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Side one:

Alfred Stepetin [AS]: ...subjects you are interested in and would like me to talk on. 'Cause there is no textbook, as such, on what I'm teaching you. But, if we do this right, and do it properly, there will be some kind of a book for the next classes. A new person, maybe, they'll use the old text to say this is what they did. I might make mistakes, but pardon me, you know? Okay.

Today I was thinking, I'm going to talk about the war years first. I'm going to do this every class. To talk a few minutes on some subject in the Aleut life. And in these, I'll bring up the elders, which are--that's what I'm supposed to do. But I'm going to talk about the war years, the effect on the elders, and the people in general. On Dutch Harbor, in the Aleutians, was bombed on June 3rd, 1942 by the Japanese. And immediately there was talk about evacuating the Aleuts, because a few days later the Japanese had invaded Attu and had taken the twenty-six people living in Attu as prisoners. And the federal government felt that this could happen to the other villages. So there was immediate talk about evacuation.

It didn't happen overnight. But it happened faster than we hoped it would. So on July 12, of '42--I'm talking about the Unalaska group where I was evacuated from the village with two days notice. And they said, "Take only one suitcase of clothes or whatever." Later we found out--everything was done so secretly, we

didn't know what was going on in the other villages. We--I had a sister living in Nikolski. I didn't know what she was going to do, where she was going to go. And I had relatives in Saint Paul, same thing. I didn't where they were going, where they were. They were wondering where we were going to be. We didn't even know where we were going. And, to tell you how that affected the older people, we were put on a boat, and we left the dock, and we were pass--as you went out the harbor, you passed the church. And all the elders knelt down and prayed. They prayed to the church, "Will I ever see you again?" You know. It was hard. And on me, even though I was a kid. 'Cause we didn't know where we were going, we didn't know where we would end up, or if we'd ever come back. Because there was no information given to us. In fact, two weeks later, when we arrived in Wrangell, Alaska, we still didn't know where we were going and where we were going to eventually live. This evacuation affected eight villages in the Aleutians: Unalaska, Nikolski, Akutan, Kushiga, Makushin, Atka, Saint Paul, and Saint George. The Unalaska group was placed in a fishing camp, at a place called Burnett Inlet. The Nikolski, Akutan, Chernofski, and Makushin group was put into--Roosevelt had something going there, some kind of men that worked for the government, and they had built a camp outside of Ketchikan, and these--Nikolski, Akutan, Chernofski, Makushin--were placed in that camp. Atka was placed at a fishing camp called Killesnoo. Saint George and Saint Paul were taken to Funter Bay and placed in--there was two canneries in Funter Bay and one was placed--Saint Paul was placed in one camp and Saint George in the other. But this is--this was the way things were. The federal government--we became wards of the federal government. We had no more say what--we weren't free anymore to do as we pleased. We became wards of the federal government.

We reached Wrangell on August 12, 1942. And then we were transferred to the evacuation camps on August 25. Camp consisted of--my camp, the one I was in--consisted of nine houses. They were two bedroom, wood frame houses. The one bunkhouse with eleven rooms. Later on, much later, a year later I think, they added four more houses. Built four more houses. In these nine houses and eleven rooms, they had to place 180 people. There was, of course, no school, no church, no hospital, or not even a clinic. There was no running water, no electricity. All houses had just wood stoves. And the federal government gave us food, but it was rationed to us. I used to look forward to Tuesday because that was apple and orange day [laughs]. There was something to look forward to. Every Tuesday you got your apple and oranges. But they would have sugar and flour day, and then fresh meat day. We had a--they had a schedule we went by. If you didn't go at a given time, you just didn't get your meat or food that week. And on the wood stove, we were used to going on the beaches and picking up driftwood and cutting it and chopping it and using it. Of course, driftwood is aged so it burns easy. All we saw was trees. I mean, we never saw them before, and they were just huge around there. And the people started cutting them and using them to heat their house. And green wood will not burn as hot as aged wood. So they learned to go out there, picking wood as they did at home.

