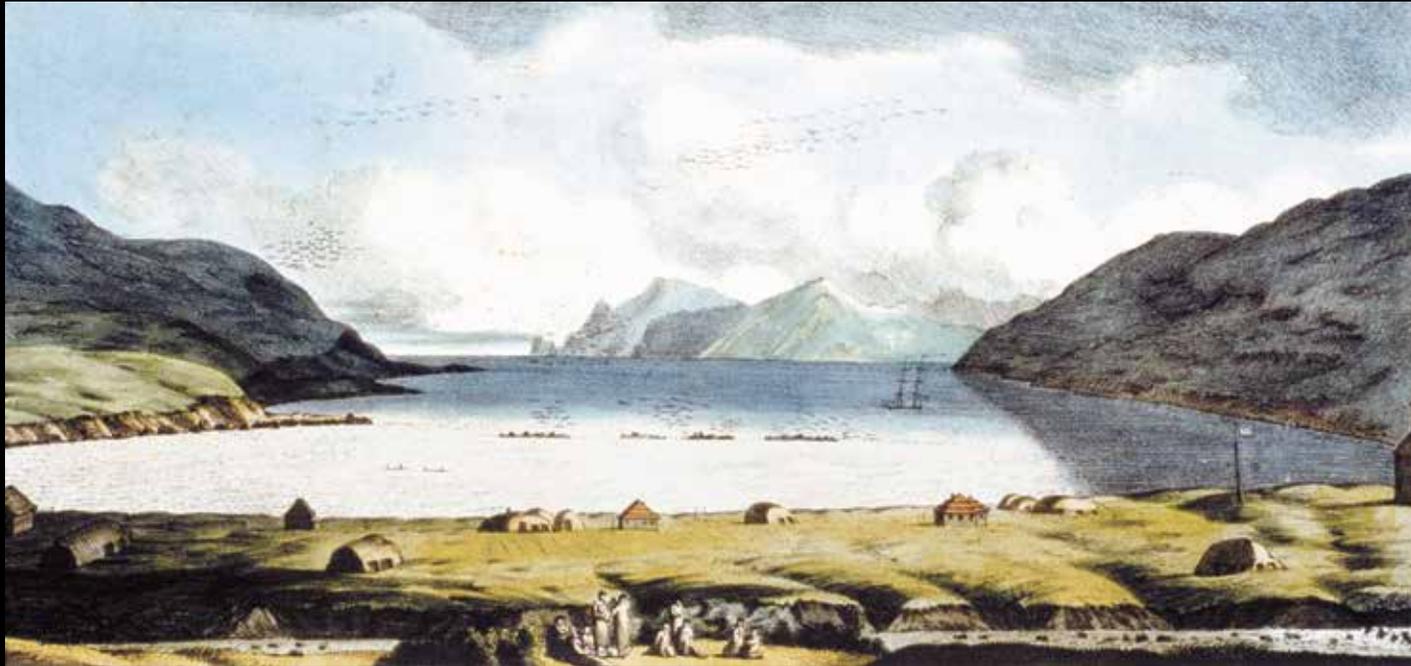


ALEUTIAN WORLD WAR II NATIONAL HISTORIC AREA



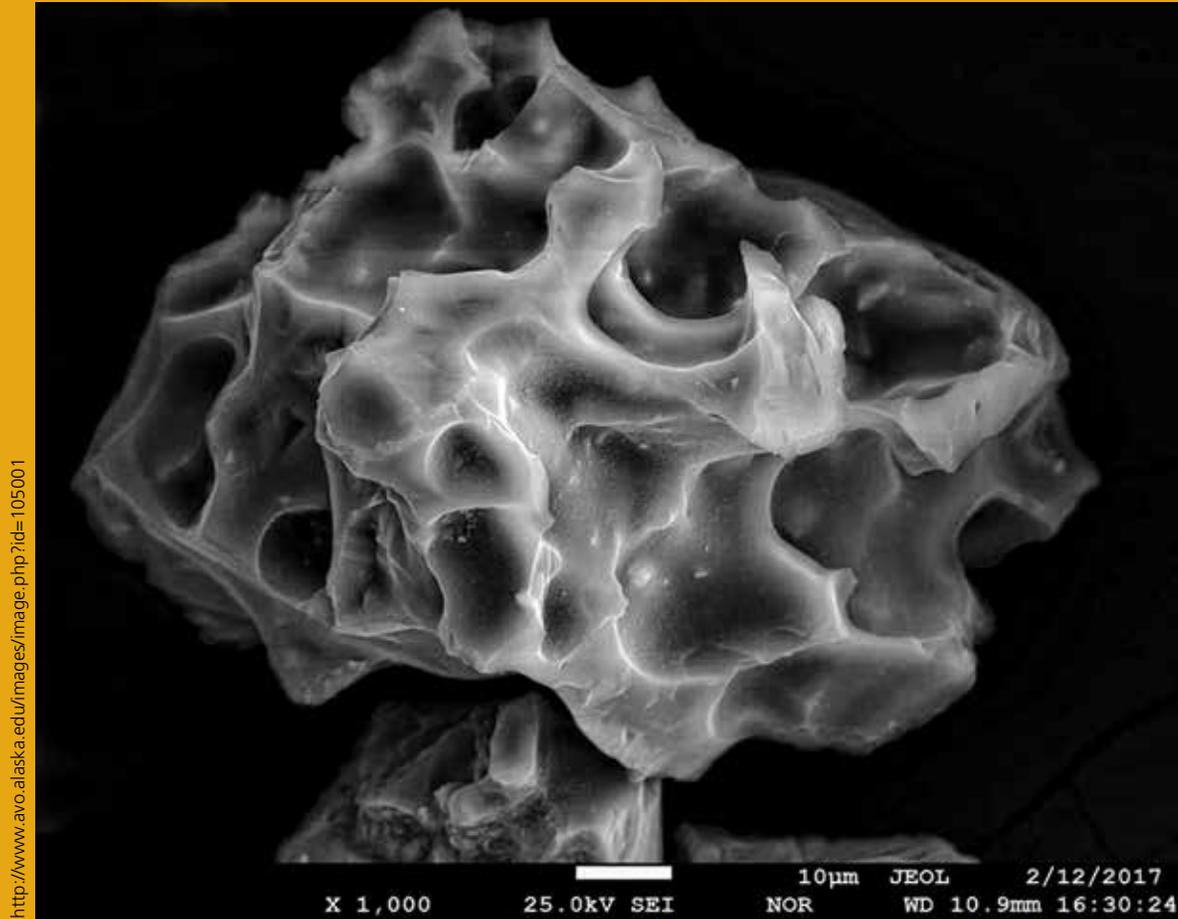
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Choris,_Unalaska.jpg

