

# ATTU BOY

アッツ島の少年



Nick Golodoff



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural and cultural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation.

The Cultural Resource Programs of the National Park Service have responsibilities that include stewardship of historic buildings, museum collections, archeological sites, cultural landscapes, oral and written histories, and ethnographic resources.

Our mission is to identify, evaluate and preserve the cultural resources of the park areas and to bring an understanding of these resources to the public. Congress has mandated that we preserve these resources because they are important components of our national and personal identity.

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By Nick Golodoff

2012

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Aleutian World War II National Historic Area

Anchorage, Alaska

Cover: Nick Golodoff on back of Japanese soldier Kamani, 1942.  
Photograph by Kiri Sugiyama. Image courtesy Nick Golodoff.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

UAA – University of Alaska Anchorage

UAF – University of Alaska Fairbanks

UW Press – University of Washington Press

# Preface

By Brenda Maly,  
Nick's granddaughter and descendant of Attu

WHEN YOU MEET SOMEONE who has been through World War II and they tell you their amazing stories of what they went through or what they saw, from the listener's point of view it's very exciting to hear. But what if you put yourself in their place? Imagine what is going through your mind, your feelings, your wonderment, your losses, the unknown of what is going to happen and the waiting. This can be a scary thought especially if the stories are from someone you love dearly. Life does work out in mysterious ways and you can't help but go with it. An early life experience can change your future in bad ways but also in good ways. What I'm trying to say here is that life is unexpected and back during World War II it was harsher than it is now. It had to be or we would not be where we are now.

My grandfather, Nick L. Golodoff, had no choice. He was taken off his island of Attu, Alaska, when he was a very young age by the Japanese. He witnessed an amazing event, World War II, from another view than most. A lot of people talk about World War II from the United States' view. He tells the story of actually being captured by the Japanese. When you do read this book, please keep in mind that Nick was about five or six years old when taken off of Attu Island. Names and dates are blurry to him and some things are uncertain. With Rachel Mason, our editor and good friend, and with our family, Nick and I have done our best to get any facts about World War II that are related to Nick's story. Most of the information needed is from Japan and some information they would not release to us. My grandfather Nick wishes to be done with this book as soon as possible. This is his last and final wish before passing. Some things may be not as professional as most books are. This book is written from his point of view as a child and



as he tells it, with some minor adjustments. A book with detailed facts and information from other sources takes some time and Nick is elderly and just wishes to get his story out now rather than later. Please understand that this book is not perfection but his honest experience. It is a story that is most interesting.

# Introduction: Telling the Story of Attu

By Rachel Mason

WHEN NICK GOLODOFF WAS SIX YEARS OLD, he and his family were taken from Attu, Alaska to Japan, where they were held captive until the end of World War II. Nick has recorded and written his memories. His granddaughter Brenda Maly transcribed and compiled them, and they are intertwined here with several other first-hand accounts of the Attuan experience.

I learned of Nick Golodoff's memoir in 2008 while working on the Lost Villages of the Aleutians project of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area, National Park Service. The project documents the history of four Unangan villages left empty in the evacuations and relocations of World War II, and never permanently resettled after the war. The residents of three villages in the Unalaska Island area (Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega) were removed to Southeast Alaska in 1942 and were resettled in other Unangan villages upon their return in 1945. Attu had a different and more tragic story. In September 1942, the Japanese army took the 42 Attu residents to Otaru, on Hokkaido Island, where they stayed until war's end. Many of them died, mainly of starvation and malnutrition. The twenty-five surviving Attuans were not able to return to their former village. Those who were not hospitalized (or sent to boarding school, as were several young people) were resettled in Atka.

In 2008, the Lost Villages project had already collected considerable material on the Unalaska Island area villages, thanks to a series of oral history interviews Ray Hudson collected in 2004. However, we had no first-hand information about Attu. At a meeting of the project's steering committee in Anchorage, I learned from Crystal Dushkin that Nick Golodoff had been working on a memoir entitled *Attu Boy*, about his experiences as a young boy at the time



Fig. 1. Map of the Attuans' Journey

of the Japanese invasion, during the internment in Japan, through the Attuans' release and return to America, and finally to his life in Atka after he moved there at the age of nine. Crystal knew that Nick was looking for a publisher, but she did not know the status of his manuscript. She suggested that the National Park Service might be able to work out an agreement with Nick to publish his memoir as the Attu volume of the Lost Villages project.

This account comes from tapes Nick made and sent to his granddaughter Brenda Maly. Brenda transcribed and edited the accounts. I rearranged Nick's statements in chronological order and wove them together with other first-hand accounts of the Attuans' experience. Besides Nick Golodoff, these include Innokenty Golodoff (Nick's father's brother), Olean Golodoff Prokopeuff (Nick's mother), Mike Lokanin, and Alex Prosoff.

Name	Age in June 1942	Year of Birth	Year of Death
Nick Golodoff	6	1935	
Innokenty "Popeye" Golodoff	25	1917	1998
Olean Golodoff Prokopeuff	31	1911	1976?
Mike Lokanin	30	1912	1961
Alex Prosoff	29	1916	Before 1949

Fig. 2. Table of Five Personal Narratives of the Attuans' Experience in Japan

Innokenty Golodoff, Nick's father's half brother, was born in 1917 on Attu to Metrofan and Anastasia Golodoff. Anastasia was Metrofan's second wife. Innokenty was known throughout his life as "Popeye." After the Attuans were settled in Atka, Popeye married Vasha Nevsoroff there in 1947. They had two daughters and a son. Popeye died in Anchorage in 1998.

Olean Golodoff Prokopeuff, Nick's mother, was born Olean Horosoff in 1910 in Atka to Peter and Anna Horosoff. She married Lawrence Golodoff in Atka and had seven children, all of whom were taken to Japan. Lawrence and three of their children died in

Japan. Nick's older brother John survived, as did his younger siblings Gregory and Elizabeth. Olean and her children were resettled in Atka after the war, and in 1947 she married Ralph Prokopeuff. They had three children. Olean died in Anchorage, sometime after 1976.

Mike or Mihie Lokanin was born in 1912, either in Attu or Unalaska, to Ephem and Anna Lukanin. His mother was from Makushin. Mike's first marriage, to Mary Tarkanoff, ended in divorce in 1939. In 1940 Mike married Parascovia Horosoff, Olean Golodoff's younger half-sister, on Attu. Their first three children died, two of them in Japan. Parascovia had six more children before Mike died in Unalaska in 1961.

Alex Prosoff was born in 1916 on Attu. His parents were Mike Prosoff and his first wife Marina. Alex married Elizabeth Prokopeuff aboard the Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* in 1939. Elizabeth already had a daughter, Fekla, who took her stepfather Alex's name. Alex died before 1949.

The first-person accounts of wartime events are quite different in style and form. Innokenty Golodoff's story was published in the *Alaska Sportsman* in December 1966, "as told to" Kent W. Kenyon, a biologist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Olean Golodoff Prokopeuff was interviewed by Knut Bergsland and her account appeared in the Aleutian-Pribilof Island Association newsletter. The translation was later revised by Moses Dirks and published in *The Aleutian Invasion*, a project of high school students in Unalaska (Unalaska City Schools 1981). In 1946 or 1947 Mike Lokanin and Alex Prosoff wrote their own stories, which were published verbatim in Ethel Ross Oliver's *Journal of an Aleutian Year* (1988).

Much of the Attuans' experience in Japan has remained obscure, partly because few of the survivors were inclined to talk about their experiences there. There is not much of a written record either. They did not keep diaries or write letters from Japan. In addition, participants in the wartime events have divergent memories of what happened. Perhaps especially because they have not discussed their experiences with one another, there are multiple accounts of these traumatic events. It is more important to preserve the authentic voices of the tellers than to make sure their stories match.

To provide a context to the first-hand accounts, I added background material, culled from published and unpublished sources, about Attu history and prehistory and about the events during World War II. Nick Golodoff's is the most complete account yet of the years in Attu, from the unique perspective of a young boy. His book is a gift not only to the descendants of Attu and to other Unangan, but to all of us who need to hear this previously untold story.

Thank you to all those who helped assemble this memoir. I would like particularly to thank Shannon Apgar-Kurtz, Anna Bateman, Francis Broderick (designer), Omar Chavez, Janet Clemens, John Cloe, Linda Cook, Debbie Corbett, Crystal Dushkin, Nicole Ferreira (cartographer), Ray Hudson, Janis Kozlowski, Bruce Greenwood, Jennifer Jolis, and Dirk Spennemann.

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## *A Young Boy's Experience During World War II*

The stories in this book are personal to me, as are the feelings I have felt through this unexpected, frightening, and life-altering ordeal.

—Nick Golodoff

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

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

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

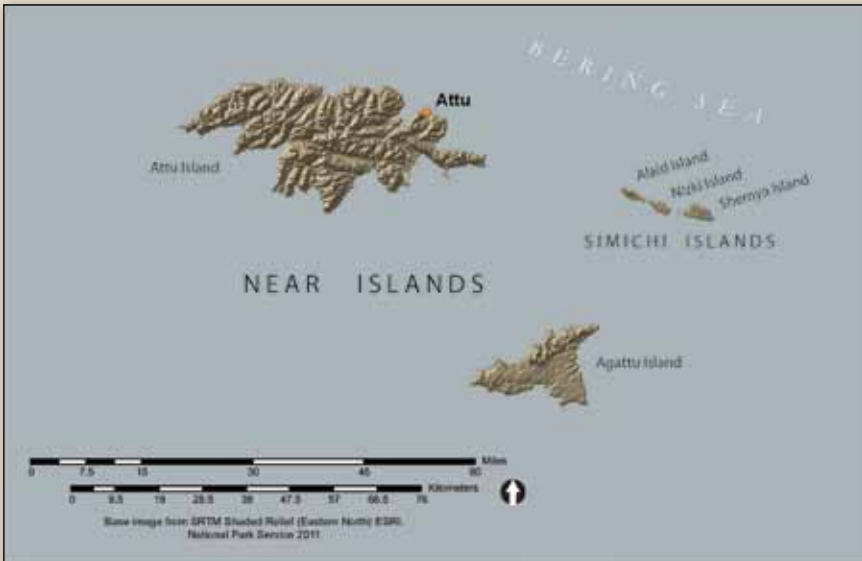


Fig. 3 Map of the Near Islands

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

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

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

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



# Nick's Extended Family

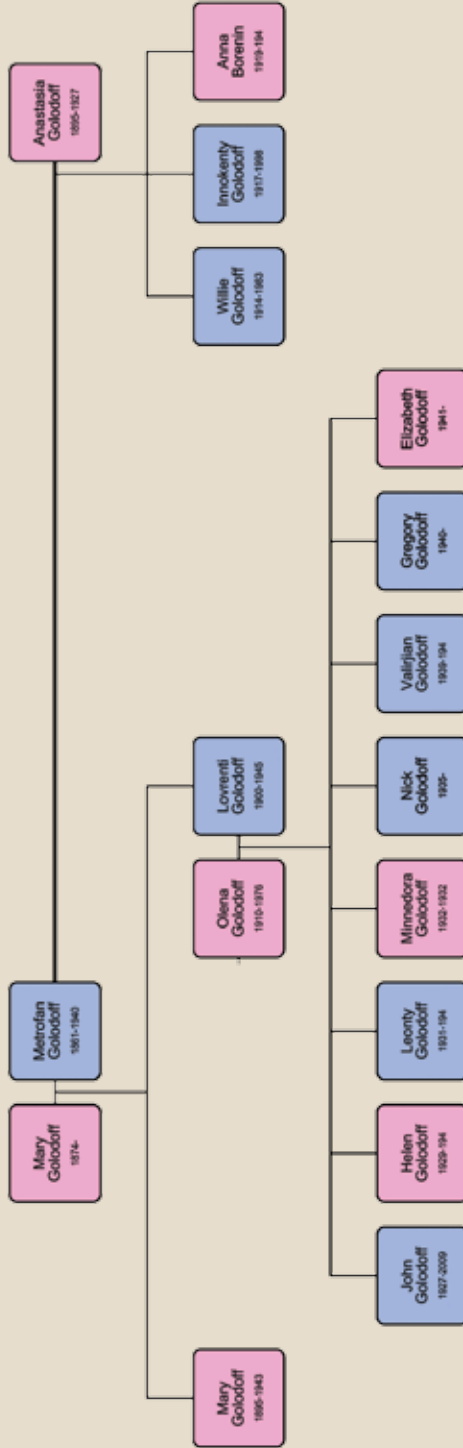


Fig. 4. Nick's Family in 1942 (Kinship Chart).  
Created using Family Echo-<http://www.familyecho.com/>



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

—Nick Golodoff



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



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

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

## *ATTU BEFORE THE WAR*

I could not live without the sight of the ocean...

—Nick Golodoff

*I* N 1942, BEFORE THE WAR BEGAN, Attu was a nice, quiet place with a population of about thirty-four people. We had nothing, no insulation in the houses, and no inside plumbing. There was a woodstove to heat the house. Attu was plain and quiet all the time. There was a trading post, and church and some houses. Some people were still living in barabaras. The BIA school had a white teacher and her husband. People did not have much to do since there were hardly any jobs. The only source of money was trapping during the winter and during the summer; they just dried, salted, or smoked salmon and did some woodcarving. I was only six years old during this time so I did not have nothing much to do besides walking the pathways. There were only a few of them, and they were nothing but gravel. One went from one end of the village to the other end and the other went down to the beach. The main one was from the church to the school. There were no streets, just paths. Back then everyone in the village used to help or work voluntarily but today people work only if you pay them.

*I have a picture of my house in Attu with my dad standing outside with someone. I remember the inside of the house. It had two rooms, one room had beds and the other had a table and a stove and also we had an attic, which we used for storage. I remember while I was in Attu, one morning in winter when I got up, my house was dark so I thought it was still night. My dad went out and made steps out of snow to the top of*



Photo 3. "The 'Main Street' of Attu." Nick's house is the one with two men standing in front of it (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)

*the almost-built house and after I went outside I could only see chimneys and the smoke coming where the house should be. I remember the house used to be cold in the morning because we only had a wood stove and the house was not insulated. I know where my house was because it was the second from the other end where the school side. I used to know the man who lived next door but cannot remember the name.*

*Attu is just like any other Aleutian island. It has more gravel than any other Aleutian island I have been on too and it has rougher country. There is very little sand. I don't remember any volcanoes on the island. Attu does have bushes that Atka doesn't have.*

*Sometimes after church, my parents used to tell me to get my godfather and bring him over to our house for tea. I was told to not let*



Photo 4. "Children playing outside their home." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan May G. Collection)

*him walk in the puddles because he was blind. I guess I was a bad boy because I used to let him walk in the puddles and he never said anything till he got to my house. Then he would tell my parents what I did. I would get kicked out of the house, but I would still do it.*

*I used to like going out in the boat, and still do. I could not live without the sight of the ocean, so when the weather was nice I would be at the beach almost every day. Whenever I needed wood or to go hunting, I was at the beach wanting to go out in the boat, but the adults would not take me and if they did not I was told I would cry and throw rocks at them.*

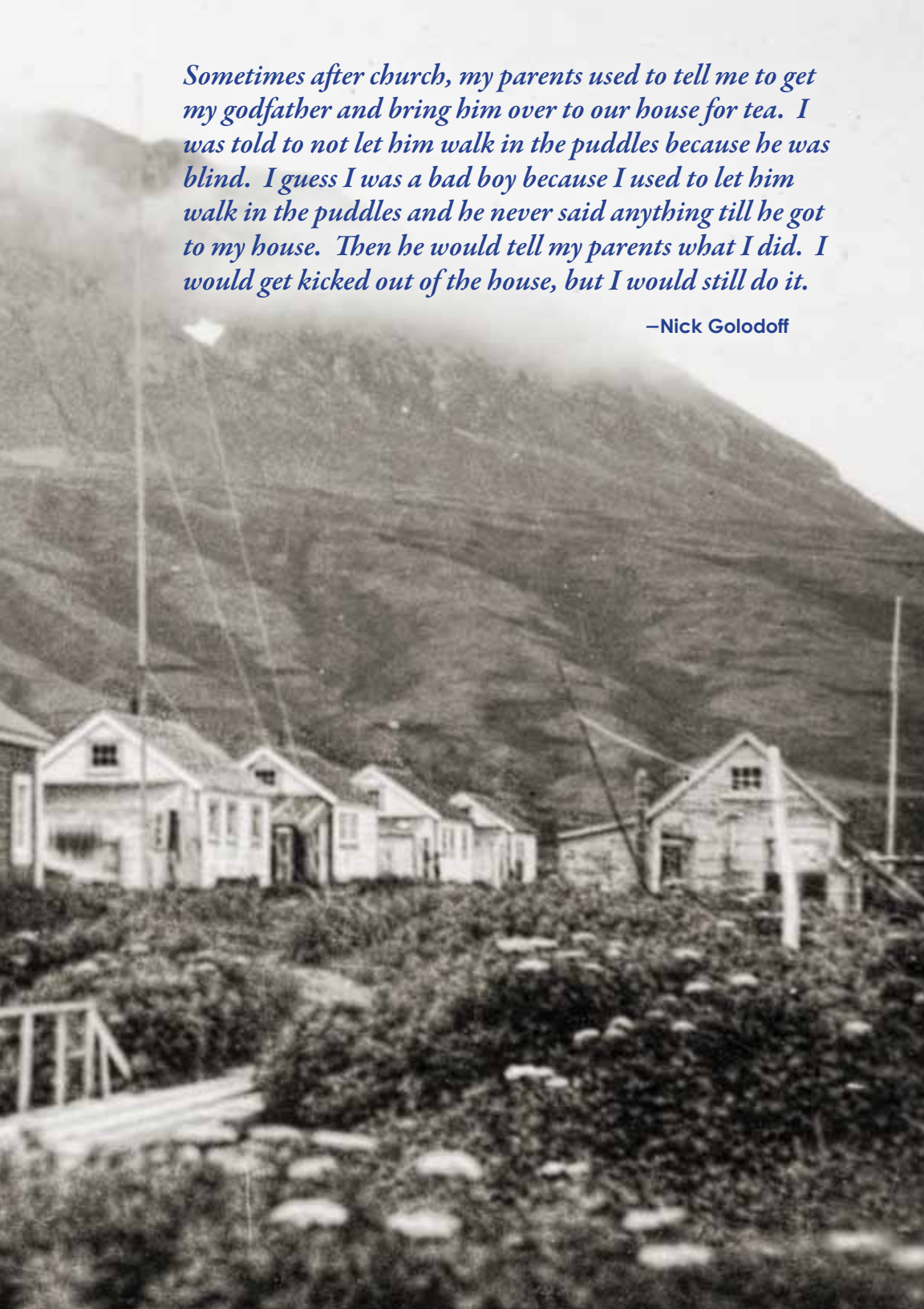


Photo 5. "View of Attu showing several homes, and a wooden plank pathway in the foreground." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)



*Sometimes after church, my parents used to tell me to get my godfather and bring him over to our house for tea. I was told to not let him walk in the puddles because he was blind. I guess I was a bad boy because I used to let him walk in the puddles and he never said anything till he got to my house. Then he would tell my parents what I did. I would get kicked out of the house, but I would still do it.*

—Nick Golodoff





## Commentary

Nick's memories of Attu as a quiet and pleasant place to live are reaffirmed by numerous other sources, such as officers on Coast Guard vessels, teachers hired by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and visitors such as a Scottish botanist and a stray American archeologist. The village was praised for its harmony and industry. Some of the outsiders theorized that because of its isolation, Attu had escaped many unsavory worldly influences.

Before World War II, there was little exchange of cash on Attu. The villagers obtained most of their food from hunting, fishing, and gathering. Sea lions, seals, and salmon were the main staples of the diet (BIA 1988:27, 65). Salmon was plentiful. The main summer fish camp was several miles from the winter village, at Sarana Bay, near the river mouth. People used driftwood for firewood, and sometimes they had to travel long distances to find it. Occasionally walrus showed up, and the men sold the ivory (Wright 1988).

In winter, the Attuans trapped fox on nearby Agattu Island. Teacher Etta Jones wrote to her family in 1941 that the Attuans' main source of income was from trapping blue fox. She reported that the trappers pooled their furs and divided the cash received among all residents, including widows and orphans as well as others who were unable to trap for themselves (Breu 2009:151). The women wove baskets for sale to outsiders. At the village store, the Attuans traded furs and baskets for goods such as flour, tea, coal and kerosene.

Beginning in the early 1920s, Fred Schroeder, a non-Native trader working for the Alaska Commercial Company, spent part of each year on Attu Island (Jones 1946:39). The Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard cutter *Tallapoosa* noted that, with the exception of a few old women who stayed in the village to take care of the houses, almost all the other residents of Attu left in August to trap blue fox on other islands, particularly Agattu, during the winter. The date of the villagers' departure depended on the arrival of the Alaska Commercial Company schooner *Eunice* in mid-August (U.S. Coast Guard 1931).