As I said, there was no clinic in the camp, and the nearest hospital was eighty miles away and was a two hour boat ride. So--and we had--the only closest thing to a doctor was the school teacher's wife. And all the medical supplies I saw in her house was a first aid kit, so if you got sick you just didn't go running to her. But like the old Aleuts, they have their own Aleut remedies they would use to help themselves. But if a person got

really bad, they would--and there was no communication, there was no radio or telephone or anything to the outside. So if something happened, we had to wait for a boat to come by or something, to get the people out. And there was a--from the bay we were in, there was a point. We got some people from the Wrangell newspaper to tell people to watch the point; that if there's a fire burning on the point, that there's an emergency at the camp. So they would transfer them [inaudible]. I, being a teenager, I had the fortunate chance of leaving the camp and going to a vocational school in Wrangell. And all teenagers--not necessarily teenagers--from grade eight through twelve, the students were taken to Wrangell Institute to go to school. And this meant you left in September and you didn't come home until May. There was no, like I say, no medical help so--as most Native villages have. There weren't that many babies born, but the ones that were born were helped in birth by a midwife. An epidemic broke out of boils because of the water change. I think it was the water change or something in the water that affected the people. Everybody got boils. And then influenza--I mean, impetigo. Which affected your face. Lice became a problem. It was because of crowding of the people. I'm not saying that the Aleuts never had lice, but a few must have had because it ran all over the camp. Everybody had lice. To decrease the lice population, almost everybody had to get a haircut down to the scalp. And the ones that didn't had to use kerosene to kill the bugs. You never smoked around people then! [laughs] There was dental care from Wrangell that the boat brought over, a dentist. But knowing he wouldn't be back for a year, he just made a--I don't know if he was getting paid by the tooth or what, but he was pulling teeth that could have been saved. And then the doctor came and he, this doctor must have money coming for

pulling tonsils, but he pulled everybody's tonsils [laughs].

And the Aleut way of fishing was not available to us. And we were not allowed to take our fishing gear, or many were not allowed to take their rifles and such. So they got nets for the fishermen to catch fish. But they never--the beaches were different.

Unalaska beaches are gravel beaches where you can pull up a net real easy. But these beaches were rocky beaches, so fishing beach netting was not possible in the bay we were living on. So most of the men just went gill netting. Hunting--for what did you hunt? There was nothing to hunt but bears. We hardly ever saw seals in the area. The only berries the women could pick were high bush blueberries and cranberries. But there again, they all were wormy. You had to clean them out before you used them. So--but the older people, it was hard for them because they were accustomed to their own house, their own village, and to be placed in a place so far away from home, with no means of making a living or anything was hard on the old people. And I was telling one of the students yesterday, it affected the students--I mean the toddlers, 'cause the ones that were toddlers are now the ones that are the leaders in our communities. And they feel they grew up in this period when they were coming out--I mean when they were beginning to see and to understand the hardship they lived. And it affected them psychologically, I believe. I'm not saying my group, 'cause I'm another generation. This generation below me, the next generation, which was affected the most. I'm not saying this is a total [inaudible], but those Natives were affected more by drinking, you know, and it became that they--psychologically it affected everybody, the people; the young especially 'cause they didn't have a normal childhood life. 'Cause, like I say, when the war was--when we returned back from the camp, it took them another three or

four years to even come back to normal, what they knew as normal before the war, and like some of them never able--came out of it. They just--they were given wood frame houses called "Army Cabanas" and said, "Here, this is the house that you lost. We're replacing it for you." And they gave them four walls, two windows, and a door. Said, "Here, this is the house. We're replacing your home." And they had to from scratch build the home from this one little cabana. It was a hardship on everybody. In this period, these young, freed teenagers were affected and, like I said, it is now that same group that are problems in the village. I think it's because of-- psychologically they feel neglected. Or felt neglected. And then the old people, I'm back to them, they said, "I want to go home." They wanted to go home. They said, "I don't want to die here. I don't want to die here." Fortunately, my village, my village group, we lost only three elders. Where in the other village camps they lost much more. But why we lost so few is we had only a few elders. I can always remember the last old woman that was dying. There was talk of returning home. She said, "I'm going to hang on. I'm going to go home." But she had--she said, "But if I die, don't bury me here. Take me home." She had died, so they built a coffin, a double coffin, for her and packed it up. And they took her body home. But it was the idea that they didn't want to be left alone when everybody else went back. And the other ones died in the city, like Wrangell, and they were buried in a proper graveyard. So, any questions?

Lydia Black [LB]: I have a few questions [inaudible]. I'll read them and if you have additional questions [inaudible]. After World War II [inaudible] how did they put their lives back together without help from the government? Alfred mentioned that they didn't get any aid. I wonder if now the Aleut people are being

helped by anybody. By government [inaudible].