Unalaska Village, by Louis Choris ca. 1816. Today's Aleutian National Historic Area at far left.

CALENDAR COMPENDIUM

SELECTIONS FROM THE
YEARS 2010 TO 2016

Francis Broderick



<http://www.avo.alaska.edu/images/image.php?id=105001>

Magnified (x 1,000) scanning electron microscope (SEM) image of glassy volcanic ash particle from the 31 January 2017 eruption of Bogoslof Volcano. This sample was collected in Dutch Harbor, ca. 60 miles to the east from the volcano by Ginny Hatfield. SEM image was acquired using JEOL JXA-8530f electron microprobe at the Advanced Instrumentation Laboratory of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

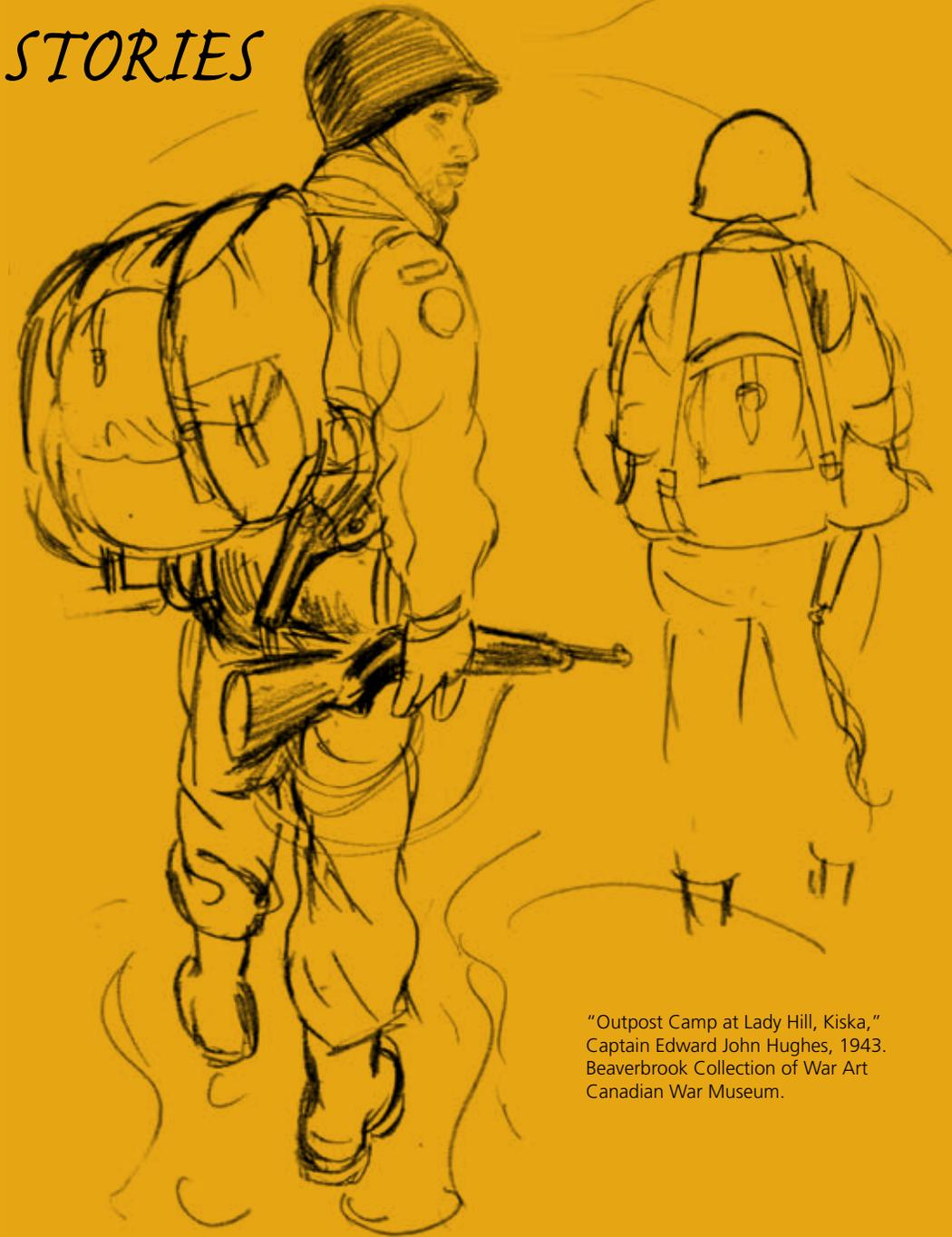
ALEUTIAN WORLD WAR II STORIES

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 2006, the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area has produced calendars with each month focused on an illustrated history related to the program's interpretive themes. The calendars have had broad nationwide appeal and were provided to veterans' groups and homes, historical societies, schools, libraries and members of the public with a personal connection or interest in World War II in the Aleutians.

Each year the calendars interwove and built upon the two main themes of the national historic area: the Aleutian military campaign and the Unangaŋ (Aleut) experience of World War II. The calendar stories also reflected the program's focus on the natural environment as well as historic preservation, both in reference to Unangaŋ culture and history and to the military campaign. The calendars also explored previously unknown sides of the World War II Aleutian experience, including primary research on the personal histories of soldiers and civilians in the Aleutian Islands.

This calendar compendium draws from a wide range of histories from the 2011 through 2016 calendars. Author and designer Francis Broderick, Archgraphics, has been the main contributor, with invaluable assistance from Janis Kozlowski, Former Program Manager, Aleutian WWII National Historic Area; Rachel Mason Program Manager, Aleutian WWII National Historic Area; and Janet Clemens, Senior Historian. For this compendium, unconstrained by the calendar's monthly format, a few of the histories have been expanded to four pages. While most retain their two page layout, when possible, new-found images have been introduced and data updated. The National Park Service is pleased to bring these compelling histories together in this publication so that the public can enjoy them beyond their calendar years.



"Outpost Camp at Lady Hill, Kiska,"
Captain Edward John Hughes, 1943.
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art
Canadian War Museum.

Volcanism

The Beginning

The sea was full of fish; the beaches were full of sea lions; the hot lava and air were full of birds. Thus life and deadly volcanism lived together.

—Thomas Jagger, volcanist, observing the magmatic birth of a new island near Bogoslof Volcano, Aleutian Chain, 30 December, 1906.