◀ Preceding page: Photos 6 & 7. Two aerial views of Chichagof Harbor and Attu Village taken prior to the Japanese invasion. Both are dated 5/14/43, about eight months after the Attuans had been taken to Japan in September 1942. (Source: U.S. Air Force [top], U.S. Navy, courtesy Dirk Spennemann [bottom])



Photo 8. "Attu Natives - 10 July 1935."  
(Source: UAA, Archives & Special  
Collections, Alan G. May Collection)

*In 1942, before the war began, Attu was a nice, quiet place with a population of about thirty-four people. We had nothing, no insulation in the houses, and no inside plumbing. There was a woodstove to heat the house. Attu was plain and quiet all the time.*

—Nick Golodoff

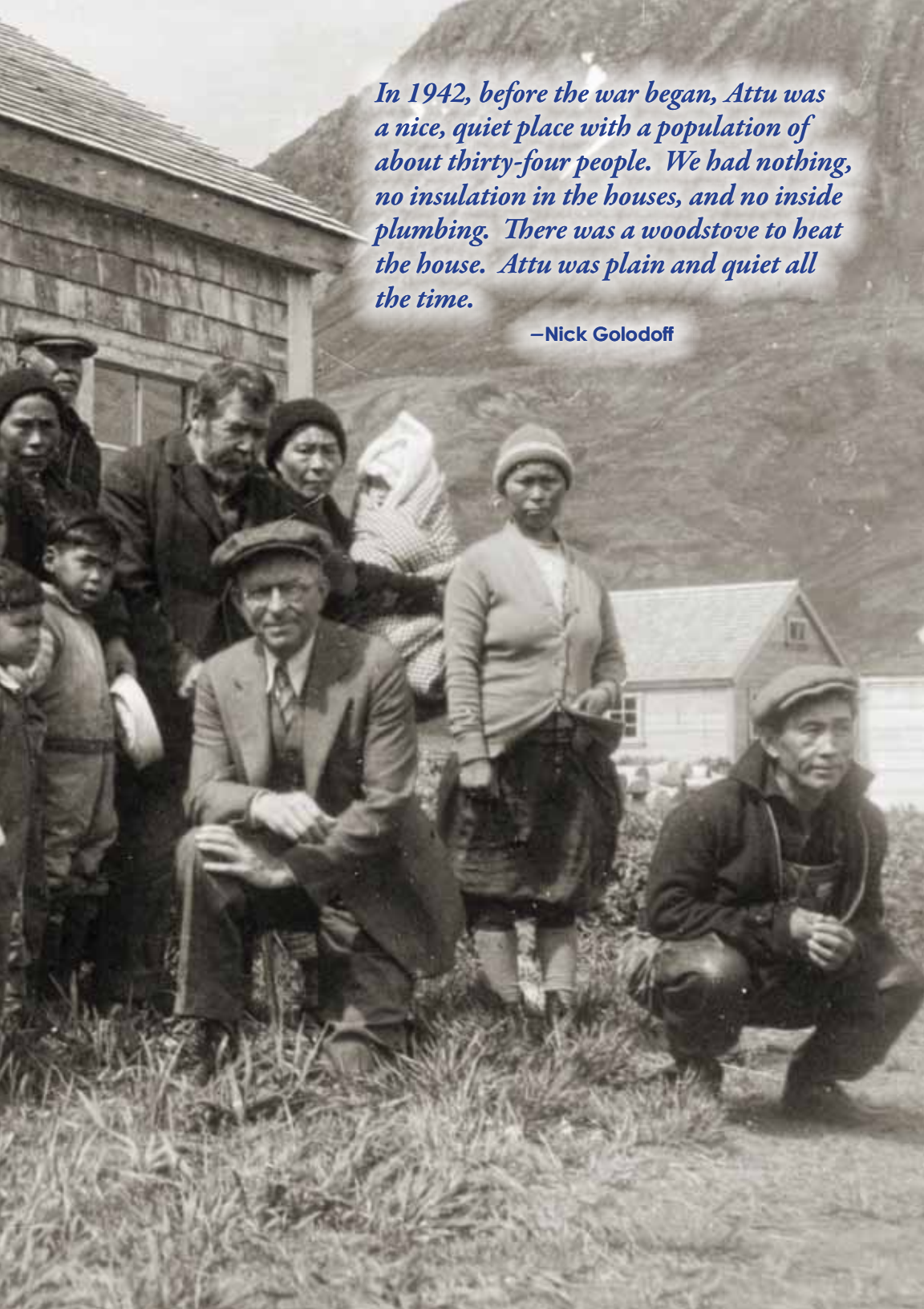




Photo 9. "Maggie's barabara." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)

Attu did not get very many visitors, but the village made a big impression on those who did manage to stop there. In the summer of 1936 Alan G. May, an amateur archeologist who had been part of famed anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička's expedition that year, spent a month in the village. May was put up in the large, modern schoolhouse, which was not being used (Stein n.d.:3). He wrote that the settlement's structures included a church, a schoolhouse, about a dozen wood frame houses, and the same number of barabaras still in use. He had been told that as late as 1928, everyone in the village lived in barabaras (May 1936:96). Another visitor in 1936 noted that on Attu, "Back of the beach were a few old barabaras covered with flowers and turf, but the islanders now occupy comfortable little wooden houses such as might be seen in any other part of Alaska." (Hutchinson 1937:170).

Naturalist Isobel Hutchinson visited Attu the same year as Alan May, after several weeks of botanical collection in the Aleutians. She had already heard good things about the village from the officers of the Coast Guard cutter who took her to the island. She wrote:

‘The natives of Attu,’ the Coast Guard officers told me, ‘are by far the happiest and best of all the natives, because they live in such a remote situation and bad influences don’t so easily come their way. They know this themselves and don’t want to be brought into closer touch with the world. They are always the most friendly and helpful too, coming down to meet us and lending a hand if required.’ (Hutchinson 1937: 168).

Some of the best sources of information about life in Attu in the 1930s are the records of the Coast Guard cutters who stopped at the island to bring mail and supplies, and provide medical and dental services. For example, the *Haida* and the *Chelan* both visited Attu in September 1930. The *Haida* treated people with conjunctivitis, bronchitis, myalgia, tuberculosis, and pleurisy. The commanding officer of the *Chelan* wrote, “The medical officer of the *Chelan* was sent ashore to the village and gave medical aid to seventeen natives and left a supply of medicines for their use during the coming winter season” (U.S. Coast Guard 1930:2).

In 1939, while he was ashore, the Commanding Officer of the *Itasca* married two couples (Willie and Julia Golodoff, and Alex and Elizabeth Prosoff), performed other judicial acts, and recorded the six deaths that had occurred in the village since the Coast Guard’s last visit. The ship found nine people on Attu in need of medical assistance, and five in need of dental work. The dental report for the trip told of pulling teeth from two people; others were lucky enough to receive only an examination. The medical party’s census counted 21 Native males, 14 Native females, eight children, two white males, and one white female in the village population (U.S. Coast Guard 1939).<sup>2</sup>

The Coast Guard officers got to know Vassa “Maggie” Prokopeoff, a basket-maker, whom they called “The Rock of Ages.” She is mentioned frequently in the records of visitors to Attu, who bought baskets from her and commissioned her to weave special ones.

The most well-known Attu resident of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, was Mike Hodikoff, chief of the village when it was occupied by the Japanese in 1942. Mike was born on Attu in 1893 and brought to Unalaska as an orphan in 1910, staying first at the Jesse Lee Home,

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<sup>2</sup>One of the white males was probably the trader, Fred Schroeder. The other white man and woman may have been teachers who stayed for a few weeks at Attu one summer.







Photo 10. "Attu Natives." (Source: Alaska State Library, Evelyn Butler and George Dale)



Photo 11. "Basket weaver on Attu." Maggie Prokopeuff. (Source: UAF, Murie Family Papers)



Photo 12. "The 'Rock of Ages' centre and two other natives." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)

the Methodist orphanage, and later with relatives. He returned to Attu and married his wife Anecia in 1920. Educated in Unalaska, he spoke better English than other Attu residents. English was still rarely spoken at Attu, but Mike spoke it well and very rapidly (May 1936:101). In addition to being chief, Mike was also a lay reader in church (where he also spoke rapidly) and had the job of sending in weather reports.

Mike was already a village leader in the early 1930s, when references to him appear in Coast Guard reports. The Coast Guard was devoting special attention to Attu because Japanese fishing vessels were suspected in the area. Vicious storms at Attu in 1931 wrecked the Coast Guard station there and three barabaras, including one



Photo 13. "Attu chief Mike Hodikoff, wife Anecia & son John." (Source: UAF, Ethel Ross Oliver)

belonging to Mike Hodikoff, whose six-year-old son was killed in the storm. Mike lost another child when his young daughter Mary Hodikoff (also age six) was taken to Unalaska for medical treatment and died during an operation to remove her tonsils (U.S. Coast Guard 1931, pp. 3-6). His wife Anecia died before World War II, leaving him with three children: Angelina, Stephen, and George.

In 1936 Mike Hodikoff communicated with the outside world using Attu's wireless radio station. In the summer of 1934, a fleet of Navy ships was sent to survey the Aleutian Islands. During that time, the Navy erected a temporary radio station in the school building at Attu, and the radio men may have taught the chief to transmit messages. Alan May observed that when the Coast Guard came to town, all the villagers came aboard the ship to watch movies (May 1942:135). These cinematic events are not mentioned in the Guard's official notes.



Photo 14. "Agefangel on left, Mike and Anastasia with a group from the village out collecting roots." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)



Photo 15. "Chief Mike and his son Gorga eating lunch when out searching for drift wood at Holtz Bay." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)



Photo 16. "Anastasia, the Chief's wife." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)



Photo 17. "Baskets and Weavers, Attu, Alaska." The girl on the right is Anecia Hodikoff, who became Chief Mike Hodikoff's wife. (Source: UAF, Murie family photos)

May wrote that Schroeder, the trader at Attu, supported the village inhabitants in several ways. He paid Mike Hodikoff sixty cents an hour to work for him and left him in charge of the store when Schroeder was out of town. Schroeder's wife, too, contributed to the welfare of the people there. May wrote,

Mrs. Schroeder sent a dress as a gift to each woman on the island, which seems very nice of her, and she also sent toys for the kiddies. Mrs. Schroeder has never visited the island, but she does this once a year. (May 1936:122).

Furthermore, Schroeder helped the Attuans pay for construction of the new church by advancing them money for lumber against their season's fox trapping. The old church had been a grass-roofed barabara (May 1936: 118). The women of Attu also raised money for the new church by selling baskets in Unalaska (Shapsnikoff and Hudson 1974:41).

*When I said I saw Jesus just before the morning the Japanese landed, an old timer told me that kids see what adults can't see. I believed him because I saw Jesus come down. He did not touch the ground, but He blessed me and then when I turned around to see if anyone was watching, Jesus was gone.*

—Nick Golodoff







Photo 18. The old church. "Greek church on Attu Island, the furthest [sic] point west" (Source: UAF, Wickersham State Historic Site)



Photo 19. The new church, built in 1932. "From the church looking down the main street. View of a wooden plank pathway to the church, with orthodox crosses marking graves on the right." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)

May noted that when Schroeder arrived in late July 1936, all the residents were pleased to see him and he seemed like a nice man (May 1936:129).

The school was built in 1932, but it would be almost a decade before any teachers were persuaded to come to Attu for longer than brief summertime visits (Kohlhoff 1995:6). Etta Jones arrived in 1941 to serve as a permanent teacher. Her husband Foster Jones assumed the duty of radio operator for the village. Both were 62 years old and had worked in other schools in Alaska (Breu 2009:149).

► Following two pages. Photo 20. "Attu Native, M.G.7/41." This is likely Annie Borenin, who became Mike Hodikoff's second wife, with her son Victor. She was also Nick Golodoff's father's sister. (Source: Alaska State Library, Evelyn Butler and George Dale)

Photo 21. "Attu Native, M.G.7/41." (Source: Alaska State Library, Evelyn Butler and George Dale)





## PRE-WAR FEARS AND CLUES ABOUT JAPANESE INVASION

Before the Japanese came to Attu, a man used to talk about seeing tracks when he had to go walking. He would see tracks on the beach and sometimes he would see somebody and when he hollered to that person, it would disappear.

—Nick Golodoff

***B**EFORE THE WAR, some trappers from the village didn't return. They found them shot on Attu. The old-timers thought it was the Japanese who shot them. When the Attuan men would go hunting on Attu they used to see other people. Later they learned that the Japanese were mapping in the area.*

*Before the Japanese came to Attu, a man used to talk about seeing tracks when he had to go walking. He would see tracks on the beach and sometimes he would see somebody and when he hollered to that person, it would disappear. I figure now they were Japanese mapping the island before they invaded it. The same thing happened on Atka and Unalaska. They used to call them "Tuginagus" which means boogiemien.<sup>3</sup> When a man from Attu went and checked his traps, he returned and asked the people in the village who was out hunting earlier. He was told that no one left the village besides him. Therefore, no one knew and no one understood what was going on. Just before the war started, I also saw a man and ghost and his son. The elders they told me stories of what might have happened. We thought the man killed his son then himself but there were no rifles nearby so we guessed it was the Japanese while they were mapping the area from Attu to Unalaska. The reason I am saying this is because after the war people went trapping*

<sup>3</sup>Bergsland (1980:43, 142) has chugdukaayaꝯ for "Devil" and tugidaꝯ for "moon" in Atkan Unangam Tunuu.

*again but never found tracks or saw ghosts anymore. I think the Japanese were all over the Aleutians before the war because after the war the elders were talking about seeing people when everybody was in the village and seeing mysterious tracks, not just on one island but all the other islands. People also heard boat engines. After the war, no one talked about boogiemmen anymore.*

## Commentary

Japanese presence was observed or suspected in Attu and other Near Islands since the first decades of the twentieth century. Mike Hodikoff recalled that sometime around 1910, Japanese marauders had stolen fox skins from the Attuans, and that they killed Mike's father in the struggle that followed (Jones 1946:40). This may have been one of the incidents Nick refers to when he mentions the trappers who didn't return.

Beginning in the early 1930s, the U.S. military was watchful in the Aleutian Islands. The Navy sent a fleet of ships with amphibious aircraft to survey the Aleutians in the summer of 1934. As early as 1937, the Coast Guard officer on the *Haida* reported that on the way back from Attu the boat hands were "Constantly checking for 'Jap ships' in fishing grounds." In August of 1938, when the *Cyane* visited Attu, it also scouted along Holtz Bay, looking for evidence of Japanese occupancy (U.S. Coast Guard 1939).

When Etta Jones was assigned to teach in Attu, she and her husband Foster Jones knew there was danger of an attack from the Japanese. When boat operators Don and Ginger Pickard visited Attu in April 1942, Foster Jones told them that if the Japanese came he would destroy his radio and the island's supplies of gasoline and oil. He was also training ("drilling") the Attu men to protect their home (Stein n.d.:4-6). Etta Jones wrote in a letter that the American flag flew proudly above the village, and that the Attuans disliked and distrusted the Japanese (Kohlhoff 1995:40).

Nick Golodoff recalls that when he was a little boy, people talked about hearing mysterious footsteps and finding other traces of pre-war visitors to Attu. Some people thought they were boogiemens, but later there was speculation that they were Japanese. The Attuans knew of the Japanese interest in the Aleutians, and they had already had encounters with Japanese fishing vessels and fur poachers. Alan May wrote in his journal that a captain of the Coast Guard had told him that "Attu has been completely surveyed by the Japs under the pretext of collecting flowers and butterflies (without permission) and the natives cowed into not speaking about it" (May 1936:90). The chief of the village, Mike Hodikoff, told a visitor to Attu that



Photo 22. Mike Hodikoff on board the *Casco*. (Source: Aleutian-Pribilof Island Association)

personnel from the Japanese Navy had already been in the area to take measurements and soundings in the harbors (Stein n.d.:5). On land, he said, they had left behind stakes with Japanese characters (Nutchuk [Simeon Oliver] 1946:148). In May 1942, the U.S. Navy took Chief Hodikoff and Alfred Prokopeuff, the second chief, on board the seaplane tender *USS Casco* so the local men could show them likely shore landing spots.



## THE JAPANESE INVASION – JUNE 7, 1942

Alex [Prosoff] and I ran past the church to the other side of the village and that's where we saw the Japanese soldiers coming down the hill.

—Nick Golodoff

**T**HE ATTUANS HAD BEEN WARNED by the U.S. military that the Japanese might come. Before the U.S. could evacuate the Attuans, the Japanese invaded. The teacher, Etta Jones, told them about Pearl Harbor. Her husband had a radio.

When the Japanese arrived, it was a nice calm day. Now I know that it was June 7, 1942, but I didn't know it then. The whole village of Attu was in church that Sunday morning. As I was going to church, I looked up and saw Jesus coming down real slow. I turned around to see if anyone else was looking, and when I turned back he was gone. Once church was over we all heard noises that sounded like motors from the next bay. It was a sound we had never heard and turned out to be machine gun fire. Four or five young men were sent up a hill to look. By the time they figured out what the noise was it was too late, the Japanese were already there. Then we saw a plane go over the village. This plane flew over once. The plane had a red round symbol on the wing and the plane was so close to the ground we could see the pilot.

When I saw Alex Prosoff off heading down to the beach I started to follow him thinking he was going boating and that I could come along. Just before I caught up with Alex, on the way down there was a platform where they were going to build a house. On the platform there was a gunnysack spread over it. While Alex and I were down at the beach, we heard sounds and voices that we did not understand. The Japanese were loud as they came down the side of the mountain. We heard a noise that sounded like crows.

*Every time I looked I didn't see anything. We started to hear shooting, so Alex ran and I followed. Alex and I ran past the church to the other side of the village and that's where we saw the Japanese soldiers coming down the hill. While I was still running after Alex, I could see a piece of mud popping up in front of me so I stopped. I looked back and the mud behind me was popping up. The reason we were not hit is that the bullets did not reach us, but they came only one or two feet short of the path we were running on. I did not understand the mud popping up at the time, but now I understand that the Japanese were shooting at us. Alex and I were lucky to get away.*

*Alex was still running so I continued following him. When Alex reached his house, he went under it. His wife was already hiding under their house so Alex crawled in. When I tried to go under I was told to go in the mud house<sup>4</sup> which was behind the house Alex was under, and is what I did. They had a barabara behind Alex's house that was his old house before they built a wooden one. It was used for storage. Someone opened the door to the mud house for me.*

*When the Japanese landed in Attu I wonder why they were shooting when they were coming down the hill. I think because everybody was outside listening to the noise from the next harbor where they were landing and nobody knew what was going on. The reason the Attu people were all outside was that there was all kinds of noise from next bay to the village. That is my first time I have seen so many people out at the same time.*

*When we went up we saw a Japanese plane go over and then later the Japanese came down the hill shooting. The school teacher's husband had a radio, but they did not send out a message until the Japanese were almost to the school. Then they started to send a message and the Japanese took over the school and cut them off. During the gunfire, I*

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<sup>4</sup>Nick uses the term "mud house" for the traditional Unangan semi-subterranean dwelling commonly referred to as a "barabara."



Photo 23. Alex and Elizabeth Prossoff. Nick hid under their barabara ("mud house") with them during the Japanese invasion. (Source: Aleutian-Pribilof Island Association)

*believe the Japanese killed their own people because I heard that one or two of the Japanese people were dead. That only person that was hit from Attu was one woman who was shot in the leg.*

*While I was in the mud house I heard people outside speaking a different language. It was lucky that Alex went under the house because if he wasn't there the Japanese would have shot the mud house and could have killed us all. After the Japanese caught Alex and his wife under the house, they gave him a note. The note said that everyone had to come out, and if no one listened, the Japanese were going to blow up the house and mud house with machine guns. Alex translated what the Japanese wrote in English. If they told us to get out we would not be able to understand and the reason for the note, Alex told us, was that the Japanese know how to write in English but did not know how to speak it. Alex translated back to the Japanese in English.*

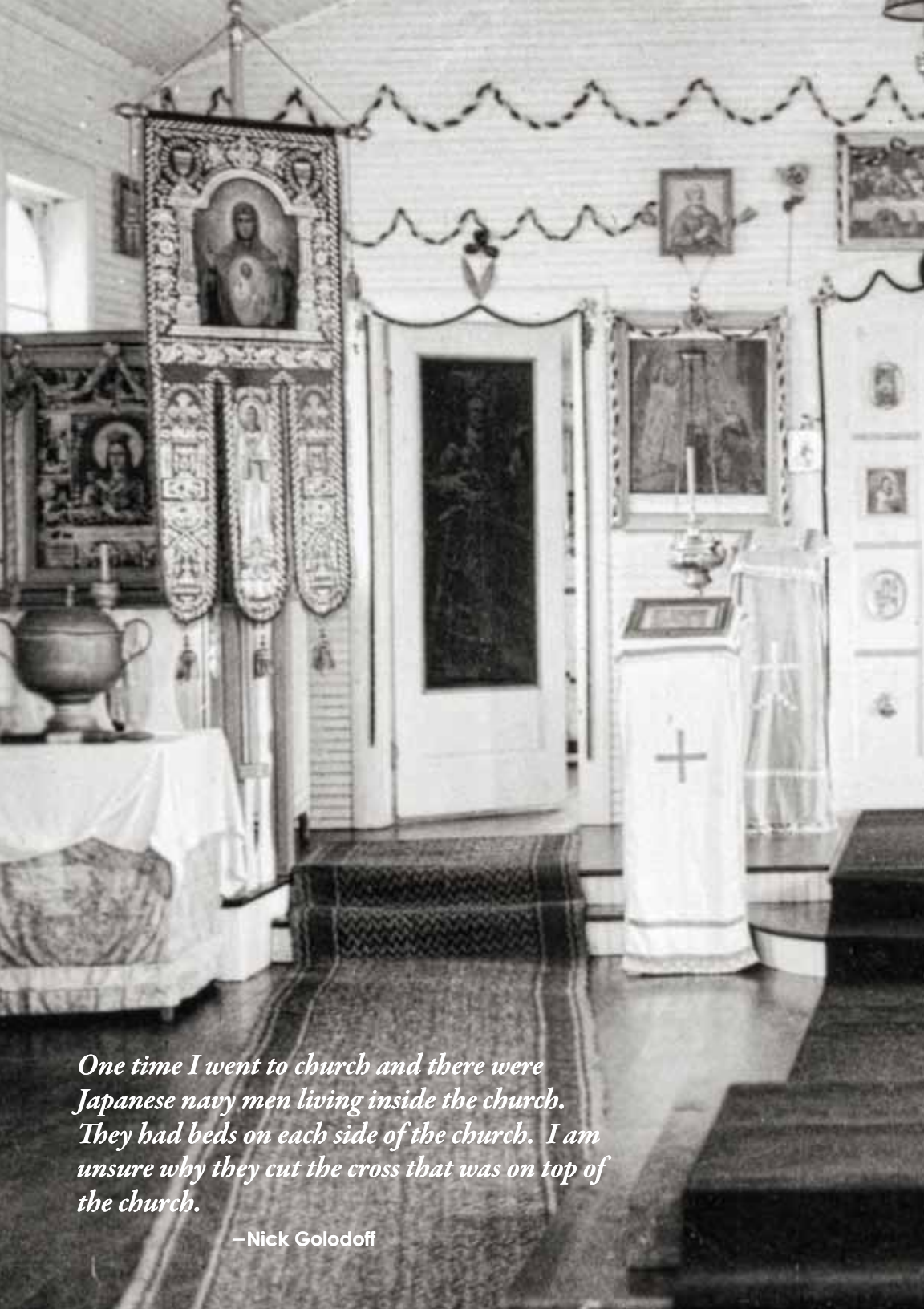


Photo 24. Attu schoolhouse. (Source: UAF Historical Photograph Collection, Vertical File Photograph Collections-Towns-Attu)



Photos 25 & 26. Etta Jones and Foster Jones. "Sad fate of Attu's only white couple." (Source: UAF, San Francisco Call-Bulletin, Aleutian Islands Photographs, 1942-1948)

*We all went out and the Japanese marched us all over to the school. That's where I met up with my mom and dad. I threw up when I got there because I was scared. I do not know how they got the other Attu people but when we got to the school, everybody was there except for the four men [teenagers] that went up the hill. Later they took two men from the village and a Japanese soldier to go up and look for them and they hollered at them to come out to let them know everything was ok and they brought them back. There was a teacher and wife in Attu but I don't know what happened to them. The white couple were married and Mrs. Jones was the teacher. I heard they both tried to kill themselves on Attu. I don't know what happened to them. They didn't want to be POWs, I guess. They cut their wrists only someone found out.*



*One time I went to church and there were Japanese navy men living inside the church. They had beds on each side of the church. I am unsure why they cut the cross that was on top of the church.*

—Nick Golodoff



Photo 27. Attu church, "The interior of church." (Source: UAA, Archives & Special Collections, Alan G. May Collection)  
Niek Golodoff: *The Japanese Invasion - June 7, 1942* 41

*I'm unsure how long they kept us there in the school but it seemed like almost all day. Later that day, toward evening, the Japanese sent us all to our houses. Once we had gotten to our houses, the Japanese posted guards with guns at every house. The guard by our house didn't have any matches or a lighter, so he would knock on our door and ask for a match in Russian. My dad would give him matches. Our guard was nice—just like most Japanese people I know.*

*The next day I went out and walked around a bit. I cannot really recall what happened, but, again, I was only six years old. Every day I would go out and walk around. I got familiar with the Japanese troops and they were friendly to me. When I would go down to the beach there was a guard that had a box and inside it there was some candy. Every time that I saw him down at the beach he'd offer me some. Behind each house, there was a mud house [barabara] and I believe that the Japanese troops were taking turns sleeping in them. I noticed behind the village there was a long mud house and I think they used it for cooking and a mess hall. The Japanese had foxholes all over Attu. One time I went to church and there were Japanese navy men living inside the church. They had beds on each side of the church. I am unsure why they cut the cross that was on top of the church. They used cloth as a net to catch trout with.*

*The Japanese commander used to take baths in drums. The Japanese soldier would put water in the drum and build a fire underneath it to heat the water and when the fire went out, he would take a bath. When Japanese purchased anything in Attu they did not use money, they used fox fur. They would take their foxes to the store and were told how much it would cost and used furs to cover the purchase.*

*Early one morning while the Japanese occupied Attu, an American plane flew low over the village before anybody got up. Just before the*



*American plane showed up, we heard a cannon go off at the point of the bay. That happened twice. I figured they were just taking pictures. The first time it happened, my mom and dad hid under the bed, but I was at the window. I saw a Japanese soldier come out in his underwear running to a fox hole with his rifle. While this was going on my dad grabbed me and pulled me under the bed with him. The second time the American plane flew over my mom and dad went under the bed, and I ran to the window again. This time the Japanese soldier had his clothes on as he was running to the foxhole with his rifle.*

## Other First-hand Accounts

### Mike Lokanin, 1947 (1988)

...1942 Jan 12 I had baby girl named Titiana. We stayed on Agattu all winter trapping foxes and the boat was to take us off in Feb 15 or 19 and we were out of ammunitions and out of flour sugar tea and milk we were completely out of everything. We were beginning to starve when findly *M/S Point Reyes* pick us up off Agattu. When we go in Attu everything was blackout and Mr. and Mrs. C. Foster Jones were in Attu. Mrs. Jones was the school teach and Mr. Jones was the radio man. It was plenty snow in Attu then.