AS: In the first part of the question, I just mentioned what the federal government did. They replaced--I mean, they gave homes, these wooden cabanas, to each. But if you had a large cabana--I mean a large family, you got two cabanas. Which was only right, that you would need two cabanas. And the two cabanas could fit easily into this room. And still have room left over, so they weren't that big a building. And they--there was always, before the war and everything, I was talking about chiefs and their responsibilities, there was always what you called a village council that took care of the problems of the village. And these, even during evacuation, they kept it going. The BIA agents would not like this idea. They'd say, "Hey, you guys don't have meetings like this." [inaudible], so they didn't allow to have meetings. But they'd still have their little secret meetings in the houses. That guy, you can't call him chief anymore because he wasn't a chief, he'd go and complain to BIA and say, hey, we need this or we need that. Try to bring up the problems to BIA. And when they got home again, after the government gave them these cabanas to fix into a home, they pretty much left and said, "Okay, we gave you what you need so we're leaving." There was no money compensation given to them for the lose of everything during the war. Like their furniture and their artifacts, or whatever. There was none. But I guess you've heard, recently, that there is a bill in Congress that they're going to compensate the Aleuts, the evacuees. Long due.

LB: Not passed yet.

AS: Yeah, not passed, but it's pretty much. February 8th, keep my

ears open [laughs].

Student: Were there people that resisted internship? And if they did, what was the reaction to that?

AS: There was, I would say, within my group, the Unalaska group, there was a couple of people who really complained and complained, and finally the BIA agent said, "I'm not going to take this from you. If you don't want to be here, you know, leave!" They didn't actually throw him out, but he gave him that. Where we didn't have a chance to get out of the village, out of the camp, he gave him the authority. "You can leave," you know. So he left. They left. Two brothers. So it was--it wasn't an eviction, but he gave them that chance, if they wanted to leave, to go ahead. And these two brothers, they felt they had enough of it, so they left. But they were young and able to get employment, and work, and take care of themselves. They weren't, you know--the older people where they would have to be aided by some--or the young people. So it--they knew what they were getting into when they started complaining.

Student: Were you ever [inaudible] by the BIA while you were there? [inaudible]

AS: You see, Unalaska--Saint Paul and Saint George were under Fish and Wildlife. Nikolski, Atka, Makushin, Akutan, all had BIA schools. Or territorial, actually. They had territorial schools. But Unalaska, even from way back, being a city, their school system was a city school system [laughs]. Anyway, so the Unalaska group never felt they were accountable to anybody for their actions at home or in the village. And then when we got to Burnett, and these people that evacuated us say, "Here, here's Mr. and Mrs. Long. They're going to be your caretakers, now." And at that moment, we

became wards of the federal government. And we had no more say in what we could do or what we wanted to do. We just did what they wanted us to do. We became wards of the government. They took care of us the best they could. They said [inaudible] could have done a lot better. But they provided us with health aid and clothes [inaudible]. But we wouldn't have been cold or hungry or sick if they hadn't moved us, so it was their responsibility to take care of us. But, I'm saying this is the Unalaska group. They weren't dependent on any form of federal government to--they had no form of government to go to as a group in Unalaska. They were just members of the city. They had no BIA teachers to go to, or--the only one they actually go to and complain to in the village would be the priest or something. So they were self-governing until this time they were put under--as wards of the government. And it affected them very much. 'Cause they never had to be--they never had to go ask somebody, "Can I go," you know. And it was hard because, just to go out of town, just to go fishing, you'd sign up for a skiff, like when you're in college and you want to play ping-pong, you want to use a ping-pong paddle, you sign up for it. It's just like this, like if you sign up you can have it. Luckily, the men were distributed rifles. They had their--but they only had three dories and they'd have to sign up for the dories so that they could go hunting. But it was things like this that they never had to do before that affected them a lot.

LB: There were several questions. Did the Aleut people receive any compensation for how they were treated during relocation? So we'll just pass on; that has been answered.

AS: There was, several years back during the--when we were studying the World War II evacuations and compensations and stuff, there

happened to be some money they had given. Roosevelt, President Roosevelt had assigned so much money to be given to the Aleuts for compensation. For their evacuation. And it was only 60,000 dollars, you know. So what--they give \$12.50 to each person and say, "Here, you're compensated." [inaudible]

Student: I would wonder if someone could elaborate on what that compensation currently is [inaudible].

LB: Alfred? Do you want [inaudible].

AS: You could...