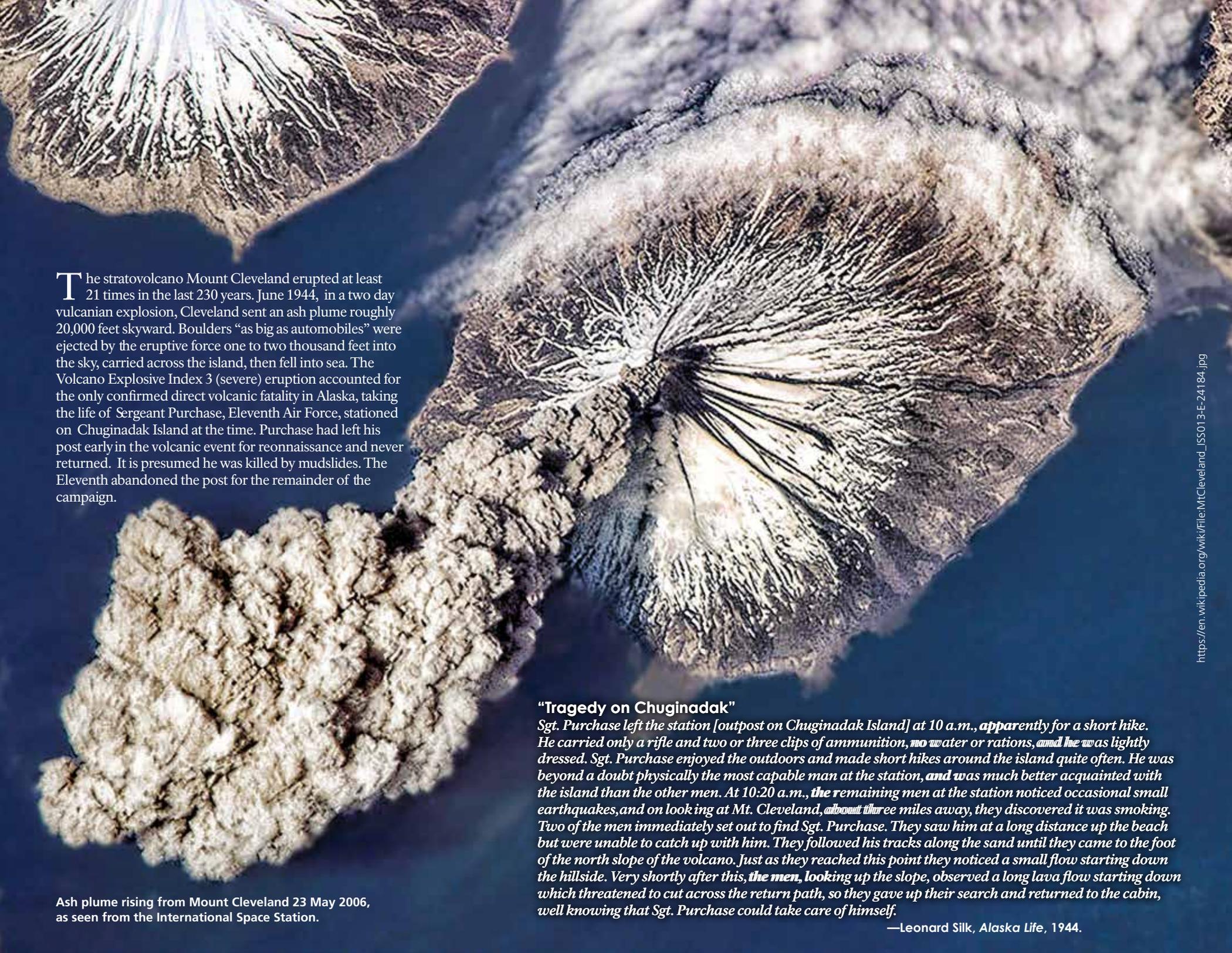
Like precarious stepping stones, the Aleutian Islands span the seas between the New and Old Worlds—reaching westward from the Alaska Peninsula to within 500 miles of Russian Kamchatka. Situated along the seam of the shifting Pacific and North American tectonic plates, the 1,100 mile long archipelago has been, and continues to be, the locus of active volcanism and earthquakes—the birth processes of the islands themselves. The Aleutians betray their violent seismic origins in their rugged landscape; their mountainous terrain; precipitous coastlines; and black sand beaches. It is thought that at least twenty-six of the chain's fifty-seven volcanoes have erupted in the past two centuries.



Bogoslof Volcano eruption, 5 January 2017. Photograph by Trever Shaishnikoff. This day Bogoslof's volcanic cloud reached a height of 35,000 feet above sea level.

Submarine eruption at Bogoslof
Volcano, 19 September 1910, 12:00 AM

Bogoslof Island
Behring Sea
Sept. 19, 1910

An aerial photograph of Mount Cleveland, a stratovolcano, showing a large, billowing ash plume rising from the summit. The volcano's rugged, rocky terrain is visible, with a prominent crater rim. The surrounding landscape is dark and appears to be covered in ash or volcanic debris. The sky is a deep blue, providing a stark contrast to the white and grey ash plume.

The stratovolcano Mount Cleveland erupted at least 21 times in the last 230 years. June 1944, in a two day vulcanian explosion, Cleveland sent an ash plume roughly 20,000 feet skyward. Boulders “as big as automobiles” were ejected by the eruptive force one to two thousand feet into the sky, carried across the island, then fell into sea. The Volcano Explosive Index 3 (severe) eruption accounted for the only confirmed direct volcanic fatality in Alaska, taking the life of Sergeant Purchase, Eleventh Air Force, stationed on Chuginadak Island at the time. Purchase had left his post early in the volcanic event for reconnaissance and never returned. It is presumed he was killed by mudslides. The Eleventh abandoned the post for the remainder of the campaign.

“Tragedy on Chuginadak”

Sgt. Purchase left the station [outpost on Chuginadak Island] at 10 a.m., apparently for a short hike. He carried only a rifle and two or three clips of ammunition, no water or rations, and he was lightly dressed. Sgt. Purchase enjoyed the outdoors and made short hikes around the island quite often. He was beyond a doubt physically the most capable man at the station, and was much better acquainted with the island than the other men. At 10:20 a.m., the remaining men at the station noticed occasional small earthquakes, and on looking at Mt. Cleveland, about three miles away, they discovered it was smoking. Two of the men immediately set out to find Sgt. Purchase. They saw him at a long distance up the beach but were unable to catch up with him. They followed his tracks along the sand until they came to the foot of the north slope of the volcano. Just as they reached this point they noticed a small flow starting down the hillside. Very shortly after this, the men, looking up the slope, observed a long lava flow starting down which threatened to cut across the return path, so they gave up their search and returned to the cabin, well knowing that Sgt. Purchase could take care of himself.

Ash plume rising from Mount Cleveland 23 May 2006, as seen from the International Space Station.

—Leonard Silk, *Alaska Life*, 1944.