When I got in Attu I heard about war, war, but I never did see war so I didnt care much and I didnt think war would be at Alaska. Pretty soon I heard about Japanese are beginning to get near Alaska but I still think Japs wont bother Attu because I know Attu is too small for them. We got word from U.S.Govt,t. to pack up all our things. Some time boat will be in Attu to pick us up. So were already packed everything we got. Of course we got the things we need out so we can use it for temporarily on month of May One day we see vessell come to outside of harbor and it was ruff wind was blowing from N.E. and as soon as we saw the boat coming we thought it was Japanese boat. After she got outside the harbor she wasnt anchor because wind was too ruff for her to anchor out there and she couldnt get inside harbor. Maybe about 1/2 hour later we seen launch coming into harbor. Some peoples still think it was Japanese boat. We look through m,Scope. We can see letters on boat U.S.N.T. They had ruff time coming in. Chief of Attu Mike Hodikoff and second Chief Alfred Prokopioff went down on beach to see if thats our transportation. Of course USN or USCG allways visit Attu once or twice a year anyway but people were talking about war. We got exided. When they come on beach the officer got out and shake hands with both chief and chief ask if this is our boat. Officer say he havent got word to pick anyone up off Attu. All they had was 10 army troops with there supply to be taken ashore on Attu but weather was too ruff to take anything over sea in small boats so they said they gone land them on Kiska Island if they can. Officer want Mike Hodikoff and Alfred to go on *Tasko*

[USS *Casco*] for 2 or 3 days so they can show a good landing places any kind of weather. They stayed out 4 days and come back.

The whole community sent out 10 pelts to Dutch Harbor for sale to Navy. because they didnt have a thing in store. All they got was flour few cans salmon corned beef no sugar no butter no milk or coffee so they got some food of *Tasko* [off the *Casco*]. Mr. Fred Schroeder did not come back from San Francisco with supplys for store. Later last part of Maya sub come to Attu a patrolling sub all the men were invided to sub and when we got to submarine capt. took all the men inside and show inside of sub to everyone and then he got on deck and laying against rail on side he ask some qs about how often the Japs come around Attu a year in present time. I was standing back against cabin and talk to one of the crew and I seen the capt was laying against the real and the chain busted and he went overboard in water and everyone on deck start to laugh. He felt backwards. When he reach the water he swim for dory which was ours tied along side the sub. He couldn't pull himself in so some men went down and help him in dorry. When he got on deck he looked at us and smile. He went below a half hour later he come out and said he is ready to leave now. He told us as soon as we see Japs boat please notify Dutch Harbor. We got off and she took off, too. Thats only U.S. boat we seen since 1942 to 1945 at Okinawa we got out of prison camp.

June we had nice all the way. Not much rain, not much wind sunshine all the time. Of course we always standing by all the time for boat to pick us up.

One day we heard Japs bombing Dutch Harbor over radio. We still hear war on radio. One day Attu mens was getting ready for going out to gather drift wood. They get there boats ready and fill up 5 gallon can with gassoline and mixed with lub oil. Everything was ready for next day. all over village everyone was in deep sad looken face. You can tell something is gone happen but they didnt know what is comeng to them. I myself feel something strange gone happen to us.

Some of the other mens say when I visited his house that he got some kind of heart trouble he said maybe too much blood pressure. I asked him what is trouble Oh he said my heart keep bother me I cannot go to sleep my heart is just like it comes up to my throat if it does that I feel awful weakened I ask him if he is gone out for wood with other mens he said I dont feel like to go but anyways I got to go.

I myself dont feel so good but I didnt pay any tention to what I feel Once and while I can feel my heart thump just like it chock me but I dont pay any tention to it. Most everyone look sad to me.

That day the village was so quiet all I can hear is the gass motors of power plant which runs three times a day by the school house All we can hear is PUTO PUTO PUTO even the kids dont like to play. It was really nice at evening all the way out is clear the island seems setin on top of the surface out in Ocean. When I look into mountain everything is green flower begining to bloss. Things look awful nice. When I sniff in air I can smell flowers and look in to mountains on each side of village look clearer than I ever seen before. Little fog string round foot of mountains looks nice. Hardly little breeze come from the southwest most of the houses are smoking. When I pass some houses I smell the boiled salmon So is my house too, my wife she is boiling salmon for supper. I went down to other end of village to see whats doing and I mett John on road. I ask him if he is going out with his father tomorrow. He tol me he will be out tomorrow if the wither keep like this. He say it will be lots of fun tomorrow going to get seagull eggs and shooting ducks and get wood. He ask me why dont I come in his boat. Iv already got boat to go anyway. Most of the 14fters carry 2 men and 2 or 3 five gallon cans of gassoline and guns and cooking eqt. They dont have much room if they carry 3 men. I tol him I already got to go in some once boat. Now the sun was get in back of the mountain and the shadow showed on the other side of the bay. When I look toward the school I see Mr. Foster Jones was coming out of his power plant house which is 10 feet away from the school. He was oiling his motor. Of course he always run it midnight too. I keep walking around no wind the ocean in bay was just like a water in pan on the table. When I look out the bay I can see the seagulls and

sea parrots flying and little birds waving beside the old ravens flying over the village, and crawling. I never see so many crows in my life before as now I thought myself.

I stopt in Alfreds house his wife is my aunt. Sometimes I go visit her house. I had few cups of tea with her. I visited my aunts house untill getting little dark now. When I start to my own house which is 50 or 60 feet away I can hear chipee birds still chiping and still seagulls cloks. I got home.

When I got home my wife had table ready and was waiting for me my daughter was sleeping on the bed. My wife said things look very quiet, lonesome today. I had my supper and whent to lay down on my bed and something in my mind tells me something is gone happened. One thing was in my mind steady, was, Japanese will be here tomorrow but I couldnt figure it out.

My wife was seting by me and said, Darling are you going out with the other men for wood? I tol her I'll be out tomorrow. Bring some seagull eggs when you come home, and I tol her I will if I can. I told my wife that I haven hunch Japs will be here some time she said to me. I hope not they might kill everyone. Every time when my heart thumps makes me feel sick and weak. Its about 11 P.M. so I tol my wife I am gone to. bed now. She tol me Darling before you go to bed get some water there is no water in the house for morning. I got up and get water from my aunts house sky nice and clear then I go to bed. My wife was still up washing dishes I didnt have to thats why I go to sleep.

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

Before the Japs came to Attu in 1942 the Navy was going to take us away. The Navy came out in May and left about 10 men and 160 drums of gasoline but they didn't take us away because it was too stormy. The Navy had 10 guns and they couldn't leave them all at Attu, so they took them to Kiska Harbor and the Japs took them the same day they took Attu. The Japs came in on June 7, 1942, and took

Attu and I guess they used the Navy's gasoline. The Japs didn't land near our village. They landed on the west side in Holtz Bay. At night we heard them coming in.

Some of us young men were going to fight the Japs. When we saw their ships coming we got out our guns and all our bullets. Then one of the old men came and talked to us and told us not to fight. He said "we are not enough to fight so many men."

Early in the morning we saw the ship. We didn't know what kind of ship it was. About 11 a.m. after we had church—it was Sunday—the Japs came into the Village. They came in over the point on the west side of Chichagof Harbor. I didn't know what to do so I ran off to the hill on the east side and hid under rocks. I stayed there half a day and then I came back. I had nothing to eat. Six men stayed out all day. The Japs were looking for them but couldn't find them, so they sent some of the village men out to bring them in.

The first Japs that came into our village were young kids. They were pretty bad—they shot into the houses. They hit Annie Hoodikoff [Hodikoff] in the leg. The Jap doctor fixed her. She died in Tacoma Hospital about 1946, after we got back from Japan. She had TB.

Right after the first bunch of Japs the second bunch came. They were better. They were the officers and they made the young kids stop shooting.

### **Alex Prossoff, 1947 (1988)**

We were having church services in the little Russian church in Attu on Sunday morning, June 7, 1942, when boats entered the harbor. When the gunboats got closer to the village we saw that they were Japs. They started machine-gun fire on the village. Some of our boys ran for their rifles to fight the Japs but Mike Hodikoff, our chief, said, "Do not shoot, maybe the Americans can save us yet."

**Mike Lokanin, 1947 (1988)**

June 7th/42 Sunday in the morning early when I was sleeping some one knocking at my door so I got up and look who was it? he said I am fred with frightened voice. I was wondering what was the matter so I ask him what was the matter. he tol me there is boats out there and they are unknown boats dont have any flag on either. One big 2 chimneyed boat. might be Japs.

I ask how many there are. He was half frightened and shake. He said he dont know it look like more than 4 or 5. So then he got out and went down to his house and I went to my bed again. It was 0300A.M. It was too early for me to get up anyway. My wife she was wake up to she ask me what was matter and who was at the door. I told her it was fred and she start to nurse her baby. I went back to sleep again. I usly get up at 0700A.M. and bld fire and make breakfast eat with my wife. I was just about to get up some one at my door again. I got out of my bed and look out through the window. It is Fred again. I said to him whats trouble, Fred. He said the boats are look like Japanese boats. I said to him why if its Japanese thay could come right in harbor and shoot the village. I said to him why dont he go to the school and tell Mr. Jones about it and maybe he can send wire to Dutch Harbor.

I beginning to think it might be Japs too. I go in my house and Fred left.

I said to my wife Honey Fred said Japanese boats outside the harbor. She lift her head off her pillow look at her baby and said Oh god blesses what we'll do then. I said to her Nothing we can do Honey God knows what we'll do and if our time is come' we'll be dead If our hour is there will be dead. So all we can do is think god in our heart that is all.

She said Oh my dear little baby. She gott tears in her eyes as she spook.

I told her I am gone out and see what the others doing. When I got out of my house and start to my aunts house I seen little skiff was

gone out to the cannon island to get close look at the boats. When I got to my Ants house most of the Village men were lined long side of house and they all talking and talk. Try to figure out what kind of boats are they what nationality and we seen plane flying, circling round but didnt seem to bother anything at all. The third time he come to circl round he got close. We saw the red Ball on the wings and on each side the ship single motor and 2 winged and 2 men one on back of pilot. He was gunner. he had machine guns on each side of him.

It was about 830 A.M. evry one getting ready for church that there last time for evr entering there church Before church my brother-in-law Aleck and other person which went out in skiff came ashore. They all said it is Japanese boats. We went to school to talk to Mr. C. Foster Jones and tol him the Japs boat are outside the harbor and we ask him to send message to Dutch Harbor because he got words US Govt to say when he sees Japs or if we seen Japs and tell him. He supost to say "the boys out today and didnt see a boat and come home and they gone to have a fried codfish" that means a Japanese boats are come here. We ask him to send message. He said it might be marines or navy. He was sending weather reports to Dutch Harbor and I told him he might as well send message because boys seen Japanese plane. He said if he make mistake call up Dutch Harbor it will be his nick. So I just walk out I seen Mrs. Jones curling her hair. I stop by her room and tol her I am afraid they are Japs. She smile and said to me Oh it might by Navy. If they are Japs why they couldv be in long time ago. I just walk out I heard the church bell still ring. I did not go to church 4 of us went out to ....the Point. The boat was so closs we could see mens walking on deck and around 20 or 25 small landing barges went back and ford from Holtz bay to transport. We were walking along edge of hills and plane was flying round. Didnt seem to bother us so we 4 of us thought might be Americans too. So we just keep on walking edge of hill and wave at boat. It was nice and clear sunshine. I thought I hear a sound of talking I tol the others Hey listen I stood there look around findly I see mens .coming from back of mountain foot. One of the boys I was with tol me lets go to them they might be Americans. I tol him I dont want to go to them



and we stood and watch them running and crewling on ground. We look at boats and boats are raising red and white flags and moving farther out in Ocean. We all made run toward the Village to see what will be happend. We see mens running down the mountain and hills as soon as they reach the beach cross the creek and open machine guns and rifle fire at Village. I though myself My wife and daughter is goner now. I thought in my mind It will be all right if they are killed without tourcher and suffer. The way the rifle and machine guns take off we 4 of us thought nothing was left in Village All we can see is men walking in Village but they were the men which came to Village. We see Japs running to Village with guns in there hands. First building they get in is school where Mr. and Mrs. Foster Jones is. We thought Foster might send message to Dutch Harbor. I tol the boys its no use for us to go to Village now the way the rifles and machine guns are shooting. Lets hide for the night and snake up to village at night and see if anything left. So we crewl under big rock which could weigh 10,00 [one thousand?] pound and we heard plane was flying over us and we was gone to take a peak at it and just about stuck our heads out and big guns went off. Boy we went back in under the rock we was piled on top of each others. We stayed ther most whole morning and afternoon. In late afternoon we heard somebody was talking and it was sound like one of our mens. We said to each other it might be they hide too. Sudnely I heard they calling us but I didnt answer because I want to make a sure its our men. By god I could hear Willie and freds voice so I pull my head out and answer them and I got out under rock with the rest of the boys. Look round but we couldnt see anyone. I answer and said Who is that call us Please show up if you are there. I seen someone setin on a hil was Willie and fred which the Japs send them to look for us. We all come out under the' rock and we start to go home. We ask what was going on. Willie said in low tone them little Japs got us now and fred said We were afraid of Japs before now we got to be afraid of Americans Fred turn his head round with his mad looking face and said We all under Japs instead of Americans. I ask him if anyone got kill He said Evryone is OK accept his wife got hit in her leg but Japanese doctor fix her. I asked him How is my wife and kid He said they all OK I would like to ask more but he lookawfull mad I was kind afraid ask him. I told

him lets go now. Willie tol me theybeen lookin for me all over Place and couldnt fine me and the boys with me. Also one boy was missing Sergy Artumonoff. On the way home we find him he give up because he seen us walking all together When he walk up to us he said, Arent the Japs gone to hurt me We tol him Oh Japs wont do any hurt to you. He bagan to smile.

fred tol me I got to go to school. So when we got to school I walk in all the door got guards by Japanese. In the schoolroom I seen Mr. and Mrs. C. Foster Jones setin on one of the school desks. I said Hello to Mr. Jones but one of the gaurds said to me No no no talk to Ameleka He was tryin to tell me not to talk with American Foster anyway said to me Well Mike the world has seem to change today. We are under Japanese rule now. I was gone tell him it was his fault to but I thought it too late now I just look at him with out saying word. Just then the Japanese MP came in with American flag under his arm and come to me and start to read paper which is Proclamation Of course he read in is language He got Intripiter with him. The MP stand in front of me and read paper I couldnt understand the words Intripiter explain meaning of the words that the Japanes capture us from U.S. Gov. now we are under Japanese Gov. Japanese Gov. will keep us under one condition that from now on we must obey the Japanese. After reading the proclamaion he tol me to go home not to go round unless I get primission. from Comander Yamadaki. So I went home and my house was in bad looking shape everything was threwin on the floor. My door was spoiled, 8 pullet holes on end of house, 2 pullet holes in my stove which one go through to fire place and my wife wasnt home. All my guns are gone some other things was gone I didnt care much about guns I hate to lose my watch 21 jewels all my papers were scadder on the floor. So I went down to chiefs house my wife usely stay there if I am not home. By Golly was there I walk in and look for my daughter I didnt see it so I ask wife where is Taty She was sleeping My wife was serving tea and she ask me if I like to have cup of tea I sure need it too. I tol her yess She me cup and just about I was gone to drink my tea one Japs came in they was looking for me he said I just left the table and go out with him. He tol me to help Mr. Jones move out of school so I went in there. Fellow named Kasukabe,

Intripitor, was in school and Mr. and Mrs. Jones was picking up there things. Man had sword. Mr. Jones had big load under his arm. This Jap want him to take some more. He said Aleck and Mike will take them to me Jap said No you take them and he slap Mr. Jones on his face and knock him down on floor and start to Kick em on body and picked em up and slap em down again and kick out door. But they didnt touch Mrs. Jones and they didnt touch Aleck and me. After he kick Mr. Jones out he pull his sword out of its case and went after Mr. Jones Of course I couldnt see what happend after he kicked out anyway I was so scared I shake. Seems like I am gone shake the whole Village down I was tryen to brase myself but I was still shake Japs take Mr. and Mrs. Jones to Traders house. Of course trader which is Mr. Fred Schroeder is not on Attu. Lucky hes not on Attu if he was he might be dead or taken to Japan too.

On the way I find Mrs. Jones slipper stuck in durt. Soon as I deliver the things in there to them I just mnnto my house and I stayed outside try to cool myself from shaking. I didnt want to scare my wife.

I walked into my house my wife looked at me. Whats the matter, Honey you look pale.

Oh I said I just dont feel good maybe from catching cold.

You better warm up Honey she said. She had little supper ready we didnt have much lefted in the house sugar milk also was gone. I had to bum milk from Elizabeth Prosoff for my baby. After I got eaten my supper I helped Pari cleaning dishes and I told her what happend to Mr. and Mrs. Jones She said to me Honey they might do same thing to us. I tol her I dont think so. After we finish dishes it is pass 12 PM day start to break about 1.30AM I went to bed with my wife. I couldnt go to sleep I roll in my bed It was light and bright too. Boy the machine guns go off in the air and I heard plane I went out on my porch and I seen plane was flying very low made a turn go out over Point without bullet touchd. I lite a fire in stove and when I had coffee ready call my wife she wasnt sleeping she got up and have coffee with me she said to me Honey what plane was the Japanese shooting at I said to her It was American plane.

She said to me God bless they might bomb this place.

As I was talking with my wife I heard some one come. I look out It was Kasukabi the fellow who Kick Mr. Jones last night. Jap was in hurry too. I was wondering what was gone on. He come at my door and call me I went out He said Good Morning and I said Good morning to him.

Mr. Foster Jones is dead. Of course I didnt ask him how he died. They had 2 intripiters one was name Imai young fellow and other was Kasukabi He was higher he had 3 stars. Mr Imai had only 2 stars on his collar. When I get down near Schroeder house I mett Mr. Imai for first time.

He said to me Are you intripiter too? Looks to me he is nice to talk with I asked him how Foster died. He said he dont know it either. Later Mr. Kasukabe come to us he start to talk. He was talking in his language I couldnt understand what he says. I see him cut across his wrist with his finger. Someone come out and call him. He go in house and Imai was look round before he spook to me. Then he said Foster cut his own wrist with his pocketknife. I was thinking after they capture Foster Jones I dont see why they left his pocket knife for him.

They call us in he was half sunk in his own blood. They wont let me see his face or body. He was wrapped in blanket. They tol me to bury him without coffin. So I dug a grave by our church. Measure destains from corner of church with my eyes and try to remember wind direction It was burried in SW corner of church grave depth 7 ft. disent from church to grave 15 ft. After that I bury him that was end of him then and I never try to forget where I berried his body. And Imai was by me all the time I work.

Some of us Attuans stay by Mrs. Jones all the time. We dont know what Japs might do to her. She is sick and has bad cuts on her wrists too. But she gets well.

Mr. Kasukabe lost one star. Mr. Imai received 3 stars. He got higher After Foster got murdered.

**Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

A few of the boys ran away. Japs landed and came running into the village, shooting. Lucky only one woman get hurt. She is shot in leg. So much shooting and machine gun bullets flying all around Japs kill some of their own men. They capture the village. Some Japs take Mr. and Mrs. Jones and all the natives to schoolhouse and keep us there whole day without food and water. Mr. Jones is radio man. Mrs. Jones is school teacher. They very nice people. The Japs keep us there until nine o'clock at night. The Joneses live in schoolhouse but the Japs want the building so they tell them to leave. Mr. Jones try to take little food. The Japs beat and kicked them. They knocked them down. Some of us take a few of their things over to Mr. Schroeder's house and then we could not do anything more for them and the Japs let us go home.

Next morning the Japs tell us Foster Jones is dead. Mike Lokanin buried him by the church. He was just wrapped in blanket. Mike said his wrists are cut. We tried to make Mrs. Jones comfortable. Some of us stay with her all the time. She is sick and has bad cuts on her wrists, too. But she gets well.

Japs have taken down our flag but Innokinty gets it and hides it. I hide the church money. The Japs go through our houses and take many things until one officer stop them. They put lines around our houses and Jap soldiers are not allowed to bother us.

**Olean Prokopeuff (Golodoff), 1981**

The year 1942, on a Sunday morning, the Japanese armed forces came and captured us. They came from the interior of our island after day-break. That morning, a Japanese airplane flew around the village three times. The teacher [Etta Jones] was informed of this by the villagers. Instead of informing the authorities, the teacher told the

villagers that there were lots of American patrol planes patrolling this area. After the teacher told them that, the villagers felt secure.

After they came down from the hills, it was said that our village was surrounded by them.

After that, the villagers went up to the observation hill and saw the Japanese fleet anchored in the bay on the other side. As they were attacking in force, one of our ladies was shot in her leg. As they were firing their weapons in all directions during their assault, their forces also hit their own men and it is believed that a few of their own men had been killed.

After they came, they went to Alfred's wife's house. Since my house was being shot at, and since I was being scared, I went to Alfred's wife's house carrying my three year child, Elizabeth.

From there we went to Alfred's wife's house where she was lying in bed with a sore leg. After we went to Alfred's wife's house, the Japanese soldiers surrounded it. They faced the house and had their rifles aimed at it. So at that point in time, Perocoviya [Pariscovia] sat down. I then thought to myself, "What if I get shot standing up? I would drop the child and she might hurt herself." So I, too, sat down. The Japanese soldiers did not shoot, and an officer got there in time to give orders to move away from the house. So the soldiers moved. The Japanese had an interpreter who spoke English pretty well. He told us to follow him to the school house, and we followed him there.

