflected how thoroughly these villagers had settled into Unalaska. From Biorka, the people included Feddie Yatchmenoff, William and Irene Yatchmenoff, Nick and Irene Galaktionoff, and Molly Lukanin. Although neither Andrew and Eustina Makarin nor Alex Ermeloff were included in the 1956 list, they were also now at Unalaska. The Makarins lived with Coco and Irene Yatchmenoff and their growing family. Andrew's grandchildren called him Kia.³⁵



A calendar painting of the Church of the Holy Ascension given by George Borenin to Ray Hudson, 1965. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

In addition to the Biorka families, the 1956 assessor's list included Sergie Borenin, Peter and Augusta Galaktionoff, Mike and Dora Kudrin, Arthur Lekanoff, Constantine and Helen Lekanoff, Maria Lekanoff, Nick Lekanoff, Timonty Lekanoff, Molly Lukanin, and Sophie Pletnikoff. (Sophie Kudrin had married Simeon Pletnikoff on December 28, 1949. She was forty; he was ten years her junior. It was one of the shortest marriages on record, and all she kept from the marriage was his name.) Several of these families were provided housing by subdividing a large parcel on the eastern end of the village into eleven "undeeded" lots. Cabanas were hauled down from abandoned military enclaves

³⁴ Nick Lekanoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1058.

³⁵ Anna Jean Bereskin, e-mail to Ray Hudson, March 1, 2012.

and set up in two rows. Referred to as “New Town” these small dwellings became homes for people from Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. Eventually, after the land was transferred to the city by the Bureau of Land Management and the Townsite Trustee, residents were able to purchase deeds for \$40.00. Molly Lukanin was the first to send in her money order. On November 6, 1964, the first set of deeds went out to her, Mike Kudrin, and Elsie Yatchmenoff.



The last chief of Biorka, Alex Ermeloff, died in early November 1957 and was buried in the Unalaska churchyard. *The Mailboat Monitor*, a small somewhat gossipy monthly newspaper published by its captain, Nels Thompson, noted:

Mrs. Agatha Ermeloff returned from the hospital in Anchorage just in time to attend the funeral of her father-in-law Chief Alexa [sic] Ermaloff, one of three lay readers in the Russian Orthodox church here. He is survived by his son Ruff and family, and daughters Elsie and Dora. His funeral was held Nov. 5.³⁶

Men in their National Guard uniforms. Left to right: John Borenin, Kusta Lekanoff, William “Coco” Yatchmenoff, Simeon Lekanoff, and Moses Gordieff. Photograph courtesy Jennie Lekanoff.

The weather was unusually warm the winter of 1958-1959. Ducks and geese wintered in Unalaska Bay. Sea lions came in and whales were seen surfacing in the mouth of the bay. “Andrew Makarin, honored lay reader at the Russian

³⁶ *The Mailboat Monitor*. December 1957:3.

Cathedral in Unalaska, is an inveterate duck hunter, and seldom misses a shot on the wing,” wrote John Valentine in a newsletter for the Northern Commercial Company, the successor of the Alaska Commercial Company at Unalaska.

On this occasion, Andrew fired from his rocking boat, and nailed a duck. But while the duck was still flapping in mid-air, a huge American eagle swooped out of nowhere, snatched the duck, and calmly lit on the beach. Andrew had already turned his boat into shore, and beaching it, leaped after the duck-snatcher with boots flapping and gun waving. By effortless short flight the canny eagle kept just ahead of Andrew’s flailing arms, tantalizing him down the whole length of beach. Andrew hollered to spectator John [Valentine] for aid, but just as John protested bare hands were no match for the big bird, the eagle decided he’d played enough and headed off for the mountain with his purloined dinner.³⁷



1963

Alfred Stepetin and Carl Moller at Unalaska, 1953. Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.

Andrew’s role at the church took on added importance after Father Nagoski was transferred to Japan where he served as bishop in Tokyo. Andrew shared church duties with Anfesia Shapsnikoff, and when he became ill in June 1963 and was transported by air to Anchorage, Anfesia had Nick Lekanoff send a wire alerting Father Simeon Oskolkoff.³⁸ Andrew was diagnosed with asthma and returned to resume his duties, sometimes alone, sometimes with Anfesia or her son Philemon. He baptized numerous children and conducted funeral services. He assisted Ishmael Gromoff when the new priest held his first service on May 3, 1966.

Until Eustina’s health declined, Andrew and his wife would occasionally return to Biorka for a week or two. Michael Swetzof recalls going with them to the top of the pass and then leaving them as they hiked down the trail to Ugadaga Bay and to the skiff they used to cross to the village.³⁹ Andrew returned to Biorka one last time in 1965 to dismantle the church and build a

small square protective structure over the site of the altar. The remaining wood was burned. Among the artifacts recovered from Biorka in later years was a handwritten copy Andrew Makarin had made of *A Brief Guide to a Pious Life* [Kratkoe praviol dlya blagochestivoi zhizni], one of the more obscure religious works published in Unangam tunuu in the early 20th century. Written in Andrew’s fine cursive hand, the manuscript fills twenty-eight pages and testifies to his devotion

³⁷ Valentine, John (J.V.), *The N.C. Company Flag*, Northern Commercial Company, March 1959.

³⁸ Shapsnikoff, Anfesia, *Diary*, June 3, 1963.

³⁹ Michael Swetzof, conversation with Ray Hudson, September 11, 2012.

and acumen. When I visited him at Anfesia Shapsnioff's suggestion near the end of his life, I asked if he would write something for me in Aleut. He took a scrap of paper and a pencil, smiled at me, and wrote two words: Unangam tunuu.

Eustina Makarin died in November 1968. Andrew survived only seven months longer, dying June 25, 1969. He was buried beside the Church of the Holy Ascension.



Andrew Makarin's skiff on the Ugadaga beach, circa 1970. Photograph by Ray Hudson.



Andrew Makarin. Photograph by Richard S. Heyza, for *The Seattle Times*, December 1966. Courtesy Ray Hudson.



Wire fence and gate remains, Makushin Village, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Lauren Adams.