LB: [inaudible] a United State's commissioner [inaudible] investigated [inaudible] the Aleut people. The Aleuts were included because they managed to locate documents about relocation in the Aleut archives. Part of them were destroyed by the BIA; part of them survived. And the Aleut corporation engaged a Washington firm [inaudible] and to [inaudible] and to put together, and the Aleuts were included in the proceedings of the commission. The commission finished its report in '83 and recommended recompense. Individual recompense to survivors and recompense to the communities, establishing a fund for a cultural center [inaudible]. Senators Stevens and Murkowski have been working towards implementation of that recommendation ever since. Just before the last presidential election, majority leader and committee chairman, James [inaudible] stopped the Aleut compensation because Aleut communities were saying in their petition [inaudible] rebuild the churches. I noted, and Alfred is saying to you, that the church is the center of existence, so Aleuts [inaudible] are not stressing, "Give me for my own personal losses." They're stressing compensation for the community and the

destruction of community life. And one of the things was, "Rebuild our churches." The Atka people were especially adamant about it. They want their church rebuilt with proper icons and bells. The church was burned to the ground when the United States Navy-- ancient bells that were brought over from Russia, so on and so forth, books, documents, everything went up in flames. And the doctrine of separation of church and state is involved. So they can't offer compensation for rebuilding the church. When I was called on this question, I nearly went through the roof, because who destroyed them in the first place! Where was the separation of the church and state then? But it had--it is in the pipeline now. And I think it cleared the commission, and I believe it is coming to the Congress floor shortly. We expect it in February. No compensation has been granted yet. And if you have any weight with the powers that be, if you are from other states, write your congressman to support the compensation for the Aleut people.

Student: So also very feasible just to send a public service announcement, which is just a local telephone call in support and they will be listened to.

LB: The Alaska congressional delegation works for the compensation. However, we have only one congressman in the House. Do you want to add anything to it?

AS: [inaudible]. It took many years...

LB: [inaudible] have been published.

AS: I was very--I was fortunate. I was one of the ones when the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands first came into the picture and said, "Okay let's get this World War II bill," I was very first to be chosen as the director of the World War II project, as it was

called. So I took a group of television people to the villages to interview the older people that were interned and to get views of the village. What was and how it was, and how it is now. There was--I don't know if you've seen it. It was on television. So I went to every village on the changing, when these movie people, television people, to make up the documentary.

LB: There's one more question pertaining to the war compensation. Did the Aleut people, when they were relocated to Wrangell, suffer from nutrition problems because of the drastic food changes?

AS: Yes. Like I was saying, the people came out with boils and impetigo and such. I think most of this was because of the food change. Their bodies weren't resistant [inaudible]. But I don't think the food, as in malnutrition as such--because they did provide us with food and it was edible. Not as much as we normally were used to having, but they made sure we didn't go hungry. They were giving us food that we hadn't eaten before.

LB: Any other questions? [inaudible]

Student: I think you'd said that the Japanese captured twenty-six people? Were those Aleuts?

AS: Yes, they were Atkans--uh, Attuans.

Student: What happened to them?

AS: They were taken to Japan and put in concentration camps until the end of the war. And then, after the war, at the signing of the ending of the war, the federal government brought them back. So they're back. But not all of them, you know. Some of them died. Very few came back. But we complained, you know. They were put in

these camps. They had lots more to complain about. But they had to complain to the Japanese government not the federal [laughs].

LB: But the Attuans [inaudible]; they were given a choice to either [inaudible]. And a few live in Atka, some live in Anchorage, a majority [inaudible].

Student: Why weren't they given [inaudible]?

LB: We don't have a map. Attu is the westernmost island between the boundaries of the United States, way out, a thousand miles across the sea. And the question of supplies and communication [inaudible].

AS: Not only that, Attu is, with Shemya [inaudible]--Shemya is another island close to [inaudible] are military outposts, you know. A lot of secret stuff going out there that they don't want us to know about. You know, they don't want a bunch of Aleuts out there. They pretty much, they know we, "We'll provide you a house if you'll move." Not only did they do that with the Atkans, but the small, local groups that were evacuated to Wrangell--or, Ketchikan. Ketchikan was a group that really got affected by it. When they came back, Nikolski was still a village, a livable village. Akutan was still a livable village. Makushin and Kushiga were beyond repair. They were gone. They were really mad, because they--GI's had gone in there and ransacked their houses. Left the doors open, broke windows, and stuff. So there was nothing to save in Kushiga or Makushin. And the federal government checked on this before they brought the people back. So they gave Makushin people--"You have a choice, you can go back to your village and start from scratch or you can move to any of the other villages we have." Some of them chose to live in Akutan, some