After we arrived at the school, when a fire was made outside, I was afraid that the school house was going to be set afire with all of us in there. Since we weren't being set on fire, we were asked if we were all present. We stated that three of our young men were out. They waited for the young men to come back to the village but there was no sign of them. The young men did not return from hiding until some of the village men went out and escorted them back to the village. Only then did they return.

The young men were brought home then we were sent back to our houses. When we went into our homes, everything was scattered on our floors, even the Easter eggs were on the floor. It was never determined what the Japanese searched for.

We all stayed inside our homes. The guards stayed by our homes with bayonets. They were standing around guarding like that for three days. Once day-break came, some flares were shot into the air. We went under our beds because of being scared, not knowing what was happening.

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

We lived on Attu three months after the Japs came. They guarded our houses all the time. We could go outside for fresh air but not away from the houses except that they let us go out and fish once in a while. We had to eat our own food. We didn't have to give the Japs any food. They didn't bother our women.

### **Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

More and more Japs come to Attu. Many of their men get sick. They make their camp all around our village. They pile their things on the beach. One time I tell them wrong thing and storm comes and they lose lots of their things. They get very mad and tell me next time I tell them wrong thing they kill me.

All summer long the Japs stayed on Attu. We did not have much food but sometimes they would let us go out in dory to fish. They made us take little Jap flag on our boat. We used to make fun of it and say it looks like target. We cannot hunt wood so we have to tear boards from inside our homes to burn.

## Commentary

The Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor on June 3 and 4, 1942. On Attu, in the early morning of June 7, Foster Jones sent his usual weather report by radio. Charles Magee, teacher and radio operator on Atka, heard Jones say he had a hunch the Japanese were going to attack Attu. The radio went dead after that (Stein n.d.:8).

As the Japanese forces approached Attu, they split up, and the larger force got lost. On the night of June 7, 1942, the Attu residents heard the Japanese boats coming into Holtz Bay, on the west side of the island. A contingent of soldiers came into the village on foot the next morning. It was Sunday morning and the attack surprised the Attuans as they left church (Carter 1994:35).

The Japanese poured out of the hills west of the village, yelling and shooting. The frightened Aleuts ran to their homes. Rifle fire randomly struck the houses. At least two Aleuts were slightly wounded, one of them Annie Hodikoff, the chief's wife,<sup>5</sup> shot in the leg. Some of the younger Aleuts wanted to get their rifles and defend their homes and families. (Stein n.d.:8)

An older man counseled the young men that they were outnumbered and would never prevail. Six men, including Innokenty Golodoff, ran away to the hills and stayed there all day (Golodoff 1966). Later the Japanese sent other Unangan residents to bring them back.

The Unangan residents were gathered in the schoolhouse and Foster and Etta Jones were questioned separately. The Japanese distributed mimeographed papers and announced to the Native population of the village that they were liberated from the American oppressors. After the soldiers searched the houses for guns, ransacking them in the process, the Attuans were allowed to return home.

There are conflicting accounts about what happened to Etta and Foster Jones, and the death of Foster Jones is especially controversial. According to one Unangan man, the Japanese knew Foster Jones

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<sup>5</sup>Actually, it was chief Mike Hodikoff's brother Fred Hodikoff's wife Annie who was shot in the leg. Annie Hodikoff was 23, about the same age as Annie Borenin, who became Mike Hodikoff's common-law second wife in Japan.



had a radio, and tortured him to find it, then killed him. Japanese reports, and some Attuans including Nick Golodoff, have said that Foster Jones killed himself, or attempted to commit suicide. Several sources agree that Etta Jones had wounds on her wrists, but that they were not mortal. According to some accounts, Foster Jones also slit his wrists. However, Mike Lokanin, who was ordered to bury Jones, denied this story. When he told Mike that Jones was dead, one of the Japanese soldiers pantomimed cutting his wrist to indicate that Jones had killed himself. Mike, however, was skeptical and said later that it was clear that Jones was deliberately killed. When Jones's body was exhumed at Attu in 1948, examination confirmed that he had been shot through the head (Kohlhoff 1995:42).

The next morning, the Native residents of the village were assembled at the flagpole, and the Japanese flag was raised (Stein n.d.:9). Later some of the Attuans covertly mocked the flag, calling it the "Japanese meatball" or saying it looked like a target. One of them stole the American flag back and hid it from the Japanese. The Japanese soldiers took some food from the Attuans, but their commander<sup>6</sup> returned the stolen food. He ordered the Unangan residents to stay in their houses and made the village off-limits to soldiers (Kohlhoff 1995:43). The Japanese roped off the houses of the village, evidently more to discourage the Japanese soldiers from bothering or stealing from the Attuans than to keep the Attuans inside (Carter 1994:40-41).

The Japanese troops occupied Attu for three months before they took the Unangan residents to Japan. During that time there was a death in the village, the elderly John Artumonoff, a former chief (Jolis 1994:11; Murray 2005). The Attuans found it difficult to fish, hunt, or collect food, because they had to get permission from the Japanese every time they went out in a boat. When they caught fish, the Japanese confiscated some for their own use. Because the Attuans were not allowed to go looking for firewood, they had to burn boards from their houses. One of the Japanese officers wrote in his diary that the Attuans loved to wear bright colors, and some wore berets. He noted that although alcohol was forbidden on Attu, the villagers enjoyed sake and beer when the Japanese soldiers

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<sup>6</sup>Kohlhoff states that this was Commander Yamazaki, but John Cloe has corrected that statement. Major Matsutoshi Hozumi was the senior Japanese commander on Attu at the time the soldiers stole the food. Colonel Yasuyo Yamazaki was the commander in charge of Japanese forces during the Battle of Attu (Cloe 2011).

offered it to them. The officer said the chief's son "Little Mike" [George Hodikoff?] accompanied them on mountain hikes and boat rides, and often played the guitar and accordion for them (Stewart 1978:62-63). Some of the other children also befriended the Japanese during these weeks in the summer of 1942. Kiri Sugiyama, a military photographer, took several pictures of Attuan children.



Photo 28: Japanese soldier with local boy, perhaps "Little Mike," on Attu, 1942. (Source: Aleutian Pribilof Island Association)

Some of the most familiar pictures of the Attuans are the ones the Japanese took after pinning numbers to every man, woman, and child. These appear to have been taken in Attu, before the villagers were taken to Japan.

► Photo 29. Young boy, #24. (Source: Aleutian Pribilof Island Association)





Photo 30. Mother and baby, #22 and #23. (Source: Aleutian Pribilof Island Association)



Photo 31. Marina Hodikoff, #36. (Source: Aleutian Pribilof Island Association)



Photo 32. Alex Prosoff, #31. (Source: Aleutian Pribilof Island Association)



Photo 33. Elizabeth Prossoff, #8. (Source: Aleutian Pribilof Island Association)



Photo 34. Young man, #17. (Source: Aleutian Pribilof Island Association)



## *LIFE AS A JAPANESE P.O.W.*

Many of the Attu people were sick. Many of the Attu people were dying. About half of them died. I am not sure exactly what happened but they were dying one by one.

—Nick Golodoff

*I GUESSED THAT THE JAPANESE WERE PLANNING TO STAY a while because they brought in extra supplies like onions and potatoes. Once the Japanese finished unloading supplies, I guess plans changed because they were leaving and they took us with them. At that time, I did not understand why they did not leave us in Attu. While we were heading down to the beach, the Japanese were burning the onions and potatoes. My mom gave me some cooked potatoes off the beach so I had some. The Japanese took us out to the boat and put us in the cargo hold, where we stayed all the way to Tokyo. They dropped off some Japanese troops there. From Tokyo we went to the island of Hokkaido, which is where we were held until the war was over. We were taken to Sapporo, the largest city on Hokkaido.<sup>7</sup>*

*The next thing I knew we were in a house and we weren't allowed to leave. In Japan, they put us all in one building for over three years with one Japanese police officer guarding us. The building we were kept in was made out of wood; there were two levels, and I stayed on the second floor. There were two planks under a building for a bathroom. Coal was piled under the house. There wasn't a sink. I remember my mom used to wipe my hands with a wet cloth. The house must have had a stove to provide heat, but I don't remember it.*

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<sup>7</sup>The Attuans may have stopped in Sapporo, but they were taken to Otaru, another city on Hokkaido, for the duration of the war.



Photo 35. The first house the Attuans lived in on Hokkaido. (Source: Aleutian-Pribilof Island Association)

*When we first got there we used to eat only rice, oats and fish, but later as the war was still going on there was hardly any food. Even the Japanese did not have much food.*

*I did not know what the men did for work, but I know that my mom worked digging the clay and I would go with her to work. There were two or three Japanese women working with mom. I do not know how long they worked during the day but we used to walk there and walk back home. I used to walk with my mom to and from the clay pits. Other than that, I never left that building.*

*At the first house I had to stay inside most of the time. It felt like time was going slow since there was not much to do. I spent most of my time looking out the window.*

*Sometime during the war, I was taken to another building. During the last year of the war, I was able to go out. The Attuans were able to go out and find food for themselves. The second building was bigger and had a fence around it. There was a sour green apple tree and peach or apricot tree nearby. The policeman wouldn't let us climb the trees. During the summer, the fruit started dropping. Early in the morning, I used to get up, pick them off the ground, and eat some. Going out and doing things kept me going. I also spent a lot of time sitting inside by the window and watching the Japanese go by. In the morning I could hear Japanese women with wooden shoes walking down the street and it would wake me up. I didn't talk to the Japanese. A little boy would come to the fence to play with me but I was too afraid to go outside the fence.*

*At the second building, there was a hospital above us where our people were taken when they were sick. I am unsure what kind of sickness they had but most of them were in the hospital. Hardly anyone was in the building. My dad was in the hospital as well and sometimes in the morning, my mom and I would walk upstairs to visit him and return in the evening. My dad died soon after we moved to the second house. I was seven or eight when he died. When I was in Japan in 1992 [actually 1995] I asked for my dad's medical record but they would not give it to me. I had an older sister too, Helen. I don't know what happened to her – maybe she died in Japan. I didn't know about any of my siblings. I thought I was alone.*

*Many of the Attu people were sick. Many of the Attu people were dying. About half of them died. I am not sure exactly what happened but they were dying one by one. When we were in the second building, I think during the last year we were there, just Steve Hodikoff and I were in the building and everyone else was in the hospital. I was kind of surprised when Steve said to be quiet and a ghost came through the door.*

*It walked in when we were both on the bed. The ghost walked in and turned around then went back out. We could see right through the ghost, but it was all white. The next day somebody else passed away.*

*The people who died were cremated and their ashes were put in pans. My dad got cremated too. After the war ended their remains were shipped to Atka and buried.*

*I remember this one woman had a hole on top of her feet. This woman must have been related to me somehow because my mom would take me to her. Every time I went to visit, the hole on the top of her feet got bigger and bigger, and then she passed away. I myself had the same problem. The hole on top of my feet was getting bigger. I do not know what they did to it but it started drying up and healed completely. I do not know what the cause of it was. Today I still have a scar from it.*

*I was told that when I was in Japan, I was in the hospital too. I do not remember what happened exactly. I was taken there in a covered wagon with Japanese pulling me. It had two wheels and was all covered.<sup>8</sup> A Japanese man was pulling me to another building. When I got there, they put me in a room with a window and told to stay in my room, and so I did. I didn't know why I was separated from my mom. I cannot remember how long I stayed. I used to get a quarter of a bowl of watery rice a day and sometimes oats and water. I could see through the window, but all I could see was ground. I was rooming with a Japanese boy younger than I was, and his mom would come and visit him once in awhile. I noticed that his mother did not like me very much. When the Japanese boy and his mother were talking, I could not understand what they were saying. After a while, I picked up a few things because I started to learn the Japanese language.*

*When I got back to my mom, I was told I was skin and bones. When I was in the hospital, I used to daydream about a big house by the beach and pies and cakes. Back when I was in Attu, I did not have many*

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<sup>8</sup>Perhaps this human-powered wheeled transportation was a rickshaw.

pies or cakes. In fact, I do not remember having a birthday party in my life. Even when I came back to the United States, I do not remember having a birthday party.

I remember being hungry. The Attuan boys would steal food at night. They stole carrots, potatoes, and turnips. The boys shared the food with everyone so no one would tell on them. There was no meat but there was a little bit of fish. I ate some seaweed.

I did not have shoes while I was in Japan. I do not know how or when I got them, but I had wooden slippers. Every morning on the pavement, you could hear wooden slippers clapping every morning and that is what used to wake me up. Since there was a fence around our building, we were able to step out. Every time I got up, I went out the back door to get some fresh air.

I could see the train station from where I stayed, and I watched some military men training the station workers to be in the military. There was a one skinny tall Japanese military man trainee and this trainer kept slapping him very often, so I guessed he did not like this tall person.

We spoke Aleut among ourselves. While we were in Japan a police officer and his wife lived with us for over three years. They communicated with us by writing in English. Most of the Japanese could write English, but they couldn't speak it. My mom knew how to read and write English. My parents spoke some Russian and the languages got mixed.

We were told that America was losing the war. I do not know why they were telling us that, but that is what they wanted us to believe, I guess. We didn't have any TV or radio, but the policeman had a radio, so I could hear some Japanese music and someone talking over the radio. The police officer had his own room and I never was in that room so I do not really know what it was but from that music, I started to learn to sing. I remembered all the songs and I started learning the language like

1,2,3,4,5 in Japanese. Just as I was learning, I left and started to forget. While in Japan I hardly talked much since there was not many people to talk to, I just listened and learned from that.

I think it was during the last year of the war, at night I could hear projectiles exploding and see search lights. American planes were flying high and I could hear the Japanese shooting at them. I never got hurt while I was in Japan.

Close to the end of the war, my mom and the police officer's wife took me to a place that was like a small pool and I enjoyed it very much. It was supposed to be for a bath. I wanted to play there but I was told to hurry up so I did. I do not remember getting back to the place where I was staying.

One day toward the end of the three years in Japan the policeman took us down to the beach and we saw Japanese women diving for sea urchins. None of us knew how to dive or wanted to dive, and it was too cold so we just watched. Later we started moving some big boulders around and found some small crabs and picked some. When we got home, we cooked some and ate them. They were really good. There was not much to eat but it helped. I don't remember how often we ate. Near the end we started getting some better food. I think maybe it was because the Japanese were losing and they didn't want the Attuans telling everyone we didn't get fed well. Late in the third year we started to get kite fish. One time a police officer took a couple of younger men and me to go shopping. There were a few kite fish, oats, and a little bit of rice for sale. The police officer tried to get some oats but the store would not give us any since there was not enough. Once we got home, the Japanese cooked some food for us. Even when I was hungry, I did not eat much since I did not like the kite fish very much. The kite fish meat was like glue; it was sticky and I did not want eat any more even though I was hungry.

Most Japanese were kind. One time there were a few Japanese police officers who came and visited us, and one officer was somewhat mean.



Photo 36. Policeman Takeshiro Shikanai. [Source: Masami Sugiyama] [p. 259, M. Sugiyama 1987]

## Other First-hand Accounts:

### **Olean Prokopeuff (Golodoff), 1981**

After three days we were taken aboard a ship and we were on our way. My house was opened and burned. We were taken out to the ship when it was getting dark. After spending the night on board the ship with much whistling and running about going on, and because of our ignorance of exactly what was happening, we were very anxious. Later on we were told that an American submarine was detected and that was the cause for all the commotion. A short-cut was said to be taken to where they were going. (I was not aware of what short cut they meant.) After traveling for some time, we were told that we were passing by a navy yard. All during the voyage, we were kept in a hold which was very unpleasant smelling, and it was also dark. We never once saw daylight until we reached Japan.

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

When the Japs were ready to leave in September, they carried all our stuff onto their ships for us. We took our blankets, beds, chairs—everything except our houses. The Japs treated us pretty good. Two of them spoke English. None of us were scared when they took us on the ship—no women cried. Then we went to Kiska and went to another ship—a bigger one. We stayed at Kiska for one day.

### **Mike Lokanin, 1947, (1988)**

From 7th June to 1st of Sept, 1942 we had been tol to be ready to go to Japan. So we got evrything ready. Imai tell us we better take as much food to Japan as we can. It is hard to get food in Japan maybe. So each family takes flour sugar barrels of salt fish. We dont know how we are going to live in Japan so we take tents stoves fish nets windows and doors also. Good thing we did. One day, 14 Sept, 1942 a coal carrier came and they tol us to get ready we gone to Japan. We take our stuff to vessel. We got aboard at late pass midnight. They put us down in hole where the coal had been. Evrything all black and dirty. Some of the little kids didnt want to leve Attu they cry



but Japs soliders pick them up throw them down in hole too. There are 42 of us Attu people and Mrs. Jones.<sup>9</sup> Some old peoples very bad scared. The vessel start off for Kiska and one of our peoples died on the boat it was Alfred Prokopioffs mother and Capt tol us to throw her overboard. So we let her go overboard in between Kiska and Attu Pass. Next morning when we got to Kiska ther were plenty Japs there as in Attu. Some houses are bombed 3 submarines were there 3 sunkin boats were there too and about 12 destroyers were there. Other vessel Big Army transport that was the one to take us to Japan. Everybody was kind of afraid because if American sub or plane come it will be our end.

That evening we take off for Japan. On the way to Japan we were kepted in hatch and not allowed to come out doors.

### **Olean Prokopeuff (Golodoff), 1981**

When we reached Japan, the Captain collided with the dock, and when this happened, we were thrown from our seated position right on to the deck. Then we thought to ourselves, "Ayayaa! Did our ship get shot?" This was a scary experience.

Finally, we were gathered on top of the dock. Then we were sprayed. Later on we were picked up by a vehicle and taken to a black house. Since we fed ourselves with our own food from home during the trip, the only different food that was given to us was some warm rice. It was the only warm food we ate.

When asked if we were hungry, we told them yes. A meal was cooked for us that day. They brought our food on a tray. Chop sticks, which we did not know how to use, were given to us to use. There was a policeman present there with his partner. So as soon as they started talking with each other and not paying attention to us, we would quickly eat with our hands. When the policeman turned towards us, we would pretend like nothing had happened at all. We were also served an unusual looking cooked bird with its feathers still on it. We felt suspicious of the cooked bird and so we did not eat it.

After we were fed, we were put to bed.

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<sup>9</sup>According to Etta Jones, she was separated from the Attuans and taken to Yokohama before the Attuans went in a different boat to Hokkaido (Breu 2009:180).

**Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

Then one day in September a coal carrier came and they told us to get ready, we are going to Japan. One Japanese man who was kind to us tell us we better take as much food with us as we can for it is hard to get food in Japan, maybe. So we do. Each family takes flour, sugar, and barrels of salt fish.

We are all put down in hold of coal carrier where coal had been. Everything all black and dirty. Some of the little children do not want to leave Attu. They cry but Japs soldiers pick them up and throw them down in holds, too. There are forty-two of us, old men and women, young people and the children. Most all the women and older girls going to have babies.

First we go to Kiska. A white man, Mr. House, is with us here. He was Navy man on Kiska when Japs take it. There were ten American Navy men there. The Japs take all of them prisoners but Mr. House runs away and hides from Japs. He eats things he finds, plants and *pootchky* and along the beach. But finally, he can't find anything more because he doesn't know. So he goes to the Japs and gives up. We never see him after we get to Japan.

My wife's mother gets sick on the coal carrier and died. They make us just through her into the sea. We could go on deck once a day for fresh air but if we were going by any cities we had to stay in the hold.

After thirteen or fourteen days one night about 11:00 P.M. we landed at the city of Otaru on the island of Hokkaido in Japan. We stayed on board the ship until daylight. When morning came some Japs soldiers, some policemen and some Japs doctors came on board. They examined all of us but did not find any disease. They took us ashore then. We do not see Mrs. Jones again.

I was just wondering where they will take us when they brought us to a house that looked like nobody had lived in it for very long time, fifteen or ten years. It was very dirty but even then Japs make us take off our shoes before we can go in.

They ask us all kinds of questions about American. They asked me if Americans are good people; if we have any military outposts on our island; if we know where there were outposts in the Aleutians Islands; how often the Coast Guard and American warships came into Attu harbor. One of our head men told us not to tell the truth to them so we did not tell them the right things. They asked us how many white people lived with us and we told them just two, the teacher and the radio man. I told them the Japs killed the man. They asked us which army we liked best, Japs or Americans. Mike and I are only ones who talk to them. I tell them I can understand American language and that they are very kind to us. As long as Americans are fight for my country I'll be on their side. I told them Japs destroy our homes, make us prisoners and put us on a land where we cannot talk his language. So I cannot say Japs are good people.

All of us are kept in one house. There are forty-two of us in one five-room house. We put our mattresses and blankets on the floor to sleep on. It was getting winter and we did not have enough blankets to keep warm. We had only one stove we brought with us from Attu. The women cooked for all of us on it. The Japs did give us little heaters but we did not have enough coal to keep us warm. They give us only one bucket of coal for all day.

### **Olean Prokopeuff (Golodoff), 1981**

Our mattresses were laid on the floor. Pillows were also given to us, and they were very hard, but we did not complain. The blankets that were given to us were almost as thick as the mattresses, but we used them anyway. Every morning the floor was mopped. The house that we were staying at had a kitchen down stairs. We had a stove that we had taken from Attu which we used there.

We had soup that looked like grass and some dried rice. When we ran out of grass soup, we started making rice soup. Prior to this, we ate the food that we brought along from Attu, like the dried fish, the salted fish, and so on, but when we ran out of food, we were given vegetables like carrots, potatoes, and so on. After eating the

boiled potatoes, we would have very bad stomach aches, and they were very painful.

It so happened one day that we were told that some officials were coming there to our place for a visit. A Japanese cook was brought there for us. They told us not to go away and the Japanese cook put wood into the oven. He lit it, and as a result of that, the smoke filled the room. I can't remember whether or not cooking took place that day.

We were once again grouped and questions were asked of us. They asked if we were eating good food. We did not give them any reply. They once again asked us if we wanted to talk. We refused to talk. Then after that, we were given food once more.

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

When we got to Japan we landed at Otaru on the west side of Hokkaido. We went to the town—or city I guess—it was kind of big. They put us in one house—a big wooden house. Two policemen lived there with us. They gave us rice and bread and some fish once in awhile and a little bit of pickled radishes. A girl friend, Kasha San,



Photo 37. Mrs. Kusaka "Kasha San," a nurse and friend of Innokenty Golodoff. (Source: Masami Sugiyama) [p. 107, M. Sugiyama 1987]

saved my life. She was a nurse, and she was good to me. She gave me extra rice and she brought me eggs. She talked a little bit of English. She was there for about a year then she went away. Then I didn't get any extra food.

**Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

We were hungry, too. At first we did all right because we ate the flour and sugar and fish we brought from Attu. The Japs gave us only two cups of rice for about ten people a day. When our food was gone we could not buy any more from Japs. Then we began to get very hungry.

**Innokenty Golodoff, (1966)**

While we were at Otaru for about three years we worked digging clay. We worked about eight hours a day. We didn't work very hard. We dug it off the top of the ground and took it to the factory in a wheelbarrow. The clay was white. I guess they made dishes out of it. Our policeman took us up in the morning—we walked—and then he came for us in the afternoon. For lunch we ate the rice we brought with us in a little tin box. We had our own spoon—I never learned to use chopsticks. We never heard any news about the war. We had electric lights. At night we talked or patched up our clothes. We didn't have anything to read.