An aerial photograph of a volcanic crater. The crater walls are dark and rugged, showing signs of erosion. In the center of the crater, a new, smaller cone has formed, covered in dark ash. At the bottom of the crater, a large, light-colored lake has formed, partially filling the basin. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

On the 10th March, 1825, after a long subterranean noise resembling a heavy cannonade... a low ridge at the northwestern end of Oomiak (Mount Okmok volcano) opened in five places with violent emissions of flames and great masses of black ashes, covering the country for miles around; the ice and snow on the mountain tops melted and descended in a terrific torrent five to ten miles in width, on the eastern side of [Umnak Island].

—Bishop Ioann Veniaminov

Umnak Island [8 August, 1945]—Shooting hot volcanic ash bombs high into the air, a long-dormant crater, nearby Mount Tulik, [a feature of Mount Okmok volcano] gave soldiers at this Aleutian base [Fort Glenn/Cape Field] some anxious moments this summer. But after Dr. Howell Williams, a volcanologist who had been making bedside observations at Mexico's Paracutin volcano, came north for a look-see, he told worried base officers there was no immediate danger from the erupting volcano.

—Lt. Ray Wilcox, Signal Corp.

The summit of a new cone formed during the 2008 eruption of Okmok volcano, Umnak Island. The crater is eroding, a lake filling the bottom. Photograph by J. R. G. Schaefer, 11 August, 2013, 3:31 PM.

*The resultant fireworks lighted
the surrounding country.*

—Unknown witness
Veniaminof eruption, 1944



Eruption of Mount Veniaminof, Aleutian Chain, 30 March 1944 as viewed from the nose of a naval air transport service aircraft. University of Alaska Fairbanks-1970-11-108.



Adapted by Gecko Graphics from the original.

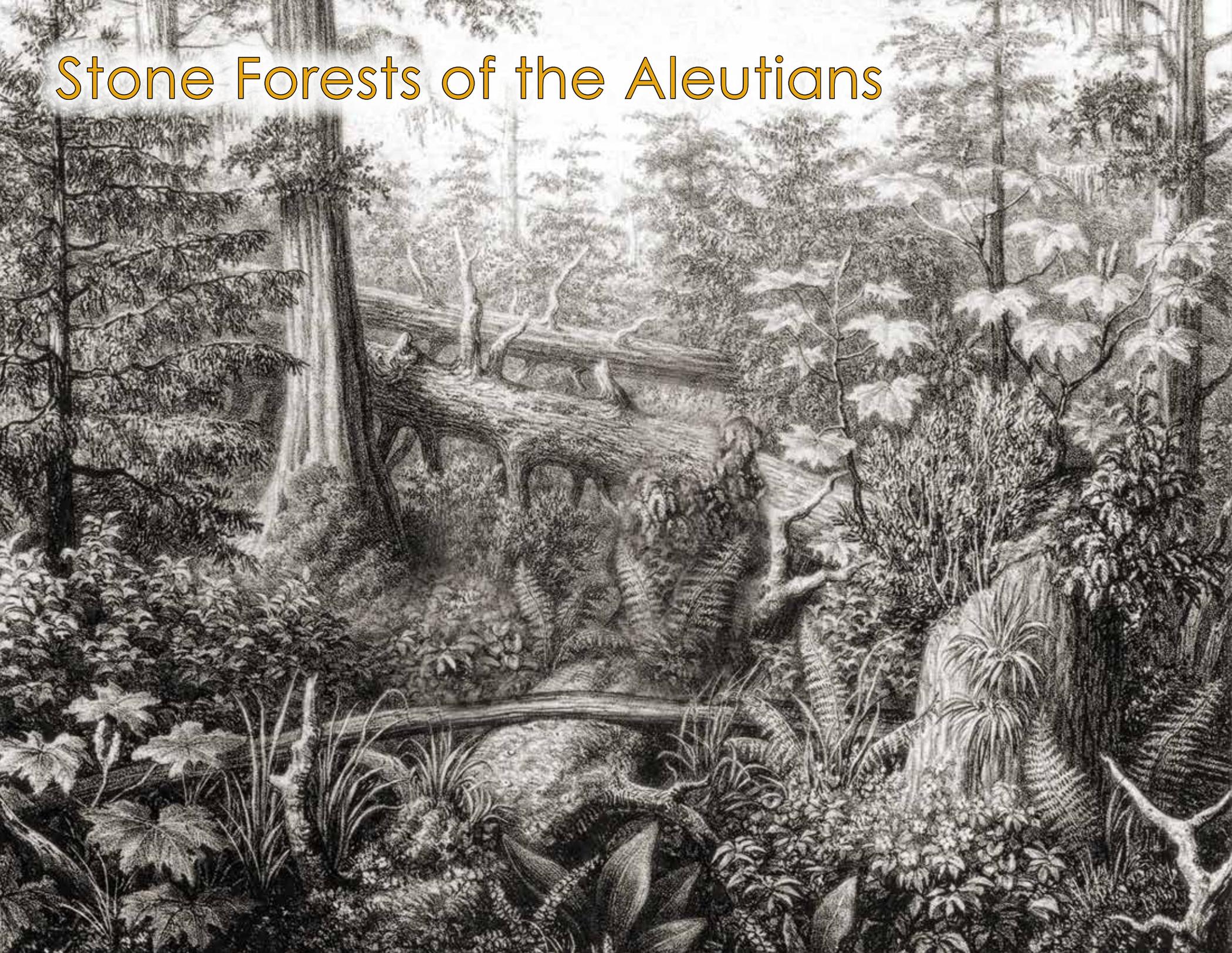
ALSEC (Aleutian Sector) cartoon mascot—bear piloting U.S. Navy PB4Y with Aleutian volcano in background.