chose to live in Unalaska. Kushiga, the same thing, they gave them a choice. Go back and start from scratch or live in the other villages. And most of Kushiga decided to live in Unalaska. Although there was another village, Borka. Borka was, is close to Unalaska. They had a choice, "Do you want to go back to your village, start from scratch. Or live in other villages." And Borka decided they would live in Unalaska. So the Unalaska Aleut group grew more. There was more population of Aleuts in Unalaska at the end of the war. Because, you see, other villages decided they wouldn't go back. A couple of brothers in Kushiga decided they'd go back, but on their own. They weren't asking the federal government for help. They went back on their own and from their way, journey in the Pribilofs, they bought supplies and built their own homes and repaired what they could from the church. This was a most [inaudible]. Like I say, the church was the main thing in their village. And they were worried. They didn't want the church to go down. So they went back and they tried to repair the church as best they could. And the ones at Kushiga did this. Makushin decided, "No, our church is beyond repair. We have nothing we can do about it." So they decided, "Okay, we'll take whatever articles are left there and move it to Unalaska." So they took it and moved it. Same with Borka. Their group moved it to Borka. There was another village, Chernofski, they moved to Unalaska. And Kushiga moved to Unalaska. So Unalaska has many church articles moved from the other churches. Kushiga was the last one, because they didn't move their things until way back, just in about '37. They hung on. They were hoping the people would come back. But those two old brothers, they weren't going to give up for nothing. Until they finally died out. And when they died, the Kushigans in Unalaska went to Kushiga and brought their things back to Unalaska. So

there was things like Kushiga, Chernofski, and Borka. Three Aleut villages totally lost. You know, nothing! There was no home to go back to, no church to go back to. It was a total loss to the--they felt a total loss.

Let's take a ten minute break so that we'll have thirty minutes after the break.

Side two:

AS: ...but this was mostly construction people, it wasn't the military themselves. The military didn't come in to Dutch Harbor until after Pearl Harbor. And their construction was pretty well completed by then. And when Pearl Harbor happened, they just moved the Army in.

Student: And then when you returned, they remained there?

AS: They remained there until, the big group--you know, when the Army leaves, they don't just leave everything. They stay there to guard. The main group left by 1950, you know. But for several years they had men staying there to guard the buildings. So they were there for, I'd say about ten years--that they were involved in the village.

LB: There is a question from the floor.

AS: Go on.

Student: Do you have any recollection of any Aleuts that were drafted into the Army? Or not drafted but volunteered [inaudible]?

AS: Me? Songs [laughs]?

Student: [inaudible] the draft.

AS: I'm not a singer. That's one thing I never learned to do was sing Aleut songs. I'm a dancer, and a dancer should sing his own songs, but I'm not a singer of the Aleut music. I know a few of the game songs that we sing when you're playing games. I know them. I love to...

LB: You misunderstood the question, I think. He was asking if there are any recollections of Aleuts volunteering for the Army.

AS: Oh! No, I was telling this to her yesterday. The Aleuts weren't going to volunteer for anything, you know [laughs]! They were trying to get away from it! But, they were drafted, you know. Many of our young men--during this period of evacuation, our young men didn't get involved on the evacuation 'cause they were drafted. And they were drafted immediately, right after World War--I mean, yeah, World War II started in December. By June, the men who were eligible to get out in the Army were gone. So they weren't involved in the evacuation. And we never saw them again until we got back. They weren't involved in the evacuation at all. But they didn't volunteer, they were drafted. And they were eligible for draft.

Student: With this money that you're going to be compensated with, is this going to be used to try to revive the Aleut culture or, and if so...

AS: No, it's going to be used to go to Hawaii or something!

[laughs] No, it's to be used for the first purposes, rebuilding the churches and repairing the churches, which is the main thing. Then there was talk about cultural centers, you know. Not so much cultural centers, but recreational centers for the community. And

then I'm sure they'll set up a scholarship fund, you know. And I'm sure they'll put a lot of it into hiring people to get more information on culture and language and stuff like that.

Student: But it wouldn't be enough to totally revive the Aleut culture?