**Olean Prokopeuff, (Golodoff)**

That land where we were was very hot. We worked with picks and shovels shoveling away at the clay. Then the clay was dried and crushed. The clay was also being worked on in the factories during winter. While working on this clay, a particle of it went in my right eye. I was afraid that I was going to lose my eyesight, but I have managed to arrive here (on Atka) without having to wear glasses.

### **Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

A month after we get to Japan we had to go to work for Japs. I dug clay for a week and then I went to work in the clay factory. It was hard work. We worked from seven in the morning to five at night and got one day of rest in two weeks. The women, most of them were put to work, too.

### **Olean Prokopeuff (Golodoff), 1981**

As things were, our men were put to work. Shortly after that, they started admitting our people to the hospital. The people were getting sick one after the other until I was almost the only one left at home to cook. While I was doing that, they took my husband to the hospital. After they took my husband, my children were starving. So when I went to fetch some water, I would pick orange peelings off the ground. Then I would cook them on the top of the heater. Then I fed them to my children, and only then would they stop crying for a while.

Shortly thereafter, they admitted my children to the hospital. They asked me to come to the hospital. So I went there and “Ayayaa!” The people that were admitted to the hospital were very sick. That day a few went home. Being unable to hear what was happening, I begged to be returned to work. So they started me working on clay...

Later on, those who were sent home from the hospital took ill again. They were taken once more to the hospital. We were allowed to visit the hospital for check-ups. Whenever they did that, I would ask my people what they were doing to them. They replied, “We are being inoculated.” Ayayaa! We did not know what was being done to them.

But then the people were dying. Lots of people died there. My daughter and son were among those who were in the hospital. They would say, “Mother, come here and scratch me.” So I would go over to him/her and not knowing exactly where they wanted me to scratch, I would scratch then moved away from them. The reason why they were unable to specify where they wanted to be scratched was because they could not move.

When my husband was close to death, he sent for me. I went to the hospital, and he gave me some cigarettes which he had stashed away. Then I stayed awake with him most of the night. Then he told

me if I were sleepy to go to sleep. So I went to sleep, and during my slumber, he died.

When I was awakened, I got up, and I noticed that in our religious custom when a person dies, he is not dressed, but I watched them dress him. After he was dressed, he was taken out. I did not know what they did to him. It was not until my Leonty died that I went to where they must have taken him. Leonty was put in an oven, and I was told to light some flowers, so I did. Then I went to the other room. After that they pulled him out and I did not like what I saw. I approached a Japanese priest and asked him if it was a sin to do that. He told me that the reason why they did that was because they did not have any burying space. They said that they hardly had any space for burying people.

#### **Alex Prossoff, 1947, (1988)**

We lost twenty-one people in Japan. My step-mother gets sick first. She got TB and Japs take her to kind of hospital. But there is no heat and very little food so she died. Some died of beri-beri. Our chief, Mike Hodikoff and his son, George, eat from garbage can and get poison food. Lots of children and babies die because they hungry and nothing but rice.

#### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

When the Japs came to Attu we were 42 people and after the school teacher died 41 left Attu. But many Attu people died in Japan. They died of starving I guess. Only 25 people came back from Japan. The ones who didn't come back ate the rice for about two years, then they couldn't eat it anymore. They were sick and they couldn't and the Japs didn't have anything else to give them. We never had any fruit or vegetables. I don't know if our policemen had any other food—all I ever saw them eat was rice. We had both white and brown rice.

My two brothers and one sister died in Japan. They never buried them—they burned them. They gave the bones and ashes back to us and now they are buried at Atka. They sent them back after we got to Atka.

### **Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

One of the hardest things was we could not bury our dead. There are no burials in Japan. All are burned. When our people died they were burned, too, and the Japs gave us little boxes to put the bones in. This was hard to have to pick up the bones of our loved ones. We kept all our boxes carefully because we wanted to take them home to be buried some day.

I noticed that when a Jap body was burned the bones did not fill the box, but when an Aleut was burned the box was not big enough to hold what was left. I told a Jap guard that his people have small frames, much smaller than Attu people. Must be because his people eat too much rice.

When we first get to Japan Japanese seem to have enough food but later lots of Japs hungry, too. We never saw any Red Cross packages of food or clothing while we were in prison. No medicine ever came either. By 1944 we got so hungry we would dig in the hog boxes when the guards were not looking. Whatever we found we would wash it and cook it and try to eat it. When spring came we would work after five o'clock in some of the Jap gardens nearby for a little extra food. In summer we sometimes helped the herring fishermen. One time, I went fishing in the bay to show the Jap fishermen how we fish in Attu. All I caught was old boot. We could not eat that.

Once we killed two dogs and ate them. The men only. We gave our rice to the girls. Next day my stomach is full, I can work. After we dig garden in the fall they let us pick up anything they don't want. So we keep alive, some of us. Some of us died and sometimes I think I, too, would die like the others and never see my home again.

When we were there I used to think Japan must be one of the poorest countries in whole world. In that town of Otaru of about twenty-five thousand people<sup>10</sup> not one painted house did I see. One house only had a coat of tar. Everyone worked, and worked every day. Young boys and girls worked in the factories near the house where we lived.

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<sup>10</sup>Otaru's population in 1920 was 102,462 (Irish 2009:227) and in 1940 was 164,282 (Demographics of Imperial Japan 2011).



**Alex Prosoff, 1947, (1988)**

One day I went up to the old Jap who was kind to us and asked him which side was winning and he said the Japs were getting weak. They had plenty men but no guns and things to fight with. I saw some big Jap cruisers, two destroyers while there, but one battleship. The officers had good clothing but the soldiers poor, except their shoes. The officers slapped their men sometimes hard in the face for a little thing, maybe a gun not clean or something. I notice Jap soldier does not have much freedom. On Attu most were young, twenty-five or nineteen years old. In Japan they were maybe fifty or older.

We did not have much clothing. All I had was one pair of pants, two shirts, one pair of socks and one towel in two years. One old Jap who talked some Russian and English was kind to us. Sometimes we would give him a piece of clothing to sell and he would get us a little food.

...We had to learn to talk Japanese, even the little children. Japs said they would kill us if we didn't. Sometimes we were beaten and our women whipped. Julia Golodoff once went three days without food to eat or water to drink. This was her punishment for talking back to the Japs and blaming them when her little girl died. She said it was Japs fault. They made her shovel snow when she was barefoot, too. She did not die.

**Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

I had arguments with the guards over their gods. One of them wanted me to pray to their gods but I told him I would pray to my own God. I asked them where were their gods but they could not tell me. I saw many statues of the gods they pray to. Most were of Buddha, though. They had a funny custom of taking a dragon-like piece of wood into their houses and talking while they open and shut its big fiery mouth. What they say I don't know. Another custom was to send men with big umbrella-like hats and dressed in white to our camp. They held out small cup and begged for money. Finally guards told them it's no use; we did not have any money.



Photo 38. The Attuans near the end of their time in Otaru. (Source: Masami Sugiyama) [Sugiyama 1987, p. 191]

## Commentary

The Attuans boarded a merchant ship, the *Yoko Maru*, in mid-September of 1942. The Japanese soldiers allowed them to bring food, blankets, and even furniture with them, perhaps with the idea that their move to Japan might be permanent. The village was standing when they left, but U.S. forces destroyed it in subsequent air and sea raids as well as in the Battle of Attu.<sup>11</sup>

The trip to Japan began September 14 and took about two weeks. Alfred Prokopeuff's and Elizabeth Prosoff's mother Anecia Prokopeuff died on board ship between Attu and Kiska, and she was buried at sea (Carter 1994:46). At Kiska the Attuans were transferred to another ship, the *Nagata Maru*.<sup>12</sup> Their quarters were in a cargo hold that had been used to carry coal. They had to stay in the hold except for daily periods on deck (Kohlhoff 1995:85-86).

The ship finally arrived at the Japanese city of Otaru, on the west side of Hokkaido Island, at the end of September. The passengers were very dirty from the coal dust and had not bathed since they left Attu (Carter 1994:46). Their first house was a vacant railroad employee dormitory on Wakatake-cho. They stayed on the second floor in four rooms, each about 142 square feet. The furniture and belongings they had brought were stored at the rear of the dormitory (Stewart 2008:302-303).

It must have been a big culture shock for the Attuans to come to live in an industrial city. Otaru's population in 1940 was about 164,000, somewhat larger than its 2008 population of about 138,000. The city is in Ainu territory, but the Ainu had been decimated by disease several centuries earlier. Today Otaru is a tourist destination for Japanese and Russians.

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<sup>11</sup>After the boat carrying the Attuans left the island in September 1942, some Japanese troops stayed on Attu, in Massacre Bay. The next year, in May 1943, the Americans re-took the island of Attu in a bloody battle that resulted in some 550 American and 2,350 Japanese deaths. In the final battle, about 700 Japanese died in a desperate last-ditch charge. The Japanese survivors committed suicide, except for a few who were taken prisoner (John Cloe, personal communication).

<sup>12</sup>The boat was identified by Gengoro S. Toda of Japan, a user of the Tully's Port website (<http://propnturret.com/tully>), a listserv devoted to Japanese military vessels. Another Tully's Port user, "Bob," [Bob Hackett] found information indicating that the gunboat Nagata Maru brought construction materials and food from Yokosuka, Japan, to Attu, arriving August 27, 1942. After transporting troops between Kiska and Attu, she departed Kiska on September 17, 1942 and arrived in Otaru, Hokkaido on September 27, 1942.



*When we were there I used to think Japan must be one of the poorest countries in whole world. In that town of Otaru...not one painted house did I see. One house only had a coat of tar. Everyone worked, and worked every day. Young boys and girls worked in the factories near the house where we lived.*

—Alex Prosoff



Photo 39. Otaru Canal February 7, 2009. (Source: 樺, photograph by 樺.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Otaru\\_yukiakari\\_no\\_michi.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Otaru_yukiakari_no_michi.jpg))

Mr. Kawashima, one of the Japanese soldiers who had occupied the village, visited the Attuans in Otaru in late 1942 or early 1943. He said that two of the boys, "Ivan" (probably John Golodoff) and his younger brother Nick, hugged him in greeting, and that Ivan told him their sister Helen had already died (Stewart 1978:28).

There are differing reports of the Attuans' diet in Otaru. In August 1942 a Japanese soldier who visited them saw that they had bread, rice, meat, and vegetables. He thought they were eating better than most Japanese (Stewart 2008:303). At that point the Unangan probably still had food they had brought with them from Attu. Innokenty Golodoff remembered that at first the food was only slightly meager – rice, bread, and a little fish and pickled radishes (Golodoff 1966:8-9).

In addition to not having enough to eat, many of the Attuans were weakened by other medical circumstances, particularly tuberculosis. Several of them died of that disease in Japan. Dr. Satoru Nogushi examined the Attuans soon after they arrived in Otaru, and found that about half of them were suffering from acute tuberculosis. He thought their conditions were exacerbated by their meager diet on Otaru, which lacked protein and calories (Stewart 2008:303). Several died from beriberi, a disease of malnutrition. This may have been caused by a diet almost entirely made up of white rice. Mike Hodikoff and his son both died of food poisoning in 1945 from eating rotten garbage (Kohlhoff 1995:132).

The Attu residents worked digging dolomite, a kind of clay, from an open pit while they were there. Nick remembers going with his mother to the clay mine and waiting for her while she worked. According to Innokenty Golodoff, the Attuans didn't work very hard. Although they were supposed to be paid 1-1/2 yen per day, they were not paid at the time. When they were released, those who had worked were given about \$700 in yen to take back to the United States. Unfortunately, this money was collected by U.S. officials and the equivalent in American money never given to the workers. The Unangan worked only during the first part of their internment, and even then, on most days only a few of them worked. The voluntary Unangan labor contrasted sharply with the treatment of Chinese and Korean prisoners, who were marched to work every day (Stewart 2008:303).

In 1944 the 29 (of the original 40) Attuans still living were moved from the Wakatake-cho dormitory to a larger house at Shimizu-cho, which had previously served as clergy quarters for a Shinto shrine. Partitions divided the families (Stewart 2008:302-303). The Attuans' new home was farther from the clay pits, and they didn't work after that. Their declining health may have also prevented them from working.

After the Japanese surrendered, the Attuans were able to walk more freely around the city of Otaru. Alex Prosoff even remembered that they met a Russian couple named "Soffieff"<sup>13</sup> and attended Russian Orthodox church services (Prosoff 1988). In 1942, a count of foreign nationals in Japan found 48 Old Russian residents living in Hokkaido (Foreign Resident Population 2011). Contrary to most reports, Stewart found that the Attuans were allowed much freedom of movement in Otaru throughout their stay in the city. According to him, the children frequented the candy store and the adults bought food at the butcher and fish shops (Stewart 2008:302-303). It is unlikely, however, that they had money to make such purchases, which also contradict the malnutrition and starvation of the Attuans.

Communication between the Attuans and the Japanese was in English, while the Attuans spoke Unangam Tunuu (Aleut) among themselves. Nick Golodoff remembered that the Japanese often wrote notes in English to convey their orders or questions. On Attu, Angelina Hodikoff served for a time as an interpreter, translating the Japanese soldiers' English into Unangam Tunuu (Jolis 1994:16). In Japan, the Unangan were expected to learn Japanese (Stewart 2008:303). A Japanese linguist, Ken Hattori, visited them in 1943 and recorded and made notes on their language.

Innokenty Golodoff said that at first the Japanese were pretty rough, but later they got friendlier. The Unangan internees remembered beatings and other mistreatment by guards. Julia Golodoff went for three days without food and water, and had to shovel snow in her bare feet, as punishment for shouting at one of the guards about her daughter's death. Japanese sources, too, acknowledge that the Attuans were sometimes victims of violence at the hands of their guards (Stewart 2008:303).

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<sup>13</sup>Perhaps "Sofiev," a common Russian name.

At least one of their captors became their friend, however: Mr. Shikanai, the policeman who lived with them in both of their houses in Otaru. On Christmas Eve in 1944, Shikanai obtained goat meat and turkey for a party, and the Unangan played the accordion and danced into the night (Kohlhoff 1995:133). After the war was over, when an American Army plane came to take the Attuans back to the U.S., they had a sake drinking party with Shikanai (Golodoff 1966:9).

The main hardship of internment in Japan was the lack of healthful food. After their own food was gone, the Attuans began to starve and suffer from malnutrition. They rarely got any fruits or vegetables, only a small ration of rice. They could see that their Japanese guards were hungry too (Golodoff 1966:9).

Forty people came to Otaru, but only 24 left. Twenty-one people died, including four of the five babies born while they were in Japan.



## RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

When we were close to the Golden Gate Bridge, we went out on the deck [of the U.S.N.S. General A. W. Brewster] and I was looking for it. The bridge was not golden but it was nice, sunny, and calm and I looked at the tall buildings.

—Nick Golodoff

*AS THE END OF THE WAR APPROACHED, we were still in Japan. The policeman told us the war was over and we painted POW on the outside of our building so the American planes would know where we were. The planes flew over and looked around and saw it, and then the next day they came back with drums filled with food, all kinds of food, and they dropped the drums from the plane with a parachute. Their aim was not very good. Some drums filled with food fell into one of the Japanese houses and the policeman had to go and collect them.*

*I do not know how they got drums up to our building, but we ate well that day. Everything tasted good to me. I really liked the canned peaches. It was the first time I saw American sugar. After that I do not remember much, but we were still there for at least a week or two before the Americans arrived and moved us out.*

*While we were in Japan, we did not know Americans dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. No one told us about it. We did not know this until we got back to the United States. The policeman was happy for us that we were leaving. I liked Japan but I was glad not to be living there anymore.*

*After the Americans found us, they put us on a bus. We didn't know we were going but they took us to the airport. Then they put us on a military plane with aluminum bucket seats on each side with seat belts. From Hokkaido, we went to Okinawa. I don't remember how long we stayed in Okinawa. All I remember is that we sat by a long table with a*

*lot of food and my stomach was shrunk because I couldn't eat much but I was very satisfied.*

*From Okinawa, I do not know how I got to Manila but I remember I was there with a bunch of military men. I slept in a big army tent with a man from Attu; we used to watch movies outside. I had my first Coca-Cola in Manila.*

*I do not know where my mom was while I was in Manila, but I was with a military man and Aleut man from Attu and I remember we used to go to the mess hall and eat. We lived in a tent and I remember it was warm and we had mosquito nets around our bed and sometimes we rode around with a few military men. Sometimes when we rode I used to see what looked like hippopotamuses in the muddy pools around Manila. One day I had my first ice cream, something sweet and cold that I never had before and that is what made me sick. I vomited and they took me to a hospital. While I was in the hospital I looked out the window; it was blowing wind and the army tents were blowing in the air. Wood and tin were flying all over, trucks were rolling over. It was windy that whole day. We were hungry, so one of the male nurses went to the kitchen to get some sandwiches. He put them into a packsaddle and crawled all the way to the mess hall and brought us some sandwiches. It was so windy he had to crawl. Later I heard about a man and woman that were inside the big heavy metal van and the man from Attu was hiding behind the outside freezer. They had twelve big freezers outside and the man from Attu was hiding behind them. I was lucky I was in the hospital that time.*

*I do not really know what happened next, but after a while we went on a big army transport ship with thousands of military soldiers from Manila to San Francisco.<sup>14</sup> The soldiers didn't have guns, just bayonets. It took 10 or 11 days, but it felt like it took forever to get from*

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<sup>14</sup>The Attuans sailed on the U.S.N.S. General A. W. Brewster. It was a new boat, launched in January 1945. When the Japanese surrendered, the Brewster was in the Philippines. It carried returning troops, and the Attuans, to San Francisco, arriving on September 1, 1945 (Naval History Online 2011).

*Manila to San Francisco because we were on the boat and most of the time we were in our rooms. When we went to the galley to eat there were no tables or chairs. We had to stand up at the counter and eat our meals and then had to leave so the others could eat too. Every day they used to give us a piece of paper that showed where we were. I do not know how long it took, but we were told we were going to go under the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge. When we were close to the Golden Gate Bridge, we went out on the deck and I was looking for it. The bridge was not golden but it was nice, sunny, and calm and I looked at the tall buildings. When we got alongside the dock, the military got off the boat first. We had to wait for somebody to come pick us up in a bus.*

*When the government workers picked us up they took us to a hotel where we stayed, but I do not know for how long. I remember eating with my mom and brothers and sister at the hotel restaurant. While we were in San Francisco, I stayed in a room with my mom. She was scared of something outside the window. It was windy and raining and something outside the window was knocking. My mom thought someone was outside the window, so she went down to the desk and told them and the guy came out and looked out and he said there was no one out there. From San Francisco, we took a train to Seattle. We had to sleep on the train and I found out it was hard to walk on the train while moving. I am not sure how long it took to travel from San Francisco to Seattle by train.*

*In Seattle, we lived in a hotel at first, but I do not know how long we stayed in the hotel. Later we moved to a house. Just my mom and I were in a house by ourselves. These houses were lined up along side of a road. There was hardly any traffic on that road. Staying here was nice. I am not sure how long we stayed, but it may have lasted about a month or so. When you walked down to the main road, there was a lot of traffic. We were up on a hill. There was a bike shop close by and they were renting out bikes for 50 cents an hour. This is where I learned*



Photo 40. Nick's wife Vasha Golodoff with three of their children. (Source: Nick Golodoff)

*to ride a bike. I used to rent a bike almost every day and practice. I had scars and bruises all over from practicing to learn how to ride a bicycle, but I learned. My first time seeing a horse is when my older brother John rented a horse and I was somewhat scared since it was a big horse. The weather in Seattle was nice practically every day. I used to watch one man hitting golf balls. He would hit the balls out in a field and leave them there; I am guessing he was practicing. Once he was done, I went out to the field and picked many golf balls up. Next day when we showed up I gave them to him and he gave me 50 cents so I went and rented a bike again. I am not sure where I got all my 50 cents from but my mom, I think, gave me 50 cents everyday. I did not have much to do. I did not*

*see any other kids, it was just me. Sometimes I was the only one in the neighborhood since it was so quiet. Sometimes people would knock on our door selling us turkey, chicken and stuff like that. I remember my mom brought a turkey for around \$2 and I do not remember us eating it.*

*The Attuans wanted to go back to Attu. Half way back to the U.S. we were told that we were going to Atka and not Attu. Mom told me we had relatives in Atka.*

*After Seattle, I do not know how we got to Adak. Once we got to Adak there were nothing but military people there. Adak was cold and I didn't like it. I didn't know what I was getting into but I followed my mom. I do not know how long we stayed in Adak, but I remember coming to Atka on a small military barge. It was only about 50 feet square with a black bottom.*

*When we got to Atka, the Aleuts there were building houses with left over military lumber, so we had to stay with other families before they built us small houses to live in. My mom was from Atka so we stayed with relatives. There was lots of material to build houses. After that they built us a bigger, better place to stay.*

*Atka was a lot like Attu. The bay looked the same and the hills and land almost similar, but at Attu there were bushes and there was none here in Atka. When we arrived, the military men were still here in Atka. I did not see any planes, boats or big guns or tanks, but they were still there, leaving slowly. Every six months some of the military people kept leaving until there was only five left. Then after that they closed down Atka and all left. The military left behind a metal airstrip about 3,000 feet long and lots of Quonset huts, a big plane hanger, cold storage, and a big wooden mess hall. They left them all and took off. There was some lumber left over which we used to build houses and then everything started rusting. What was left and useless we used to burn. We did not have indoor plumbing, so we used to haul water from creeks. To take*

*a bath we used to heat water on top of the stove and my family had no money so we had to live off the land, eating things like fish from the creek, roots, berries, sea urchins, mussels, clams, etc. But I still had better food than I ate when I was in Japan.*

## Other First-hand Accounts:

### **Olean Prokopeuff (Golodoff), 1981**

The people continued to die. All that was left was just a few of us. Time passed until we heard an airplane. We went out and we stepped out to look. We saw drums coming down in parachutes, and evidently, the plane was an American plane and the drums contained food. So we stayed up and ate all night.

### **Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

One day, 1945, we learned from hearing Japs talking that Germany has lost the war. So I went to friendly Jap and ask him if it is true Germany lose the war and he said yes. He said the Americans now have Germany. The Japs seem very sad over Germany losing. After that we had blackouts every night. They put us to work digging trenches. One day in August while we were digging a trench in front of a policeman's house we hear noise from radio coming from open window. We know enough Jap to know it is Jap Emperor telling his people that Japan had lost the war. He told them they must now work very hard to live. That afternoon the Jap guard tell us to stop working. They did not tell us war is over but we know it because things change. Japs take their things out of caves where they had them stored. They said it is because of nice weather and they want to dry stored clothing. There are no more blackouts, either. I asked them why did they turn on lights at night and where are the sirens that used to blow when enemy planes are near. They said the Americans are over on the southern side of Japan now so lights don't bother. But not once did they tell us they lost the war.

Seven days later a B-29 flew over very low and saw the PW sign the Japs built for us. They circled it four times and then flew so low we could see people leaning out. They dropped drums of food, candy, and cigarettes, also two bundles of clothing and shoes. The next week they came again and dropped more things. Three weeks later three Americans came. It was then we were really happy! The Japs tried to make the Americans think they had been good to

us. They had our camp cleaned up and gave the Americans good food. We told our stories before the Americans and the Japs. We told of the beatings they had given us, of the months of cold and sickness and starvation. We told of our people who died of neglect. When we finished the Japs tore up their stories they had ready. The Americans told us not to take any more orders from the Japs. *We Were Free!* They told us an American plane would take us away in two weeks. We did not work for Japs now. We went walking all over this city that had been our home for three years. One day four of us went walking and saw a church that looked like our own church at Attu with big dome and a Russian cross. We walked all around the church but could not get in. We knocked at the door for a long time. Then some one come. What a surprise! Gray hair and blue eyes!