Abrasive ash, blooming upwards to 30,000 feet and more from an erupting Aleutian volcano... The grit erodes any forward-facing surface of an aircraft entering the plume. Cockpit windows may be scoured to near opacity. Ash compromises sensitive electronics disrupting navigation, communications. Rock fragments, ash, and ice particles colliding in the cloud create static charges —“dirty thunderstorms”—lightning born in the plume itself. Sulfur and other gases in the eruption when hydrated create acidic aerosols—a corrosive mist that affects human respiration... Ash damages an aircraft’s engines—the turbine blades of a jet—and ironically, when ingested in a heated jet engine, volcanic ash melts, adhering to operating parts, leading to engine failure. Simply put, aircraft and ash do not mix.

December 15, 1989, a Boeing 747-400 originating in Amsterdam lost power when encountering the ash cloud from Mt. Redoubt. The pilot glided steep to 14,000 feet then restarted engines and landed at Anchorage airport. No injuries, but damage was estimated at 80 million dollars. This is considered the most serious ash-aviation incident in Alaska.

Visit the Alaska Volcano Observatory website at: <https://www.avo.alaska.edu/>

Stone Forests of the Aleutians



Two ancient tree stumps, in situ and partially embedded in bedrock, were found at a depth of 23m off the coast of Amchitka Island. The stumps were found in October 1972 during underwater surveys of damage associated with recent nuclear testing on Amchitka. The indicated age of the wood exceeded 40,000 years. Because of the offshore and submerged location of these stumps, they represent a time when the island was not only forested but larger and at least 23 meters [75.5 feet] higher in relation to sea level.

— National Marine Fisheries Service, Auke Bay, Alaska. Auke Bay Fisheries Lab (abridged)



Fossilized tree trunk washed by incoming tide, Unga Island. Mineralization has turned the trunk a vibrant red-gold.



Image courtesy National Park Service.

Fossilized tree trunks, northwest Unga Island. Here at low tide, black, yellow, and gray petrified stumps rise along a five mile stretch of beach. They have been described as “marching into the ocean.” Unga Island is the largest of the Shumagin Islands, named by Vitus Bering after the sailor Nikita Shumagin, who died of scurvy during Bering’s 1741 expedition to North America. In 2000, Unga’s population was one individual. Today the island is uninhabited.

Trees turned to stone lie on the beaches of Unga Island near the Alaska mainland and offshore Amchitka Island near the westernmost terminus of the Aleutian Chain. These petrified remnants of ancient forests, located near opposite ends of the archipelago, suggest trees may have once covered the breadth of the arc from east to west. Thought to be the ancestors of California redwoods, (sequoia), or metasequoia (“dawn redwood”) found primarily in China, Unga’s trees measure up to 10 feet in diameter around the bole, with trunk fragments reaching 67 feet in length. Dating to the early Miocene or Oligocene epochs—20 to 25 million years past—the Aleutians’ ancient great woodlands succumbed to climactic change long before the arrival of humans, giving rise to the tenacious grasses and dwarf plants—the dramatic, treeless landscape we see today.

Image courtesy National Park Service.

Preceding page: This Sitka landscape may mirror the forested environment of the Aleutians some twenty million years past. Litke, F. P. (Fedor Petrovich). *Voyage autour du monde, exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l'empereur Nicolas 1er, sur la corvette le Sényavine, dans les années 1826, 1827, 1828 et 1829. Par Frédéric Lutké ... commandante de l'expédition ... Paris, Typ. de Firmin Didot frères, 1835-36.* Illustration courtesy University of Alaska, Fairbanks, C0024 Atlas. Note: this image has been substantially altered by digital removal of human figures. Alteration graciously approved by UAF Archives for this publication only.

How delightful to the eye seemed those lonely little trees.

—Isabel S. Shepard, wife of Captain of the U.S. Steamer *Rush*, 1889



Above: Sitka Spruce National Historic Landmark, Amaknak Island, 2007. The core group of historic trees stands in center (#1) with only the uppermost branches of their crowns sustaining needles. National Park Service photographs by Judy Kesler, Regional Web Manager. Digital montage by Archgraphics.
Background: Sitka spruce "forest," Amaknak Island, 1899. Photograph by Edward Curtis, E.H. Harriman expedition.

In 1805, the Russians attempted to reforest the Aleutian chain, planting Sitka Spruce seedlings on Amaknak Island. A few of these trees still stand today, dwarfed and knotted, bearing little resemblance to their old growth parents in the rainforest environs to the south. Five hundred miles west of their closest relatives on Kodiak, Amaknak's spruce have withstood roughly two centuries of fierce winds, limited sunshine, and cold soil. Their remarkable adaptation, however tenuous, lends credence to scientific predictions that Sitka Spruce from Kodiak could migrate naturally to Amaknak/Unalaska islands four to five thousand years from today.