AS: I think--personally, I feel the Aleut culture is dead, you know? We can't revive it, in any way could we bring it back like it used to be. We can only revive, bring it back, in tapes, in videos. You know, where--as much as we can gather. And like Lydia, she's with Aleut arts. You know, that part of the Aleut culture, the arts. And if it wasn't for her, there wouldn't be nothing on Aleut art. But she's got this book out, and she's doing lot of more work on the Aleut arts and anthropology. That part of it. Okay, then we have a dear friend across the hall over here, Michael Krauss, he's language. I could almost sit and talk Aleut with him if I had to. He's that much interested in the Aleut language. In fact, my free time, I'm going over and work on tapes with him. I could do this, you know, but there's hardly anybody following me that will be able to do this. So we have to put it all on tape, you know, and if anybody is interested, they will have to learn it from tape. Like these--any Aleut gathering that they're going to do Aleut dances at, you [inaudible] on the Aleut tape. We all make sure there's a video there, so that it's being put on tape. But, as a culture, I don't think the Aleuts will ever get back to their own old Aleut customs. If they do, it'll be a miracle.

LB: But I think the money could be used to create institutions that will help to preserve a sense of Aleut unity and Aleut identity.

AS: And--I was going to say something and it slipped my mind. We were in the hallway talking about that. But anyways, anything else? Yes.

Student: If--this is curiosity sake. Is the church located on a hill?

AS: No. It's on a flat area on--well, mine isn't. The Unalaska church is--Unalaska is on a flat area and our church is down on the ground. I mean, it's not up on top. Saint Paul's and Saint George's are up on a hill. Atka's is up on a hill. Akutan is pretty much on the flat. Atka is up on a hill. But, I was telling her yesterday. I was talking today or yesterday. We have in Unalaska--I'm going to sketch a rough sketch here [inaudible]. This is Unalaska, shaped like that. And this is the bay goes up this way. This is a creek here going up there [inaudible]. And this is the dock. The docks are down, okay? The store is--when we say, "I'm going downtown," we mean we're going this direction. This is the village. The church is located here. But strangely enough, when you say, "I'm going down to the store," or, "I'm going down to the dock," though you're going the same direction, you always say, "I'm going up to church." [laughs] You never say, "I'm going down to church." I don't know why, but people just never say, "I'm going down to church." But I noticed it when--I'm going down. How come they're going to go up to church? You go down. So then, it's on flat land. But most villages, because of how they're situated, where the church is, ended up on a hill. Maybe to stand out better.

Student: Was there any interaction with the local Tlingit or Haida [inaudible]. They were located pretty far away.

AS: Yeah, there was no intermingling of Tlingits and Aleuts. Well, the few Aleuts that went out to Sitka to help the Russians got slaughtered before they got ashore. That's as close as they got! [laughs] But, now like any other--bring the church back in, I could go to Sitka and sing the same songs the Tlingits sing in church. The church always gets there [laughs]. Anybody else?

Student: [inaudible] of elders, a long time ago, used to claim that they could foretell the future. Was happenings in World War II foretold by the elders?

AS: Years back, before--I would say back in the 30's, I used to hear old men and women talking and they'd say, "There's going to be a war." You know. But they never meant with who--said with who. They felt there was a war coming. But I think, through their history, there was a war somewhere all along. There was always a war. I mean, even in our society, we'll spend so many years in peace and then we'll have a war, you know. It's just almost automatically. And I think all this is population gets too big, you have to kill them off, you know [laughs]. No, I didn't meant it like that! Society in itself subconsciously does this, to feed their more or less hungry people. And there was something else here. Oh! When you mentioned predictions. I was--my uncle, rest his soul, Matfay, he was an old man, but he was--I told you yesterday that the elders taught their young ones to hunt seals and to observe weather. My uncle was a weather observer and we lived uptown. Downtown was the Alaska communications office and the GI who ran the signal corps went down there every morning to give weather to the fishermen, which came on off the teletype. But on his way down, he'd stop at my uncle's and say, "Well, Matfay,

what's going to happen today?" My uncle would tell him the wind was going to come out of the west, "We'll have rain this afternoon." Or, "Tell your wife not to wash clothes today." He'd go down and give the weather reports that came off the teletype, then he'd, "But Matfay said..." [laughs] and give the weather. We had people who studied the weather.

I still wonder why they didn't eat crab!

LB: Because it was believed that crab had fed on the corpses of those who had drowned and whose bodies were not recovered. Crabs were cannibals.

AS: Such a delicious food to [laughs]...

Student: Did your uncle help you learn how to read the weather?