“Is this a Russian church?” I asked.

“Yes,” answered the old couple in English.

“May we come in?”

“Of course. Where do you come from?” they asked. “Come in.”

“We come from Attu, Alaska,” I said.

“Where is that?” they ask. “Come in.”

We went in and found a map. On it is little dot-Attu. We show them where we come from. They say, “Oh! You are Americans! What can we do for you boys?” “We want to go to church,” I tell them. I tell them we have been Japs’ prisoners three years. Only church we have is little holy picture Mike sneak with him.

“All right,” old couple say. “Come back tomorrow.”

So next day we all went back and had church. It was very nice to have church again in a church like ours. The old couple told us their name was Soffieff. These old people came from Russia many years before. They lived in China before they came to Japan. They suffered very much in the war, too.

We went and had church with these old people once more before we left Otaru.

Before we are going to leave Otaru, I go to Japs and say, “We want money for work we do.” They finally give me handful of little paper bills fifty-yen size. I divide among my people. When time to go



we ask for kind old Jap man. We take up collection for him and he go home happy.

After the food was dropped, the Americans came. We could see cars running around and they made a lot of smoke. These cars had to be cranked to get them started. So one got tired of cranking a car before it could be started. They also had some cars that didn't make any noise at all when running.

Then we were taken inside the house. We were asked if we wanted to go home. We all said, "Yes!" They were Americans and they told us that the war was over, and we were going to be taken home. That next day, we were taken to the airport. We stayed there for three nights. Our flight must have been late or something. I never did find out.

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

About September 1945, the Red Cross helped us leave Otaru. An American Army plane took us to Okinawa. We had a big saki party at Otaru just before we left. Our policeman got drunk too. We wanted to take him with us so they let him go to Okinawa with us then they took him back. When we left our house at Otaru we didn't use the doors, we went out through the windows because everyone was feeling so good. A Jap civilian gave us the saki, two or three bottles, almost a gallon in each one. I like saki. That was the only party we had while we were in Japan.

### **Olean Prokopieuff (Golodoff), 1981**

We finally departed from that place and we landed on a number of islands. I don't even know the names of the islands.

We saw where the Americans dropped their atomic bomb. It looked like a bundle of kindling wood. The place appeared demolished when viewed from the airplane. When we were in Japan, we used to be evacuated to the interior whenever the Americans dropped their bombs.

Then we flew once more. I still can't remember the names of the three islands (over which we flew). I think we were still flying, and I remembered Okinawa, because we were there for two-and-a-half weeks. Then once again we were airborne heading for the main land. When we arrived on the main land, it was unbearably hot there.

We caught a boat from Manila bound for San Francisco. During our trip, we encountered a storm, and we were told that we were in Alaskan waters. We were hoping that they could let us off at Unalaska, but instead the boat continued on to San Francisco.

### **Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

At the end of two weeks we get on C-47 and fly to Okinawa. We take all our little boxes of dead in one big box, our church books and our trunks. The pilots flew over Nagasaki and showed us where atom bomb dropped. It is very awful! Nothing left of that big city.

At Okinawa all our boxes and things are put inside big wire fence. We had bad tornado there and when storm is over we look for our things, but big box of all our dead people, everything is gone. Some one tell us they will look for our things and they put us on transport boat *Brewster* for San Francisco. Then I really felt I was going home.

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

When we got back to the States we went to San Francisco—on a Navy boat. We stayed in a hotel and the Red Cross took care of us and took us to see the city and we went across the Gold Gate bridge. We stayed there for about two weeks then we went to Seattle.

### **Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

San Fransisco! That is very beautiful city, I think. It looks like heaven to me. Of all the cities I've been in, I like that one best. Red Cross and welfare people are at the boat and doctors and nurses. They

take us to Lankershim Fifth Street Hotel<sup>15</sup> and give us money to pay our hotel fare and buy food and clothing. Miss Van Every<sup>16</sup> of Indian Affairs took us round in her car to see things. But mostly we walk. We walk all day, Elizabeth and me, just looking. Elizabeth wear out two pair shoes and heel off one. He [sic] look very funny walking with heel off but we walk till I see sign of little hammer hitting heel and we go there. It's a shoemaker place and he fix his heel. Then, we walk some more. Elizabeth always see things he wants. "I want this, and this and this," he say. We were in San Fransisco one week and two days and we were so busy walking and looking we did not have time to go to church.

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

In Seattle we stayed near White Center. We had a good time—first we stayed in a hotel, then in a camp—a house with kitchen and everything. I stayed with my brother's family.

### **Alex Prosoff, 1947 (1988)**

When we went to Seattle we went to Church of Seven Domes. Some of our people go to hospital in Tacoma. We stay in Seattle many days, then we get on boat *Branch* and come to Atka. We want to go to Attu. They tell us soldiers still on Attu and no more village. We must come to Atka. They will give us new house here.

### **Olean Prokopeuff (Golodoff), 1981**

From San Francisco we took a train to Seattle. From Seattle, we boarded a ship, *Branch*, and later arrived at Adak. When we were in Seattle, we were there for some time and it was getting close to Christmas. We did not really want to go home, but we were brought here. At that time, they dropped off many soldiers on Adak. We were brought here from Adak in a small tug. I had gotten used to the big

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<sup>15</sup>The Hotel Lankershim was a large and well-known hotel on Fifth Street in San Francisco. See the 1930 postcard of it at <http://www.route40.net.net/page.asp?n=918> (Brusca 2010).

<sup>16</sup>Mildred van Every worked as a matron for the BIA's San Francisco office between 1934 and 1946.



Photo 41. "Attu children taking communion in Seattle." (Source: Becky Bendixon, via Ebay)

ship that brought us from Seattle, and I did not feel very safe on that small tug.

When the tug arrived at Atka, a truck picked us up and we were taken to the school. At the school, we were assigned to where we were going to live. I was placed in Cedor's house.

A year passed, then the houses were built for us. Army Quonset huts were made for us to live in, and we stayed in the huts for another year. Then our houses were finished so we moved in. Since then, they have been our houses for a long time. Today, whenever there is a storm, I don't trust my poor house.



Photo 42. Nick's mother Olean with her new husband, Ralph Prokopeuff, on their wedding day in 1947. (Source: Nick Golodoff)

### **Innokenty Golodoff, 1966**

After Seattle we went to Adak and stayed there one night, then they took us to Atka. The new houses were already built. The Government built them for us. We tried to go to Attu but they told us we were not enough people so the Government wouldn't let us go to Attu. The Government told us to live with the Atka people. So we got to Atka on December 11, 1945. Then I was single but today



Photo 43. Innokenty and Vasha Golodoff, with their baby, "Toughie" [Helen], on their wedding day in 1947. (Source: UW Press, Ethel Ross Oliver)

I have a wife and three kids, two girls and a boy. My oldest girl is 19 and my youngest, the boy, is 16. Now the Attu people like it at Atka. My wife is an Atka woman and I don't want to go back to Attu.

**Fig. 5. Attu residents who died in Japan, and those who survived (Source: Murray 2005)**

**Deceased prior to 11/27/45**

Artumonoff, John – b. 1869, d. 1942 on Attu  
Artumonoff, Mavra – b. 1924, d. 1944  
Artumonoff, Peter – b. 1920, d. 1944  
Borenin, Annie Golodoff – b. 1919, d. 1943  
Golodoff, Artelion "Arty" (Angelina's baby, b. and d.1943 in Japan)  
Golodoff, Harman (Garman) – b. 1891, d. 1945  
Golodoff, Helen, b. 1929, d. 1944  
Golodoff, Lavrenti – b. 1900, d. 1945  
Golodoff, Leonti, b. 1931, d. 1943  
Golodoff, Mary – b. 1895, d. 1943  
Golodoff, Michael (Julia's baby, b. and d. 1943 in Japan)  
Golodoff, Valvigian (Valirjian) – b. 1939, d. 1943  
Hodikoff, Anecia (Mike H.'s baby, b. and d. 1943 in Japan)  
Hodikoff, Fred (Fedosay) – b. 1901, d. 1945  
Hodikoff, George – b. 1929, d. 1945  
Hodikoff, Michael Gorga "Mike" (Chief) – b. 1893, d. 1945  
Lokanin, Gabriel (Mike L.'s baby, b. and d. 1944 in Japan)  
Lokanin, Tatiana – b. 1942, d. 1944  
Prokopioff, Anecia Kriukov (Golodoff) – b. 1886, d. 1942 while under way for Japan.  
Prokopioff, Mary – b. 1939, d. 1943  
Prosoff, Bladimir – b. 1932, d. 1943  
Prosoff, Martha Hodikoff – b. 1903, d. 1943

**Surviving on 11/27/45**

Artumonoff, Sergi – 18, b. 1927, last record in 1966  
Golodoff (Prokopioff), Alfred Jr. (b. 1945 in Japan)  
Golodoff (Prosoff), Thecla (Fekla) – 10, b. 1935  
Golodoff, Elizabeth – 4, b. 1941  
Golodoff, Gregory – 5, b. 1940  
Golodoff, Innokinty "Popeye" – 28, b. 1917, d. 1998

Golodoff, John – 17, b. 1928, d. 2009  
Golodoff, Julia Prokopeuff – 22, b. 1923, d. 1954  
Golodoff, Mary Tarkanoff Lokanin – 28, b. 1918, d. before 1963  
Golodoff, Nick – 9, b. 1935  
Golodoff, Olean – 5, b. 1939  
Golodoff, Olean Horosoff – 35, b. 1910  
Golodoff, Willie – 31, b. 1914, d. 1983  
Hodikoff, Angelina – 17, b. 1927, d. 1981  
Hodikoff, Annie Yatchmenoff – 28, b. 1918, disappears from  
records in Tacoma hospital 1945  
Hodikoff, John – 18, b. 1927  
Hodikoff, Marina – 8, b. 1938, d. 1996  
Hodikoff, Martha – 9, b. 1937  
Hodikoff, Stephen – 14, b. 1931, d. 1985  
Lokanin, Mike – 33, b. 1912, d. 1961  
Lokanin, Parascovia Horosoff, 23, b. 1922, d. 1994  
Prokopioff (Golodoff), Alfred Sr., 37, b. 1908, d. 1963  
Prosoff, Agnes – 5, b. 1940, d. 1980  
Prosoff, Alexy – 29, b. 1916, d. before 1949  
Prosoff, Elizabeth Prokopioff Golodoff – 26, b. 1919



## Commentary

One day the policeman who guarded the Attuans told them that the war was over. The Attuans painted the letters “POW” on the roof of their building so the American planes would know where they were. Planes flew over, dropping drums filled with delicious food. Nick Golodoff particularly remembers the canned peaches they brought. Some Japanese sources recalled that the Attuans defied orders to share some of the food and cigarettes with their friends among the Japanese guards (Stewart 1978:34).

After the Attuans heard the war was over, they were able to leave their quarters and walk around the city (Lokanin 1988:239). When they left, about two weeks later, police officer Shikanai and his superior, Sergeant Endo, accompanied the Attuans as far as Chitose air base. The Unangan requested that Mr. Shikanai come with them further, to Atgusi air base outside of Tokyo, and he did (Stewart 1978:35-36).<sup>17</sup>

The Attuans were given the cremated remains of those who had died in Japan, and they put all the boxes of bones of those who had died together in a big box (Lokanin 1988:239). Unfortunately, the bones were lost on the way back to the United States. Alex Prosoff said that while they were in Okinawa the Attuans left all their baggage, including the box of bones, inside a big fence. After a big storm the box and all the rest of their things were gone (Prosoff 1988:248). The box of remains was eventually recovered and sent to Atka. The cremated remains of the deceased Attuans were buried near the Atka church, but outside of the church grounds because the Russian Orthodox church does not allow cremation.

The Attuans got on a plane, the first flight any of them had ever been on. They stayed in Osaka one night, then went on to Okinawa. A huge storm grounded them there for several weeks. Then they flew to Manila, where they stayed in army tents and were taken around by military men. They boarded a ship and set out for San Francisco. It took ten or eleven days, Nick Golodoff remembers, but it seemed like forever. Some government or Red Cross workers met the boat

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<sup>17</sup>Before they left Otaru, according to Henry Stewart based on interviews with Japanese sources, Mr. Shikanai had a tailor make a suit of clothes for each of the Attuans. At Atgusi, however, the Americans gave the Attuans new clothes and made them burn the ones they were wearing (Stewart 1978:35).

and took the Attuans to a hotel, giving them money for lodging and clothing. They were in San Francisco for a week or ten days, and did a lot of walking around.

The Attuans took a train to Seattle by train, the first train trip any of them had taken. In that city, they attended services at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption, which Alex Prosoff called the Church of Seven Domes. Some of the people went to the hospital in Tacoma (Prosoff 1988:248) for treatment of tuberculosis. The remaining Attu residents finally boarded a boat to return to the Aleutians on December 12, 1945. They got to Unalaska on the 19th, and from there traveled to Atka with a stop in Adak (Lokanin 1988:240). They had hoped to return to Attu, but they were told there weren't enough people left to resettle their village. Sixteen Attu survivors arrived in Atka on December 21.

When the military transport ship *David W. Branch* brought them to Atka, the residents of that village were still in the process of rebuilding their village, which the U.S. Army had burned after the residents were relocated to Southeast Alaska in 1942. The Attuans had to stay with Atkan families until the military could build houses for them. Fortunately, Nick Golodoff's mother Olean was from Atka, so she and her children Nick, Greg, and Elizabeth were able to stay with their relatives, the Snigaroffs. Later, Olean married an Atka man (see Photo 42). Innokenty Golodoff married an Atka woman and began raising a family (see Photo 43). Willie Golodoff was reunited with his wife Julia, but then, like several others, had to go to a hospital in Tacoma (Jolis 1994:20). Four Attu "children," including 18-year-old John Golodoff and 20-year-old Angelina Hodikoff, were sent to vocational school in Eklutna. One of the teachers there wrote an article about these Attu survivors. She said Angelina carried with her a scrap of paper which said:

Father, Mike Hodkoff, burn at Attu, died in Jap camp at Otturu Island of Hokhaida. Mother, Anicia Prokoppoff, born at Attu, died at Attu, 1940. Three brothers, two named George and Leonty, Mike died when Japs came. Another brother George died in Jap camp. Sisters Mary and Annie died at Attu when the Japs came. Brother

Stephen age 14, birthday Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>, taken prisoner, now thought to be at Atka. (Butts 1948).

The Attuans were unhappy that they could not return to their home. Alan May, who had visited Attu in 1936, corresponded after the war with several of the Attu people who were hospitalized with tuberculosis in Washington State. Mike Lokanin wrote to him that he missed Mike Hodikoff and his smile, and that he was worried about his wife and his friend John Hodikoff, both of whom also had tuberculosis and were in another hospital. Mike Lokanin did not think the Attuans and Atkans were getting along very well with each other yet. He wrote, "We rather be on Attu instead Atka" (Lokanin 1946). Ted Bank, a visitor to Atka in 1948, said one of the troubles the Attuans had in their new home was that the Atkans wouldn't allow them to use their wood to build new houses. The Attuans thought the Atkans looked down on them (Bank 1956:78).

By June 1947, only 11 Attu survivors were at Atka. One was at Fort Richardson in the Army (John Golodoff); four were at Tacoma Hospital (Willie Golodoff, Annie Hodikoff, John Hodikoff, and Mary Prokopeuff); and six students were at Mt. Edgecombe (Sergei Artumonoff, Marina Hodikoff, Martha Hodikoff, Stephen Hodikoff, Agnes Prosoff, and Fekla Prosoff). Angelina Hodikoff had moved to Dillingham.

One consequence of the move to Atka was the exacerbation of rivalry in basketry between the villages. The Attuans and Atkans had different basket-weaving styles and kept them secret from each other. The Attuan women no longer had access to their favorite kind of grass (Shapsnikoff and Hudson 1974:50). The Attuan style, previously known as the finest form of Unangan basketry, died out with the Attuan women. Attu also once had a distinct dialect of Unangan Tunuu, but with the death of so many Attuan speakers, the dialogue was no longer spoken.



Photo 44. Cover: "Meetings between Aleutian and Japanese People," by Masami Sugiyama, published in Japan, 1987.

## NICK'S CONNECTION TO JAPAN

When I was in Japan, every morning I would see my picture on TV and in the newspaper...

—Nick Golodoff

*I CALL THE AUTHOR "SAM." He came to Atka three or four times. He sent me that picture. The last time Sam came, they took me back to Japan. I don't know the name of the soldier whose back I was on in the picture. I met him in Japan in Sapporo when I went in 1995. A year later the soldier died. The people who brought me to Japan brought the soldier to Sapporo. He didn't speak English but had a translator. The only reason the soldier was alive was because before the battle of Attu he was captured in China and became a POW. He was a POW until the war ended.*

*The picture shows me as a kid and the soldier has me on his back. We weren't close friends. The picture came out in Japan somehow and stories were created about the photo. I didn't know the picture was even taken until Sam came to Atka. They knew it was me because I was the only kid that age on Attu. Somehow they knew my name. When I was in Japan, every morning I would see my picture on TV and in the newspaper, so I went down to the front desk at the hotel and they cut out the article for me. I really wanted to know what it said.*

## Commentary

A Japanese author named Masami Sugiyama has written a book about Nick and the other Attuans, published in Japan in 1987. The English title on the cover is “Meetings between Aleutian and Japanese People,” although the book has also been called in English, “On the Trail of the Picture.” The author was inspired by a picture he saw of Nick Golodoff, then six years old, riding on the back of a Japanese soldier. The picture was taken in 1942 by Kiri Sugiyama (no relationship to Masami Sugiyama), a military photographer who accompanied the Japanese soldiers on Attu. In the early 1980s, to research his book, Masami Sugiyama traveled to Atka to meet surviving Attuans who still lived there. He also went to Otaru, on Hokkaido Island, to visit the places the Attuans had stayed and to look for the Japanese people who had known them in those days. Upon meeting Masami in Atka, Nick Golodoff called him “Sam” because it was easier to pronounce than his full name. When Nick went back to Japan in 1995, he met Sam in Tokyo.

Nick was invited in 1995 to go to Japan to attend a conference on wartime compensation. All his travel expenses were paid so that he could speak at the conference on behalf of the Attuans. A number of newspapers and TV stations ran stories about Nick, and he still has some of the clippings about his visit to Japan. After his trip, he received calls and letters from all over the world. While he was in Japan, Nick visited the places he and the other Attuans had stayed in Otaru. He met with the doctor who had treated the Attuans, who although quite elderly was still working. Nick asked for the medical records from his father’s stay in the infirmary, and subsequent death, but was told that giving them to him would be against the law.

Sylvia Kobayachi, from Anchorage, came with Nick to Japan and acted as his translator. Both she and her husband had been in Japanese-American internment camps in the United States during World War II. In Japan, some people asked Nick if Mrs. Kobayachi was his wife!

While in Japan, Nick also visited the soldier who had carried him on his back in Attu when Nick was a little boy. He met the soldier, Mr. Kamani, and his wife in Tokyo. Since 1995, the soldier has passed away.

Masami Sugiyama does not wish his book to be quoted, because it has been misquoted and plagiarized in the past. However, Hiroko Harada, a professor of Japanese at the University of Alaska Anchorage, has written a summary in English of parts of the book. It contains valuable information about the Attuans' stay in Japan from the perspective of the Japanese policemen, doctors and nurses who had contact with them. Sugiyama also visited both places where the Attuans had stayed in Otaru, the railroad dormitory on Wakatake-cho and the Shinto priests' quarters on Shimizu-cho. During his 1995 trip to Japan, Nick was able to visit the house on Wakatake-cho, but the house on Shimizu-cho and the clay mine where the Attuans had worked were both gone.

Here are some of the people Masami Sugiyama interviewed in Japan:

- Takeshiro Shikanai – police officer who lived with the Attuans and was their friend. He spoke the Tsugaru dialect and taught Japanese to Elizabeth Prossoff. When the Attuans were released, Shikanai accompanied them as far as Atsuki. Shikanai's wife was Toki Shikanai, who died in 1978. Takeshiro Shikanai had already died when Nick visited in 1995.
- Toshikatsu Endo – higher-ranking police officer who arrived at the Otaru Police Station later in the war. He may be the officer "E," mentioned by Henry Stewart, who was more abusive in his dealings with the Attuans and hit Angelina Hodikoff in the leg with a rock because she would not do housework or laundry at the house.
- Ms. Moto – a nurse who remembered Attuans hospitalized at the Otaru Tuberculosis Clinic, especially a woman named "Arsa" and a two-year-old named Elizabeth.
- Ms. Kusakabe – a nurse at the tuberculosis clinic. Innokenty Golodoff remembered her as "Kasha-san" and called her his girlfriend.
- Ken Hattori – a linguist teaching at Hokkaido Imperial University, who visited the Attuans in summer 1943 and researched their language.



Photos 45 & 46. Nick on soldier Kamani's back; soldier on Nick's back.  
(Source: Nick Golodoff)

- Dr. Ishibashi – director of the Ishibashi Hospital, who treated one Attuan who was infected with diphtheria.
- Dr. Minoru Yamauchi – treated the Attuans at the Otaru Tuberculosis Clinic. He remembered Mike Lokanin very well and was friends with him.
- Dr. Noguchi – director of the Otaru Tuberculosis Clinic.
- Yuriko Tanaka – head nurse at the Otaru Tuberculosis Clinic.



## REFLECTIONS ON LIFE IN ATKA

Not many people live here. I estimate around 100 people live in Atka year around. ... In Atka we live with the wildlife. The reindeer come down to the village. Sea lions go by here. People in Atka still eat seal and sea lions. We have halibut and codfish come close to shore.

—Nick Golodoff

*I*N ATTU AND ATKA the temperature never goes below zero but the wind chill does go below zero here in the Aleutian Islands. They both have deep water harbors. The Atka harbor doesn't ever freeze. Ever since I can remember the water line has been creeping up. The temperature gets warmer every year. There are only four trees on all of Atka Island. They were planted after the war.