The [Aleutian] islands west of Kodiak produce [no] tree of any kind: this I can positively assert.

—Martin Sauer, Billings Expedition 1785-1794

<http://2.bp.blogspot.com>



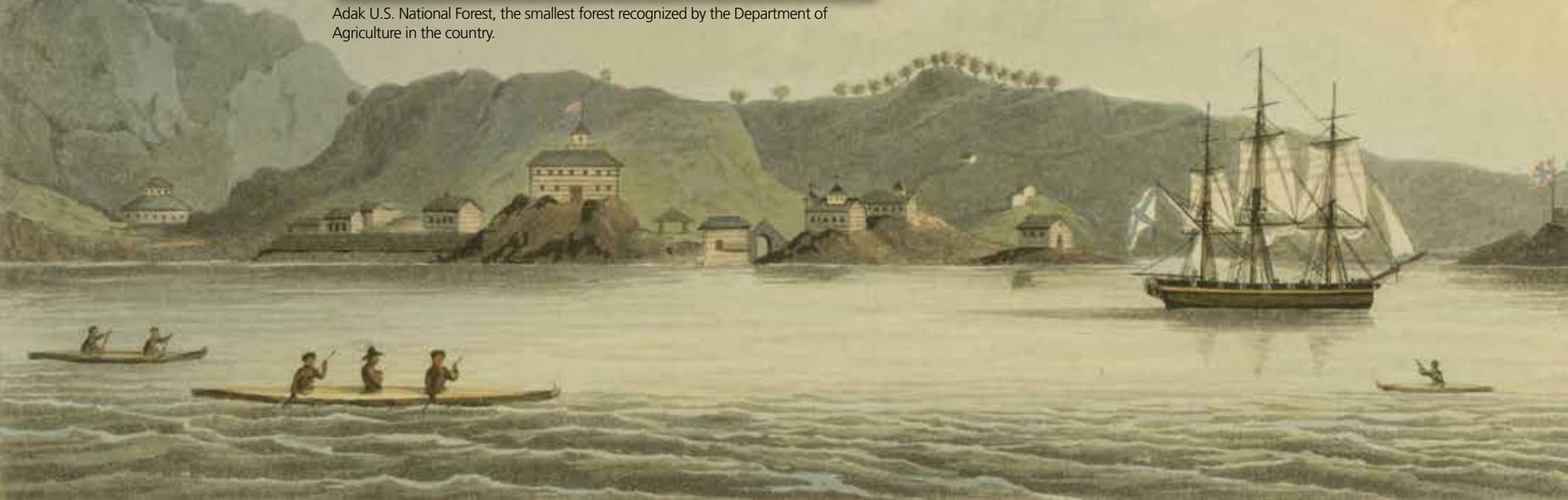
Adak U.S. National Forest, the smallest forest recognized by the Department of Agriculture in the country.

Adak National Forest

During World War II, General Simon Boliver Buckner ordered the planting of Christmas trees on Adak Island to bolster U.S. troop morale. Forestation began in 1943 and continued through 1945, but even the most sturdy of these transplanted trees could barely stand in the Aleutian environment. At one point in the 1960s only a single pine remained. It was at this time that Cold War-era (1947-1991) soldiers stationed on Adak raised the sign “You are now ENTERING and LEAVING the ADAK NATIONAL FOREST.”