AS: No, I'm one of those Aleuts that wasn't interested in the beginning, you know, when I was young. I--in fact, like I said, I didn't get home until I was twenty-five. And by then I didn't understand Aleut or speak Aleut. I understood Aleut, but I didn't speak it. But through necessity I learned it. Because my uncle spoke to me in Aleut. I wanted to know what he was saying. I wanted to talk back to him. And I lived with my aunt and she spoke Aleut. So in everyday conversation, I learned it. There's some people say, "Gee, I forgot Aleut. I've been gone for so long, I forgot Aleut." It's the person. If you want to learn it, you're going to learn it, and I did. In fact...

LB: There's a question there.

AS: Yes?

Student: Could you speak some Aleut for us? I mean, just a short story or something? I've never heard the language.

AS: You never heard the language before. Okay, let's see what I could tell you. What can I tell you [laughs]? I'm trying to think of a short Aleut [inaudible] [laughs]. I won't tell you about [inaudible]. Okay, this is a story, a short story. I'm going to make it shorter than it actually is. About two brothers. [speaks Aleut]. That's just three sentences, I think. But it's so long and it's such a nice story, I hate to cut it short [laughs]. But that's the Aleut language. It sounds like that. And...

Student: When you were a child, was there a--things were in writing--were things--things were in writing in the Aleut language, in the bible for the church [inaudible]. What kind of alphabet was there? Is it like [inaudible]...

AS: They used the Russian alphabet. So, and then the Aleuts, I was telling you about this, the Aleuts had these two g's and x's that had the caps on it. So they--the Russians had it and they're capped letters.

Student: Are some of the Aleut [inaudible] they sound like Russian?

AS: We have borrowed words. We have words that we borrowed from the Russians so a lot of our Aleut words, when you hear Athabascans say them--and even Eskimos say the same word. But it's a borrowed word like "chaiu", you know. That's tea. But Athabascans say "chaiu" too. Tea. Because the Russians brought the tea and told them this is "chaiu", so that's where it came from.

LB: And the Russians borrowed the word from the Chinese!

AS: [laughs] So there's a lot of--somebody was asking me in here,

I noticed, okay, are the Aleuts closely related to any other Alaskan Native group. I don't know because I'm not an anthropologist or something like that, but linguistically, we are related or cousins to the Eskimo. Reed--what's her name?

LB: Irene.

AS: Irene Reed. I took a summer course here in Native Languages, and Irene was one of my instructors. So was Michael Krauss. She put up an Eskimo word, and she told us Aleuts what that word meant. I forget what word it was and how it went. And then she said, "Now, I'm going to take this word, I'm going to change a couple letters in it, and it'll become an Aleut word." And sure enough, she just changed the sounds of different syllables, and it became an Aleut word. So through this they know they are related languages. You know, they're not foreign to each other. Somewhere, way back, there must have been one spoken language. But by separation and [inaudible] they changed.

Student: Can you talk a little bit about the origins of the Aleut people? Where did they come from? When?

AS: This is cute! There's someone smarter to talk about it than me [laughs].

Student: You mean anthropological origins [inaudible] Aleut [inaudible]. What do the anthropologists think was the origin of the Aleut people? What do the Aleut people think the origin was?

AS: Do you think you could answer them? I have a legend...

LB: Anthropologists are fighting about them--problems. There is an archaeological site on the island of Unangula [sp.?], in the Nickorski [sp.?] Harbor on that island. The dates, oh, maybe nine

thousand years. But, you see, they're only stone tools. So if you find tools, you don't know who the people were who used it. So there were people in the eastern Aleutian islands who used tools nine thousand years ago. Who those people were, we don't know. Were they the direct ancestors of the Aleuts? Professor Laughlin believes they were, but I think he's the only one. A lot of people think that there was a great big gap between the people who used the Unangula [Esp.?] as a base and the settlement that there is real documented archaeological continuity to the modern Aleuts. And they are arguing this, and it is a very hot issue in professional circles to the point that people don't speak to each other. So basically, it's a larger question of the Esk-aleut speakers origin. There is no question that they are asiatic mongoloids, and the current wisdom is that they occupied portions of the new continent, and that the area where Europeans found them, within the last four to six thousand years. That's all [inaudible]. The exact process and exact dating is very controversial, in an archaeological sense.

AS: [inaudible].

LB: Now, according to Father Veniaminov, who recorded Aleut legends one hundred and fifty years ago, the Aleuts believe that they came into the islands from the west, though the archaeologists say they spilled into the archipelago from the east. And that's about it.

AS: And then there's a story about how they actually came when the two sea otters [laughs]...

LB: And then there's the height of the volcanoes. You can talk about the height of the volcanoes.