*In Atka our houses never had insulation. They were just made out of wood and all open underneath, not a single piece of insulation in the house. During the winter, it got cold inside, but my family and I are used to it. Sometimes in the morning when I got up if there was water in a cup, it would be frozen. We would have to get up early in the morning to light the wood stove. The wood stove did not take long to heat the house. We never had a refrigerator or freezer so during the winter after we would go hunting, the food would last longer than in the summer. In the summer, we would have to eat it up right away or throw it away before it spoiled. Aleuts do not waste anything. We use everything that we hunt. For example, during the summer, we would use fish traps in the creek and after we get all the fish we want, we would let the rest go so they can spawn. February and March used to be a tough time for us Aleuts since we did not have a freezer to put away food only salted salmon and dried and smoked fish.*

*Atka has two active volcanoes on the north end. One is called Korovin and the other one is Atka volcano. In Atka there are lots of*



Photo 47. Nick in Atka. (Source: Brenda Maly)

*harbors, creeks, and lakes. At every creek, there used to be a mud house where the fish come up. People were scattered all around Atka and Amlia. On Amlia there used to be a village at the first harbor, right across the pass. I know this because I was trapping there one time and from up above I saw two or three big mud houses that used to be there, plus around it there were little ones. There must have been quite a few people that lived there. Way before the war people buried their dead in the caves. There are two caves in Atka that have skulls in them and some by the camp where there are buried people.*

*I do not know when the people moved their village but they used to have a village on Korovin side that is now called Old Harbor. There never was a Russian settlement on Atka. In the 1880 census, the village*

*was called Nazan. The population was 236. Atka had its own post office in 1938, and in 1957 had the post office in the store.*

*I lived about six years in Attu and a little over three years in Japan and the rest of my life in Atka. I do not want to disappoint anybody by saying something about the Aleutians that I don't know too much about. I have not been all over Atka. I have discovered most of it but not all. I am sure people have lived here on Atka before the Russians did. What I do not like is that we Alaskans owned and lived on this land and Russia came around and sold it to the United States and now we have to buy it back from the United States. The Fish and Wildlife Service owns Atka except for the private lands.*

### **Growing up and going to school:**

*In Attu there were no children my age. Most of the kids were older. So when the war started I used to walk between the Japanese military men and they treated me nice. On the way back from Japan, I did the same thing with the United States soldiers. When I got to Atka I found some kids my age so we played together; we walked around together and did everything together.*

*When I was a kid, on my birthdays I never had a cake or presents. The only thing I remember on my birthdays was that I went to Russian Orthodox church on December 19 every year. The only other thing I remember on my birthday is that I felt good, I don't know why. I never had a cake till I got about 35 years old. That's when my wife Vasha started making me homemade cake.*

*While in Attu and Japan, I never went to school. All I knew was the Aleut language, and a little Japanese. When I got to Atka I started school. I was 10 years old and was in kindergarten. I was uneducated and I did not know the alphabet or numbers. I did not mind it much but when I started I did not like to color. Later, I started coloring better. Soon I started reading, but the pronunciation was hard for me. For example,*

*when “island” came up I would say “is-land” instead of the proper way and all the other kids started laughing. The teacher told them to stop since they did the same thing with other words. I felt better after that.*

*When I was a kid going to school, one of the teachers took us out to the first creek on the right side of the village and had us dig right above the creek. We dug and found some spears and few other items, but I do not know what happened to them and cannot recall the teacher’s name. If you don’t see a person or do things that you used to do, you forget. I used to be able to speak, sing, and count in Japanese but can’t anymore since I don’t use it often.*

*I don’t have a high school degree. When I turned 18 the school didn’t want me anymore. I tried to go back three times but they kicked me out because of my age. On the third time, they got my mom and the chief of the village and told them that I should not go back to school anymore so I did not. I taught myself after that. I read everything I could. I mostly learned from the elders. Some of the elders never went to school and I felt they were the smartest. Their education was learning from life.*

*Some of the seniors still write in Aleut but most kids today do not speak our language anymore. They have to be taught in school. I teach Aleut in school to the kids. Attu and Atka have different dialects. They have the same words but slightly different meaning.*

### **Left behind by the military:**

*When the military left Atka they left a lot of rifle and machine gun ammunition, but we could not see them because they were halfway buried or inside bunkers. When some kids and I found them, we would play with them. We used to take the tip off the shell and pour the powder into a beer can and light it and watch it fly around. The military left a whole bunch of dynamite caps that we used to play with, using a 12-volt battery to make them pop. Some of them make a small pop and it takes*

*a while before they kick off. The first time I picked up one after it did not pop, it popped suddenly and I got part of it in my leg and ear.*

*In Attu the Japanese also left ammo, especially in caves, and there were a lot of caves on Attu. Later in the years, I went back to Attu to work for a salvage company from Tacoma. We salvaged lots of military stuff that they left behind from Adak, Kiska and Attu. When I was in Attu salvaging military stuff, I did not go to the village side because I was working long hours and did not have time. I used to work from morning until evening. I did not even go to where we used to have summer camp but I could see it from the road.*

*After we got back from the war here in Atka, the only transportation was by military plane or military barge that brought supplies. The only way to fly out of Atka was to fly to Adak. Later on, Reeve started flying in, but the military airport that was made out of metal matting rotted away and sand started piling on the airport. Reeve quit flying here. Since then, the only transportation we had was a military tug from Adak that brought mail once a month.*

*On May 31, 2004, Memorial Day, I was watching the news and they were talking about veterans. I was wondering if I'm a veteran or not because I was shot at when I was six years old, even though I never joined the military. I had to register for the draft but there was no Post Office in Atka that time to register with. I did not know how to register, so I did not. After I got married, they just put a post office in the village and I registered. They asked why I did not register when I was 18 and I told them why. They gave me some kind of card. The reason I gave for not registering is that I was a prisoner of war for more than three years.*

### **Working life:**

*Before and after the War we used to saw and chop wood all the time. I used to do that almost everyday and it was hard work but it*

*kept me healthy. Right now I am still working. After the War, I started working in the Pribilofs. I must have worked at least 13 summers there. That is where I learned my trade as a plumber, electrician, and carpenter helper, and later, on my own, I learned mechanical work. Right now, I am working at the school as school maintenance. I am doing all right now. I have done all kinds of work. I never found anything that I could not do. I used to apply for any jobs that I could find to make some money for a living.*

*When I got old enough to work, I got my first job in the Pribilofs, St. Paul Island, working on fur seals. I was 15 in 1950 when I started working in St. Paul. I didn't take my birth certificate to Japan and I didn't have it. They made me apply for a social security card when I worked on St. Paul. It took a month to get one, even though all the paperwork was done in St. Paul. I worked for the sealing operation in the summer for 13-15 years. I worked for the government and was paid \$1.25 per hour. I did different jobs while working there. A lot of times my job was blubbering seals—taking the blubber off the skins. The meat was either ground or cooked into fertilizer. They fed it to mink in mink farms.*

*I got a better job working for the Tacoma Salvage Company. I cleaned debris left from World War II on Adak, Attu, and Amchitka. Other workers cleaned in Shemya. I cleaned copper, iron, lead, batteries, and drones. They salvaged whatever they could. I learned how to operate a Cat. A metal barge took everything that was salvaged to Seattle or Tacoma. On Adak, some Japanese ships took car engines.*

*After that, I took any job I could find. I used to work as a carpenter and I fished. Sometimes we got hired from outside so I went out and worked on fish processors and then fished in Kodiak and now I am fishing halibut here in Atka. This is how I ended up with a 22-foot aluminum boat and 18-foot aluminum boat and still have them.*

*I fished in Kodiak 25-26 years ago. I only fished in the summer, for pink, red, and silver salmon. I crewed on boats that were captained by people from Atka who ran the boats for Seattle companies. The captains knew me from Atka. I got paid a crew share—the pay depended on how many pounds of fish we caught. There was a two or three man crew, mostly three, including the captain and two deckhands. The fishing boat was 32 feet. I was in charge of the power skiff. Using the skiff, I would create a 200-250 yard circle with the net. We used to fish all around Kodiak. The company had tenders to take the fish from the boats to the cannery. Port Williams was the base for the boats in the winter.*

*I worked on a crab processor. I don't think crab was a traditional Aleut food. When I was young I never saw a crab because they lived in too deep of water. Now crabs come into shallower waters. One time I caught crab by accident on a halibut hook when the crab grabbed the bait and wouldn't let go.*

*Right now, I have been working for the school district and the airport. I have a little contract with the airport to remove snow on the airstrip and I work as a janitor and do maintenance at the school for 21 years now. I am still working but not making too much money, just enough to live comfortably.*

*When I was growing up, I was poor and hungry. After the War when I got here, I did not have no socks, no heavy jacket, no boots, I could not afford it. My shoes had holes in them, but even then I still packed wood in the snow with my feet freezing. But right now, I feel that I have too much. I have a freezer, I'm working, the only reason that I have money is that I want to retire and pay for bills like credit card bills. In addition, I need to pay for my phone bill, light bill, and monthly payment on my house.*

*Earlier in life, I had a couple of friends with the Democratic and Republican parties and they both say that the Republicans help the rich*

*and the Democrats help the poor. I don't know if that is true or not but when President Bush cut taxes I thought I was going to get some tax cut but since I don't make much money I didn't get much of a tax break. This is why I believe there is some truth to that saying.*

### **Hunting, fishing and wildlife:**

*Out here in the Aleutians, everything is expensive. Almost everything is tripled in price from Anchorage or Seattle. Therefore, we had to survive like the old timers. They know how to survive. When we were young, a friend and I were in a creek trying to catch some silver salmon. One of the silvers went under the bank. We had a hook on a stick trying to hook them out and we never made it. An elder came around and asked us if there was fish under the bank and we said, "Yes, but we can't catch it." He went and put his hook upwards. We had our hook downwards, and that is why we could not catch any.*

*The tide here in the Aleutians doesn't go low as the tide in the mainland. I used to fish in Kodiak and I know the tide there goes sometimes 12 feet lower than normal and here in Atka it goes six or seven feet only. In Kodiak sometimes you see a boat on top of the rock about 12 feet up in the air and when we go under the bridge people up there looked down at us and smile.*

*Anyway, I'm a good shot for hunting seals and ducks and sea lions, things like that. I got good because we did not have enough ammo. The older people used to give me one or two shells and told me to get something to eat and couldn't afford to miss, so I really got to be a good shot.*

*You cannot go out anytime you want on a skiff because of the weather. The weather out here in the Aleutians is nasty. It is usually very windy, sometimes foggy and wet. The winters do not get freezing cold, but the summers do not get very hot either. Even in bad weather, people like to hunt. I enjoy hunting whenever I can. I do not do much*



*hunting anymore because my aiming eye is not good anymore and I cannot see that well.*

*I want to say something about wildlife. They say that wildlife is disappearing. When I used to fish for halibut I saw dead birds floating around and these birds are from out in the ocean. They are not land birds or at least not birds from Atka anyway. I think the reason that these birds were dying is from oil. People do not respect wildlife as much as they did in the past. I see people throw trash in the ocean. People should worry about what the future will lead to if this keeps happening. Wildlife get beached up here on the island and end up dying—whales, seal lions, birds, and sea otters. There is a lot of fishing here in Atka like king crab, black cod, grey cod, king salmon, pink salmon, halibut and many more. Sometimes during the summer, the halibut is so close to the beach you can catch them. Almost year round there fishermen stop by from other parts of Alaska while fishing.*

*I know a few people that are afraid of killer whales. Killer whales do not bother anybody. Sometimes they would follow you around and get close to your boat but they do not do anything. One time an old timer said that when he had a seal on top of his kayak the killer whale would take it but would not bother him.*

*One time I was on an island near Atka where seagulls nest. After the eggs hatched, I saw some eagles killing small seagulls and I figured there would be lot of small ones left but there was only a few. I never get tired of watching wildlife. When I go out, I see eagles, crows, seagulls, ptarmigans, horned puffins, fish, etc. When I was a kid I raised an eaglet but I couldn't keep it as a pet because it was too mean. There are some birds in Atka that we have never seen before. When I was a kid there used to be a few birds but now there is a whole lot around.*

*For the past five years now, the reindeer, during the winter, would come down the hills to the village. The reindeer would stay around the*

*village for almost the whole winter because there is more food around near the village than there is in the hills. I was told that six or twelve reindeer were put on Atka before the war. Now there are thousands. During the war the reindeer population grew and now there are maybe about two or three thousand reindeer here on the island of Atka.*

*One thing about Atka is that Atka has all kinds of decorated, different colored rocks. In certain areas there are different kinds of rocks. Atka is beautiful when you're up in the hills. I used to walk eight, ten, 12 hours a day hunting for reindeer before the ATV 4-wheelers came around. The reindeer were introduced before the war and now there are thousands of them. It is beautiful up there in the hills during the winter or summer, especially during the summer when it is all green. There are hills, lots of lakes, valleys, creeks, and rivers. Mostly there are big hills, and when you walk you practically you have to climb up them. Looking for reindeer, I would go up on the highest hills and look around. When I spotted them I would walk toward them and when they're too far I used to herd them closer to the village when I was alone. When you're by yourself animals are not scared of you, even sea lions, ducks, and seals. When you are alone in the boat, they come close to you, but when there are two of you they don't do that. I do not understand that. When there are two of you, the reindeer get kind of spooky but when you're alone it's easier to herd them. When they are so far from the village, they do not want to be herded anymore and try to go back. I used to shoot one there, pack it, and drag it home.*

*There is a lot of driftwood around the island. After the war, the driftwood has been used for firewood. I use cottonwood driftwood to smoke fish. The village areas have been picked clean. I have found unopened beer cans, flares, sometimes you find packaged food. I used to find a lot of Japanese [glass] balls after World War II, washed up on the shore.*

### **Atka is far away from anywhere else:**

*The state of Alaska built an airport in Atka 22 years ago. PenAir has a mail contract with the state to fly mail to Atka three times a week from Dutch Harbor. The plane can also carry 7-9 people, or cargo. The plane used to take seafood out but now it's too expensive. Now we have Coastal Transportation, a boat that comes three times a summer to pick up halibut and black cod. It leaves with 200,000 pounds of frozen fish.*

*I still live here in Atka. I never owned a house. I still don't own one but I'm buying one from Aleutian Housing Authority right now and hope to own it in a few years. You are supposed to live in the house for 25 years to own it. It was a prebuilt house. They brought the two halves in and put them together in Atka.*

*Not many people live here. I estimate around 100 people live in Atka year around. More come in the summer so they can fish. In Atka we live with the wildlife. The reindeer come down to the village. Sea lions go by here. People in Atka still eat seal and sea lions. We have halibut and codfish come close to shore. Before sea otters came around, we use to have crab on the beaches. In summer time, all the creeks around the island are full of salmon and we do not get any tourists out here. It is hard to get out here when the weather is bad. The only transportation out here is by PenAir from Dutch Harbor to Atka. The plane is supposed to arrive to Atka twice a week, but sometimes we do not get any planes for two weeks or more because of the weather.*

*After the war when we got to Atka I used to watch people build skiffs and then I built me one. After my first year in St. Paul I had a little bit of money and all that I needed to buy was a hammer and a hand saw. The rest of the stuff came from the old military buildings like nails, paint, and plywood. I had to buy some cork in cotton. I built me a 14-foot boat. I had to buy oars since I did not have a motor. Once that was built, I started going out on my own. The first time I*

*went out in my boat I hand lined for halibut and that time there were many halibut around.*

*In my time, I sank with my skiff three times. It was always near shore and always due to rough seas. The first time it was nice out and I had a skiff full of driftwood for my stove. I tried to fit into a northwest wind blowing about 40 and a couple of waves just sank me. My motor quit since it was under water, so I had to paddle back to a calmer place and pulled my boat and walked home in a wet snow that night and got home about 3 in the morning. The second time, a friend and I were out halibut fishing, hand lining, and the wind started blowing southeast about 40 and on the way back we sank again. When we sank everything we had, even the halibut, was floating in the water so we headed for the beach, but just before we got to the beach the motor quit so we jumped in the water and pulled our boat in and saved what we could save and we walked home. The third time I was out getting driftwood for my stove and it was blowing northwest about 35 to 40. We were just outside the village. I had too much wood in my boat, so I started sinking and headed toward the beach but this time the motor didn't quit. Nowadays I use GPS in my boat for fishing.*

*Atka is a beautiful place to live but it is very expensive. I pay over \$600 a month for fuel, \$300 a month for electricity, and pay for rent on our home every month, phone bills, grocery, oil, etc. If we did not live off the land, I do not think we could have been able to make it. The reason why it is so expensive here is that we live so far west of the mainland. It costs a lot to have everything either flown in or brought in by boat.*

*There are not many jobs on Atka. There is fishing during the summer. The school district, the store, and the post office all hire some people. There is a health aide at the clinic. Some people have jobs working for Aleutian Housing or the telephone company. The guy who works as*

*the diesel operator doesn't make any money. The city of Atka owns and operates the gas storage tanks. In 2007 a gallon of gas was over \$5.*

*The Atka airport has 3,000 feet of paved runway and is 100 feet wide. The city wants a longer runway, but it's too expensive to lengthen it. PenAir comes in with a twin engine prop on a regular flight from Dutch Harbor. There are charters to Atka. One time Northern Air Cargo DC6 landed, a four engine cargo plane. It was flying in bait for the processors. It was completely empty when it left.*

*Our small dock for cargo, a newly built road from the village to the dock, and the main dock are all on the other side of the bay. When I wrote this on June 14, 2004, we were finally starting to see king salmon in Atka. Some people from the village were commercially fishing halibut right then.*

*When you decide to come to Atka, make sure you schedule longer than you expect because of the weather. What I am trying to say is that when people come to Atka, and they are ready to head back out the plane is often either delayed and does not arrive until a day or two later.*

### **Learning from the elders:**

*I learned many things from the old timers. They taught me how to survive and taught me how to be good, told me what is good and bad. Now days the younger kids do not seem like they're interested in that stuff anymore. Since they have everything, they think it is going to be like that all the time, so they don't care. Later on when they get older and their parents cannot support them anymore, they are going to have a hard time. I hope they read my book and learn from it.*

*Old timers used to tell me that "What you do on your birthday you get good at," and I never believed it until now. If you work or do something on your birthday you do get real good at it. It happened to me. Most things that old timers told me I did not believe, but most of them*

came true. When I was young I used to camp and trap with old timers during the summer and winter and they used to tell me stories. I do not know how to say this, but the elders predicted the future and there are many things that I was told were going to happen or happened already. Few of those old timers knew how to read or write, but they knew what was going on and knew what they were talking about.

The old-timers used to tell me that the Russians were tough, mean, and they killed a lot of people. The old-timers that told me many stories are all gone. I have learned a lot from them. The reason why I was with the old-timers all the time is because I was kicked out of school when I was 18 so I spent my time with them since there was nothing much to do. The old-timers did not talk much about how they got here. I am thinking maybe they did not know or that they were here from the beginning. One other thing that an old-timer told me is that, if you live in a warm, sunny, calm environment that you will pay for it later. What I mean by this is it will get rough like hurricanes, floods, etc. If you have too perfect of a place to live too disastrous of a thing will happen. If you live in a place like the Aleutians, the weather is usually bad and stays the same but there are times when it is very nice. Like I said, the summers here are not too hot and the winters are not too cold. Usually it is just windy, foggy, and damp.

When I was young, I hardly ever wanted to be inside. I am usually always outside. Whenever the elders go camping or go out in a boat I used to volunteer to go with them to help them out. They tell many stories about the past, and sometimes they tell a story about what will happen. Some stories that they told were that the world was going to change. I do not know how they would know about that. They said that the ocean is going to come up every year and now I see it happening. In addition, they said there would be more wind and not as many earthquakes and now that I am older, it is happening. They used to tell me when it was

*nice all the time and no wind, there are a lot of little earthquakes. One time I was walking and I did not feel the earthquake but I saw the land wavy like. Later on when I reached the village, the elders told me there was an earthquake. They told me that the world would end sometime and not too far away.*

*They also mentioned that the children would start going against their parents. The kids would not listen and now I am seeing it happening. The parents cannot control their children because the government made a law saying we cannot spank our children and if we did we either would end up in jail or be separated from our families. Long time ago if one kid did something wrong everybody was spanked. That is how we controlled our kids. For hunting and fishing, the elders told me not to kill or take anything that I do not need. They asked me to control the wildlife. They never wasted anything that is edible. For example, when they would shoot the geese they pluck the whole head and eat it, but I never tried it because there was no meat on the head.*

*What I was told when I was younger is that if you have an easy life you pay for it later. They told me to be satisfied for what I have and what I get and not complain. If you ask for things you do not need or take more than you need and complain, you will be sorry later. I learned that when you fix something in a hurry you end up doing it again but if you take your time, you're finished on that first try.*

*When I was young I was told to respect elders, teachers, doctors, priests. We had a chief in the village and when the chief said anything the vice chief went around the houses and told the people what was going to happen or what we needed to do. For example, if we needed to clean the village, everyone helped and if the kids did anything wrong we were spanked, even if we did not do anything. Even after the war, I was told to help others and not ask for help so I used to help others, even when I was a kid and even when I did not have food or anything. The elders*

*did not have much to give me in return so they said that I will do better later in years, and that I am right now. Another thing old timers told me was that when you walk don't drink water, and that's how I used to be. I used to walk all day, sometimes eight to 12 hours without water and never get tired. Once I got home, I would drink water and get tired out, so I believe what they told me.*

*Everybody in Attu and Atka goes to church, or used to. I hardly go to church anymore because an elder told me, "If you go to church just to think or for just amusement, you might as well not go at all and just stay home and pray where there is no distractions." This is why I don't bother. I also believe God is everywhere and he can hear you pray no matter where you are.*



Photo 48. Atka church and houses. (Source: City of Atka, ca. 2001)

*When I said I saw Jesus just before the morning the Japanese landed, an old timer told me that kids see what adults can't see. I believed him because I saw Jesus come down. He did not touch the*



*ground, but He blessed me and then when I turned around to see if anyone was watching, Jesus was gone. I also said I saw a ghost one evening. It was the shape of a person and I could see right through it. That next morning someone died.*

### **Relatives from Attu:**

*I came back from Japan with my two uncles, Innokenty Golodoff and Willy Golodoff. My uncles told me some stories about Attu afterwards. When I was growing up I used to ask my mom about Japan but she never wanted to talk about it. I think my brother wants to forget about Japan also. I was always interested about what happened throughout my childhood but no one really wanted to talk about it. I am always interested. I think Japan was a nice place to live when I was staying there.*

*I had cousins, uncles and aunts on Attu but I don't know a lot about them. My mother died from diabetes at Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage while I was 30 or 40 and living in Atka, and her body was sent back to Atka. The only Attuans left are my younger brother Greg, my younger sister Elizabeth, and me. My older brother John died last year. Greg Golodoff lives in Atka and Elizabeth Kudrin lives in Anchorage. My brother and sister don't like to talk about Japan. That is all I know from Attu. Children of Attu people are still around, but most of them are not living in Atka. I do not even know how many there are. I know one living here in Atka is about all.*

*I don't know if my older brother and sister were in school when we were taken to Japan, but I think they must have been. My older brother lived in Atka. He died in August 2009. John didn't like to talk about what happened because he didn't keep track of what was going on. He was six to eight years older than me. I didn't know him very well and*



Photo 49. Elizabeth and Gregory Golodoff in Atka in 1946-1947 (Source: UW Press, Ethel Ross Oliver)

*after the war he didn't come back to Atka with us. John went to school at Mt. Edgecombe. He came back to the Aleutians and started to work on the North Star. One day the North Star came to Atka and John got off and stayed for a while. He left to go find a job on a fishing boat. He came back to live on Atka six years ago.*

*My brother Greg joined the Army. Then he lived in Anchorage and worked there. I took Greg to work on a processor. After that Greg moved to Atka, where he still lives.*

*I was married to my wife for over 50 years and I have eight kids with her, four boys and four girls. One of the girls passed away not too long ago but she left a beautiful little granddaughter Niki. All my kids are grown up and do not live with us anymore. My son Raymond lives in Anchorage and is a school bus driver. He moved to Anchorage three years ago to find work.*