AS: I don't know that. I'm not read up on it [laughs].

LB: When the Makushin volcano became the victor.

AS: There are so many things that Dr. Black knows about and hasn't told me about, that I could sit here and read if I had to [inaudible] all the information. And we're very fortunate that a lot of the material that we can go back to were preserved by the different--the Russians and--they preserved what they had on the Aleut. Most--linguistically, religiously, and, you know, so we're very fortunate that there is material available to...

Student: I have a few questions that kind of tie in with the Russian Orthodox Church. When Russia sold Alaska to the U.S., what happened to the priests that were at the Aleutians? Did they...

AS: They remained. They remained...

Student: They remained?

AS: ...because it was a government that was selling their land. It wasn't the church. The church still existed as a church in Alaska. The government was selling the land and the rights to the land, but they weren't selling the church. The church still was in existence.

Student: The Russian priests stayed on?

AS: Yeah, and they were compensated by the church in Russia, you know. They still were paid compensation from the church in Russia.

LB: At the time of the sale, the majority of the Alaska clergy were Alaskan Natives.

Student: Oh, they were by then?

LB: Oh yes. Yes. I just mentioned that the person who brought Orthodoxy to the Yup'ik was an Aleut from Atka.

Student: Well, something else that I sort of wondered about is, like, have the Aleuts--the last twenty or thirty years, have you been trying to do research or look back into their culture, have you gone to Russia any? Or is any of that kind of exchange going on?

AS: Well, like much of anything else that you're going to do business with Russia, you couldn't have done it the last twenty years because that was the worst ice age [laughs] that there was. The Russians weren't letting anybody into anywhere. Within the last maybe ten years things have been opening up a little bit and we'll be able to get--like our church has been able to get to Russia and to communicate with their church over there. Where they couldn't have possible done this ten years ago. So there's openings being made for us to get into material that we may be able to use. And like with her, just mentioned--she was mentioning it to me, but I'll have her mention it, tell her about that Russian exchange they're having.

LB: Smithsonian Institution is readying an exhibit of Alaskan artifacts, most of it Tlingit and Aleut, for the first time on loan from the Soviet Union to the United States. The exhibit will open in the fall of this year and will be open in Washington; on tour in large cities in the United States. It will come to Anchorage two years from the opening. This is the first time that the old Alaskan artifacts from the eighteenth century will come back home for a visit.

AS: So you see, there's that little opening being made that you

could, possibly in the future, get into the archives there, too.

Student: Yeah, seems like they have a lot of interesting information, maybe.

AS: Well, thanks to writers before the revolution that they had a lot of material they had compiled that was available to some of our study people. Like a lot of the works she works with are Russian. They're by the author, not by, I mean, just by whoever. Yes, somebody else?

Student: I was just wondering, so when the Russians came up on the Aleutian chain, they took a lot of artifacts?

LB: Well, the first ethnographic museum in Russia was opened in the reign of Peter the Great, in the early 1700's. So all the merchants and skippers, as part of the commissions under which they were permitted to engage in the fur trade, they had to supply curiosities for the national ethnographic museum. And each captain brought home something, and you know how tourists are, souvenirs and so on. Governors of Alaska took--it was their duty to provide ethnographic examples. And, for example, one of the governors was from Finland, and when all the Finnish capitals were burned to the ground and the new capital, Helsinki, was built, he collected an enormous collection of Alaskan artifacts. Aleut, Eskimo, Tlingit, Haida for the new Finnish capital. So the second largest collection of Alaskan artifacts in the world is in Helsinki in Finland. It's gorgeous! It's not an exhibit, it's in storage. It's exotic stuff. So, and also they opened a museum in Sitka. In 1840 there was a museum opened in Sitka, where the best products of Aleut and Tlingit and Eskimo art was exhibited. When the army took over Alaska in 1867, and the [inaudible] and General Davis grabbed

the collection. Part of it survives. He sold the remnants to the Harvard University Peabody Museum. I feel it should come back to Alaska again. I feel it was part of the imperial [inaudible] in Sitka.

Student: Other than the Museum of Natural History [inaudible] and they're--they have an exhibit of Alaskan, an Alaska Native exhibit, and [inaudible] it's a permanent one or [inaudible].

LB: But they're items of olden times, [inaudible] Russian [inaudible] because they all were collected after 1867. Russian collections go back to the 1700's.

AS: Oh, a couple more and let's go. Ah, let's go. Okay, thank you and we'll see you next Tuesday. But be sure you sign up for [tape ends].