# Family

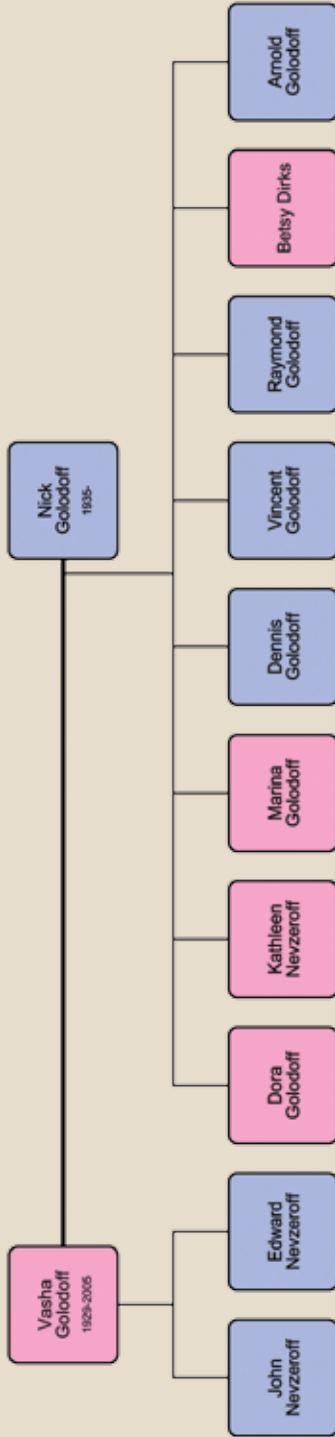


Fig. 6. Nick's Children (Kinship Chart)  
Created using Family Echo—<http://www.familyecho.com/>

*The reason I'm writing this book is to tell you about how Aleuts were back then, how my life back then got me to where I am now, how I learned, and what happened during the war. There is little info about Attu and Atka out there. Hardly anyone knows about the islands or Aleuts. The Aleuts today all turned modern.*

## Background: Attu Prehistory and History

By Rachel Mason, with Prehistory section adapted from Corbett et al. 2010

**A**ttu's remote beauty has always impressed visitors, but its beauty is often hidden by fog, wind, and rain. In a 1994 student paper, Jennifer Jolis wrote:

Attu Island. Forty-two miles long, fifteen miles wide, mist-enshrouded, wind-whipped, mountainous, and mysterious, it lies at the western end of the Aleutian chain of islands, which curve across the top of the North Pacific like jewels in a necklace, connecting North America with its past. These volcanic islands are the crest of a submarine ridge approximately 1,400 miles long, twenty to sixty miles wide, and 12,000 feet high above the ocean floor to either side. The islands separate the North Pacific Ocean to the south from the Bering Sea to the north. Coming together over the islands these systems clash and mingle, giving rise to climatic conditions that have earned them the sobriquet "birthplace of the winds." At any time of year warm moist air from the Pacific, meeting the frigid arctic air of the Bering Sea, can produce gale force winds, dense fog to sea level, or brilliantly clear sunny skies, followed in moments by rain squalls and more fog. Attu is the westernmost island in this arc, indeed, the westernmost point in North America. At longitude 173 degrees East it lies over 1,100 miles from the mainland of Alaska and less than 550 miles from the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia. The island's volcanic origins have produced a terrain of steep mountains rising from a deeply indented coastline with an abundance of bays and inlets. In summer

wildflowers bloom in brilliant profusion in the alpine tundra, lovely surprise for anyone who looks closely: orchid, monkshood, lupine, rhododendron. The British botanist Isobel Hutchison collected 69 species in less than two hours at the end of the 1936 season and estimated that a complete sampling would rival Unalaska's 350 species. The long beach grasses bend and sway to the earth before the winds that sweep across the hills, mimicking the waves in the coves and bays. On foggy evenings the calls of loons and eiders sound lonely, lost, otherworldly. The upwelling produced by the convergence of the northern and southern waters around the islands produces a marine life of great richness and variety. The sea is home to sea otters, sea lions, harbor seals, the occasional whale, migrating waterfowl and gulls, halibut, salmon, greenling, flounder. Although numbers of all species have diminished over time, the area continues to be one of the most rich and productive in the world, boasting the world's largest number of sea mammal species. (Jolis 1994:3)

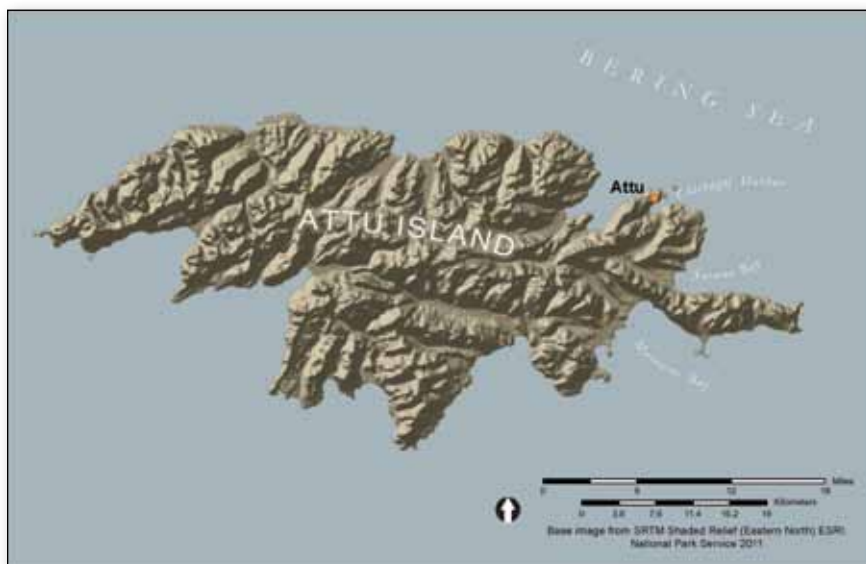


Fig. 7. Map of Attu Island.

### **Attu Prehistory (Adapted from Corbett et al. 2010)**

Attu is one of the Near Islands, so named because they are the nearest Aleutian Islands to Russia and Asia. They are not very near to the mainland of Alaska; Atka, the closest village in that direction, is 500 miles away. In spite of being so far from mainland Alaska a surprising amount of archeological work has been attempted in the Near Islands. Most of the work has emphasized the distinctive culture of the Near Island Unangan.

Beginning in 1874 William H. Dall (1877), a surveyor with the Coast Survey, excavated village sites on Attu, Agattu, and Amchitka as well as islands further east. He was followed by Waldemar Jochelson (1925), leading an expedition sponsored by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society and the wealthy Riaboushinsky family. His team spent 19 months in the Aleutian Islands excavating sites on Unalaska, Umnak, Atka, and Attu. In 1909, they excavated three sites on Attu. One, a post-Russian site they called "Sin," was near the 20<sup>th</sup> century winter village on Chichagof Bay. A second site, also from the historical era, was near the summer village at Sarana Bay. At the third, called Nanikax, on Lastova Bay, the crew found 15 pits (Jochelson 1925:24). A typical prehistoric Unangan winter settlement consisted of a few large houses with several families in each. Summer homes, less permanent, were smaller and housed only one family (Corbett 1990:9). Jochelson found human remains in kitchen midden near the village sites, but later research indicated that most burials were in specially constructed houses within the village. Unlike other Unangan, it appeared the people living in the Near Islands did not use caves for burials or practice mummification (Jochelson 1925:46; Laughlin and Marsh 1951:82).

Alĕs Hrdlička (1945), a physical anthropologist at the Smithsonian, spent a summer working on Agattu. A member of Hrdlička's field team, Alan May, excavated a site near the village in Chichagof Harbor.

In the 1950s, after the war, 1950s, Albert Spaulding (1962) excavated at Krugloi Point, Agattu. Since then, most professional work in the Near Islands has consisted of site surveys notably by Ted Bank II in 1948 and the National Park Service in 1968 (McCartney

1974). In 1975, to aid in their Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act applications for historic and cemetery sites, the Aleut Corporation contracted with Bruno Frohlich and David Kojansky to survey the coast of Attu, where they found 12 archeological sites. In 1985, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) began investigating these claims in the western Aleutians on Amchitka in the Rat Islands. The Civil Rights Act of 1988 led to the BIA investigation of the historic village on Attu. BIA surveyed the rest of the Near Islands in 1988 and 1989. Corbett (1990) tested several sites on Shemya Island. Beginning in 1997 the Western Aleutians Archaeological and Paleobiological Project began 14 years of work to understand the history and lives of the Near Island Unangan. The teams excavated on Attu, Shemya, Buldir, Rat and Little Kiska Islands. The report for the work on Shemya has been published (Corbett et al. 2010), the rest of the work is still being analyzed.

Most archeologists agree that the Aleutians were settled from the east. The origins of the Near Island Unangan may be found in many places, but their deep roots as maritime hunters are found on the Alaska Peninsula, and eastern Aleutians. More than 9,000 years ago, land-based hunters developed the skills and technology to hunt sea mammals and fish offshore.

The earliest evidence of human occupation of the Aleutians, dated to about 8,000 years ago, is on Anangula Island in the eastern Aleutians (Laughlin and Marsh 1951). Recently, Anangula style sites have been found in Unalaska Bay (Knecht and Davis 2001). The distinctive tool kit consists of long narrow, parallel sided blades, burins for carving bone, and end and side scrapers. This technology is a variant of the widespread Paleo-Arctic tradition found throughout Alaska and parts of Siberia.

About 7000 years ago sites at Umnak and Akun still show a relationship with Anangula but people had added stemmed points, bifacial tools, and shallow semisubterranean houses. Dumond (2001) suggests this tradition shares similarities with the Ocean Bay tradition of Kodiak and the Alaska Peninsula.

By 5,000 years ago there were people in the Rat Islands, but as far as we know the Near Islands were still uninhabited. Between 4,000–3,000 years ago a distinct Margaret Bay tradition appears on



Unalaska and neighboring islands. The most notable aspect of this tradition is houses with stone walls, clay floors, and sophisticated fireplaces with external vents, chimneys and subfloor channels (Knecht and Davis 2001). By 3,000 years ago the Aleutian tradition as it is widely recognized was fully developed.

While the area could have been occupied as early as 2000 BC (BIA 1988:8-9), we will never know exactly when the first exploring parties landed on the Near Islands. They came from the east, from the Rat Islands. Young men, proving themselves, explored the new islands. These pristine islands with untapped hunting grounds must have electrified the people. By 3,000 years ago, there were several settlements in the Near Islands. The earliest colonists settled in areas with the richest resources; at Massacre Bay on Attu, at Aga Cove and Krugloi Point on Agattu, on the south coast of Shemya and where Alaid and Nizki connect.

Early inhabitants hunted fur seals in local rookeries, and caught huge cod at sea. A thousand years later smaller reef fish, and shellfish were more common. This switch prompted an increase in the use of small, jewel-like bone fishhooks to catch the smaller prey. The tool kit also changed. The oldest sites contain more, large cobble tools, including hammerstones, choppers, and abraders. Later, there is an increase in cutting and scraping tools. A variety of drills and chisels, ground stone knives, and adzes appear. Bone tools became more elaborate, with new styles of harpoon and spear points and awls and the addition of fishing gorges and woodworking chisels to the toolkit. The appearance of jewelry and other decorative pieces signals increased status differences between individuals.

Populations in the early settlements were small but by 2400 years ago had grown dramatically and many new villages appeared. The early villages were made up of a few houses, each occupied by an extended family, maybe 30-40 people. Before about 1000 years ago there were probably about 2,000 people in the Near Islands. Major cultural changes occurred sometime about 750 years ago. The population grew to possibly four times the size it had been earlier. Villages lined the coastlines of all the islands, and some with several hundred inhabitants. In each village one or two houses were substantially larger than the others. Larger communities need more

formal leadership than family based hamlets. When the Russians arrived in 1745 they reported that village chiefs built large houses to care for orphans and the poor, and for communal ceremonies.

The Near Island culture was firmly rooted in the ancestral Aleutian tradition, extending back to Anangula and even further to the Alaska Peninsula. At the western end of the Aleutian Islands they were free to develop their own unique traditions, and their culture became one of the most distinctive variants of the historic Unangan people. The *Sasignan* were the Unangan group that inhabited the Near Islands, including the people of Attu, Agattu, and the Semichi Islands (Bergsland and Dirks 1990:2).

### **Russian Colonialization**

Because the Near Islands were the closest populated lands to Russia, the people of those islands were the first to be contacted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Crews of *promyshlenniki* (fur hunters and traders) that included both Russians and Kamchadals were assembled in the Russian Far East to travel to the Aleutians (Laughlin 1984:315). With the arrival of Russian fur hunters off Agattu in September 1745, the world of the Aleuts changed forever. The Russian crew was met on shore by 100 armed men and moved instead to the less populated Attu Island (Berkh 1974:16). The Russians captured an old woman and a boy, keeping the boy to train as translator. Within a few weeks, a Russian party attacked another settlement and killed 15 men to get women. These violent acts are recorded by the names Murder Point and Massacre Bay on Attu.

Between 1745 and 1799, 80 Russian hunting parties worked in the Near Islands, mostly on Attu. In 1750, Andreian Tolstykh introduced arctic fox to Attu Island from the Commander Islands. In many places in the Aleutian Islands, the company encouraged the introduction of breeding pairs of foxes as crop animals (Black 1984:101-102).

Because the initial Russian hunting pressure was concentrated in the western Aleutians, the sea mammal population declined quickly in the Near Islands. The hunters went further east, to the Fox Islands, where there were more sea otters and foxes. They continued to stop in the Near Islands to collect tribute and to press the residents into service as hunters (BIA 1988:17).

The effects of contact were devastating. Within a few years, the population had declined greatly because of disease and because of the hardship of forced labor for the Russians (BIA 1988:18). By 1762 the merchants Cherepanov and Kul'kov estimated a total population of 100 for the island group (Liapunova 1979).

Each Island had its own chief. Agattu was politically dominant at contact, but by the 1760s, power had shifted to Attu. Chief Bakutan and his second chief Chintuyach were based on Attu, and most people had moved to that island. The move was prompted by many factors including population collapse, a desire to be near the Russians and their trade goods, and protection by the Russian presence from raids by their eastern neighbors (Black 1984:73).

In 1799, the Russian government granted the Russian-American Company a 20-year monopoly on the Pacific fur trade. The Attuans remained independent of Company control, they hunted for themselves and traded with the Russians. By the end of the 18th century, the small community, with 20 able bodied men, occupied two settlements: one in Massacre Bay, and the other at the mouth of Chichagof Harbor.

In 1805, the Russians moved people from Adak or Amchitka, called Atkans,<sup>18</sup> to Attu. They built a Company settlement at the head of Chichagof Harbor. A visitor in 1811 reported poor conditions in the new settlement. No ship had stopped there for five years, and supplies were low. Some of the Atkans had left Attu, and the only Russians remaining were the manager and one other man. The Attuans were living separately from the Atkans, and were more independent of the Russian company, although they traded furs in return for goods such as thread, guns and ammunition (Black 1984:159-161). In subsequent years, the number of Attuans decreased, while the Atkan settlement grew (BIA 1988:18-19). By 1830, the Chichagof Harbor village was the only permanent winter settlement.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>According to the late Lydia Black, none of the "Atkans" was really from Atka (Debbie Corbett, pers. comm., 2011).

<sup>19</sup>The Russians also moved Unangan to settle the Commander Islands to the west. Between 1814 and 1816, some of the relocated "Atkans" and several Attuans were taken from Attu to the Commander Islands (Lantis in Oliver 1988: xxiv). Other transfers from Attu followed. Even after Russia's 1867 sale of Alaska, in 1872-1873 a group of 38 Unangan hunters and their families, mainly from Attu, moved to the Commander Islands (Black 1984:105). The Attuan dialect once spoken on Copper Island, one of the Commanders, was creolized, with Russian verbal inflection (Bergsland and Dirks 1990:5, 7fn).

Although the first baptism took place on Attu in 1758, predating the arrival of Russian Orthodox clergy, it was 1825 before a chapel was in existence there. When the priest Iakov Netsvetov, a “Creole” of mixed Russian and Unangan descent, was appointed to head the Atka parish in 1828, his duties included regular visits to Attu and other outposts such as Amlia and Bering Island. Netsvetov made his first trip to Attu in 1831, noting at that time that the language spoken on Attu was different from the one on Atka. Netsvetov counted 120 Unangan and Creoles in a company settlement at Chichagof Harbor. All of them were baptized, but he said the Attuans were more independent and superstitious than other Unangan. At the time most Native residents lived in barabaras (sod houses), but the village also included three houses, a store, and a chapel (Netsvetov 1980:33-34). According to his records, the priest’s next visits were in 1833 and 1838 (Netsvetov 1980:79, 173-174). Local people maintained the chapel during the several years that might elapse between visits from a priest.

Sea otters were the focus of the Russian company’s interest. Company hunters left for the Semichi Island hunting grounds for sea-otter hunting in November and December. The hunters returned to Attu in December to trap foxes until spring. Attuans accompanied the Atkans to the Semichis and Agattu to hunt, but did not trap foxes (Khelbnikov 1994).

After each May, subsistence pursuits took over from commercial hunting. Red salmon were caught from in weirs at fish camps in Sarana and Massacre Bays and dried for winter. Barrels of salmon were also salted. Men traveled along the north coast of Attu hunting driftwood, accompanied by women who fished on the reefs and gathered grass and edible plants. Sea lions and seals were hunted where and whenever found. Except for tea, sugar, molasses, and biscuits, the islanders were self-sufficient in food. They traded fox and sea otter furs for rifles, shot and powder, and fiber to make nets. The most sought after goods were wool worsted, linen, Chinese cotton and silk, velveteen, velvet, and taffeta. Finished clothing, such as vests, shirts, trousers, caps and hats, and silk shawls was also popular. Other necessities included cooking vessels, copper tea kettles, casks, wooden beams, and needles and thread.

A Russian-American Company census of Attu in 1860 found 227 Unangan and 21 Creoles including the company manager.

About 50 men and 10 women were sent out each year to hunt, and furs were shipped out at the end of each year's hunt. The village included a chapel, a wooden house, a bathhouse, a barracks, a wharf and a store (BIA 1988:19).

### **Attu in the American Era, 1867-1942**

After the sale of Alaska in 1867 to the United States, a decline in services on remote islands contributed to a dramatic drop in the population. By 1880, the village had 107 inhabitants, down from 220 in 1870 (Scammon 1874; U. S. Census 1884). The economy depended on sea otter and fox furs.

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Attu received few visits from outsiders. Those who did visit the remote island were impressed with how clean and neat the village was, and how friendly and happy its residents. In 1909, Attu was one of the sites Waldemar Jochelson studied with the Aleut-Kamchatka Archaeological Expedition. The party arrived June 15 and stayed in the island's winter village in Chichagof Harbor. A few days later they moved with the Unangan to Sarana Bay, the summer village, where they remained until early August (Jochelson 1925:16-17). The village teachers' files show that in the same year, 1909, there was an attempt to place reindeer on Attu, as part of educator Sheldon Jackson's program to institute new ways of life among Alaska Natives. The effort to make Attuans into reindeer herders was not successful.

The 1920s brought high fox prices and prosperity to the islands. A. B. Sommerville had leased the Semichi Islands in 1911 and planted 15 blue foxes there (Gray 1939:134). In 1922, Fred Schroeder of the Aleutian Fur Company bought Sommerville out and planted foxes on Agattu, and built cabins on Shemya and Alaid (Golodoff 1988).

The Aleuts on Attu replaced their sod barabaras with frame houses (Gray 1939). A wooden church, built of materials purchased with proceeds from baskets made by seven women, was completed in the 1920s (Shapsnikov and Hudson 1974). A school was built in 1932 (Golodoff 1988; West 1938), but no teachers arrived until 1940. Trappers left home around October to restock and repair the nine cabins around the coast of Attu. Trapping began in November and ended in March. They returned to the village in January for the

holidays. The Attuans also trapped on Agattu, the Semichis, and in the Rat Islands on Rat Island proper. Islands were worked on a rotation, allowing fox populations to recover for several years before returning. Men trapping these other islands were often accompanied by their families.

Innokenty Golodoff (1988) described trapping on Shemya in 1938. Innokenty, his brother Willie, Willie's wife Julia, and their children Mary and Michael, along with three other adults travelled to Shemya in late fall. They took two dories, 5 hp motors, gas lanterns, fuel, tobacco, and staples such as flour, sugar, tea, and coffee. The cabin, a one-room frame structure, was located on the eastern shore of Alcan Harbor. Each man set about 10 traps and checked them on foot. They wore homemade sea lion-gut raincoats and sea lion-flipper boots in foul weather. When conditions permitted, they motored to Alaid and Nizki and trapped there.

The men hunted sea lions, seals, geese and ducks, on the offshore rocks around Shemya. The trappers also spent a great deal of time searching for driftwood to heat the cabin and for cooking. Trappers on the outer islands could remain in camp until May before a vessel arrived to take them home (Golodoff 1988).

In the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, Attu was the remote and peaceful place that visitors praised and that Nick remembers from his earliest years. The trader, Fred Schroeder, was the main source of store goods, cash, and credit in return for fox furs and baskets. Contacts with the outside world came when Coast Guard cutters stopped every few months. In the years just before the war, when fears of the Japanese were mounting, a radio was brought to Attu and Chief Mike Hodikoff was taught how to use it—a job Foster Jones, the teacher's husband, took over in 1941.

The Japanese invasion of the village in June 1942, and the other events related in previous chapters, ended forever the village's reputation as a remote paradise.

## Conclusions

After the Attuans were taken to Japan, their village was occupied by Japanese troops and was destroyed by American bombing (Garfield 1995:213–214). On other parts of the island, the U.S. military left behind the remains of structures including tunnels used for storage. In 1987 a “peace memorial” was installed to honor all the soldiers who died at Attu, and in 1993 a sign was placed to commemorate the Attu villagers’ wartime ordeal.

The island of Attu has remained uninhabited. There is nothing left of the wooden houses, the school, church, or the barabaras that were still in use in 1942. A Coast Guard Loran (long-range navigation system) station operated there in 1961 and was staffed by 20 personnel. It was closed in 2010 after the Global Positioning System (GPS) replaced Loran as a navigational system for ships and aircraft.

As Jennifer Jolis wrote almost two decades ago,

Periodically the island is visited by fishermen or by interested naturalists, biologists, and archeologists, usually in the employ of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The buildings and bridges built by the Navy are disappearing, each year the wind and waves take back the land. Each spring the grasses continue to wave, the eiders to sound their lonely calls. A lone eagle flies over Temnac Valley. The people are gone. The island remains. (Jolis 1994:30).

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Nick Golodoff. (Source: Brenda Maly)

## *Attu Boy*

*“In 1942, before the war began, Attu was a nice, quiet place... We had nothing, no insulation in the houses and no inside plumbing. There was a woodstove to heat the house. Attu was plain and quiet all the time.”*

—Nick Golodoff

**N**ick Golodoff was six years old when the peaceful life of his remote Aleutian village was interrupted by an invasion by the Japanese army on May 7, 1942. As soldiers poured into Attu on foot, shooting, Nick hid in his neighbors' barabara, or sod house.

The Japanese occupied Attu for two months before taking the Unangan occupants of the village to Otaru, a city on Hokkaido. Over the next three years nearly half the Attuans died of disease and starvation, among them Nick's father, brother, and sister. Nick's memoir tells, through a child's eyes, the story of that extraordinary and tragic experience, and reflects on his life in Atka after World War II.