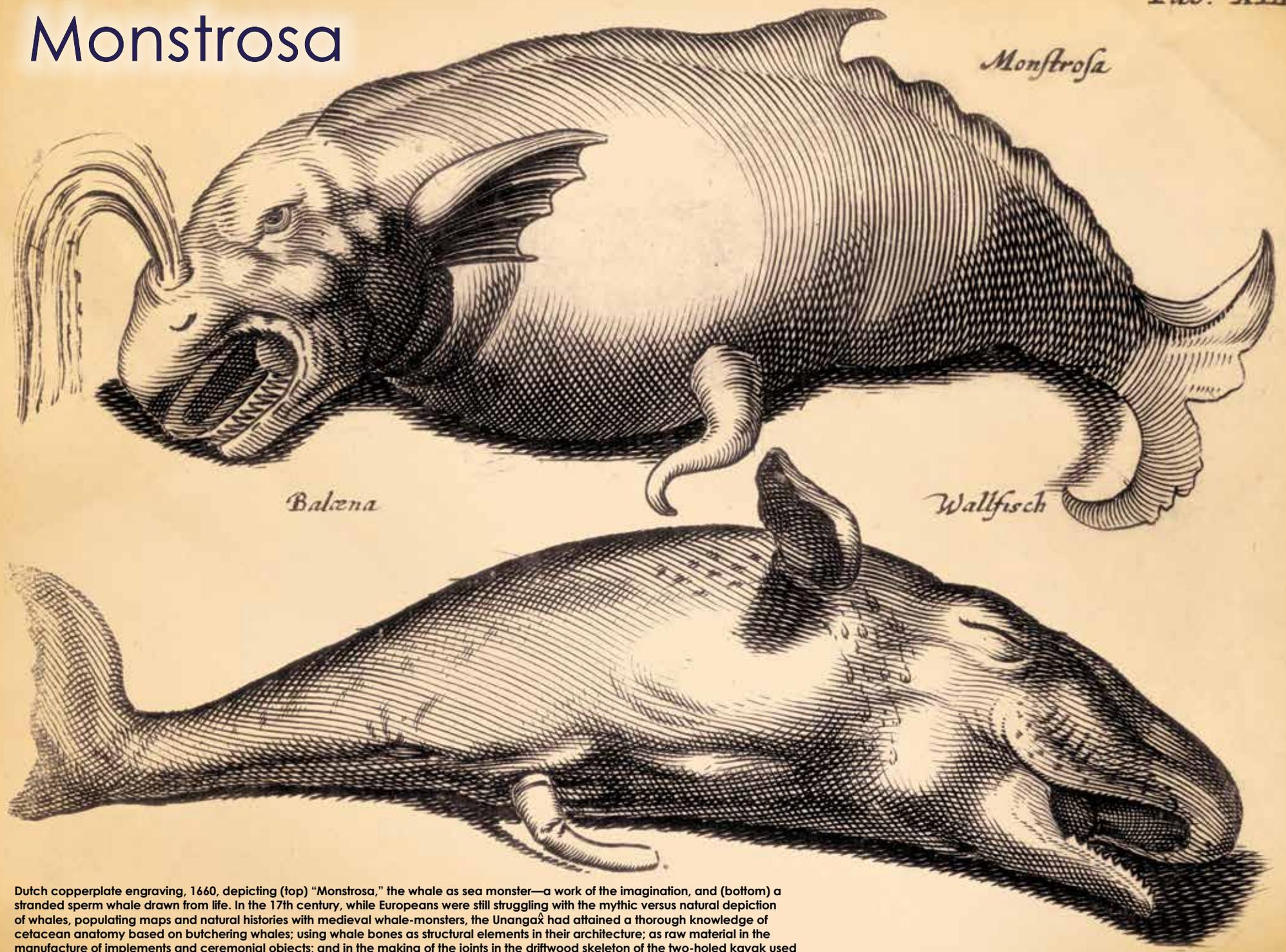
Today, either through the providence of a micro-climate, or through human intervention, roughly 33 trees stand in two groves located in the sheltered ravines of Nurse and Hospital creeks on Adak.

Planted as Christmas trees, the locals decorate the forest every December.



Background: Harbor of St. Paul, Kodiak Island, circa 1814, the Imperial Russian Navy ship *Neva* at right. Trees stand as if in formation against the skyline. Today Kodiak Island is the furthest west natural extent of their range. Illustration by Yuri Fyodorovich Lisiansky. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/49/Russian_Sloop-of-War_Neva.jpg

Monstrosa



Balena

Monstrosa

Walfisch

Dutch copperplate engraving, 1660, depicting (top) "Monstrosa," the whale as sea monster—a work of the imagination, and (bottom) a stranded sperm whale drawn from life. In the 17th century, while Europeans were still struggling with the mythic versus natural depiction of whales, populating maps and natural histories with medieval whale-monsters, the Unangaḵ had attained a thorough knowledge of cetacean anatomy based on butchering whales; using whale bones as structural elements in their architecture; as raw material in the manufacture of implements and ceremonial objects; and in the making of the joints in the driftwood skeleton of the two-holed kayak used in the "whale-chase." Image courtesy Archgraphics.

Roughly the size of a modern wolf, the *Pakicetus* (right) is widely regarded by paleontologists as the most basal whale. Fossil finds in Pakistan indicate that it had four functioning limbs, a distinct and flexible neck, a typical complement of teeth used for tearing and grinding, and nostrils located at the tip of the snout—all attributes of a terrestrial mammal. In addition, it possessed close-spaced, upward-facing eyes (which allowed it to see while nearly completely submerged in water), and most importantly—a specialized, thickened skull bone, the auditory bulla, that modern whales utilize for underwater hearing. (In the *Pakicetus*, this bulla was present but non-functioning.) It is this hybrid morphology that defines the *Pakicetus* as the oldest known semi-aquatic ancestor of the modern whale. Illustration by John Klausmeyer, University of Michigan Exhibit Museum.



Above image from "Evolution of Whales from Land to Sea" by Philip D. Gingerich in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol 156, No. 3, Sept. 2012.

...[whales] are no more fish than are horses and cows. Whales and all their relatives, such as porpoises, grampuses, and narwhals, are mammals — warm-blooded creatures which bring forth their young alive and suckle their offspring like any four-footed land mammal.

—A. Hyall Verrill, *The Real Story of the Whaler: Whaling, Past and Present*, 1916

Misshapen images and ill-informed descriptions of whales created an unfounded multiplicity of variant species that pile up one upon another, unchecked by empirical corroboration.

—Stuart M. Frank, *Whaling Literature*

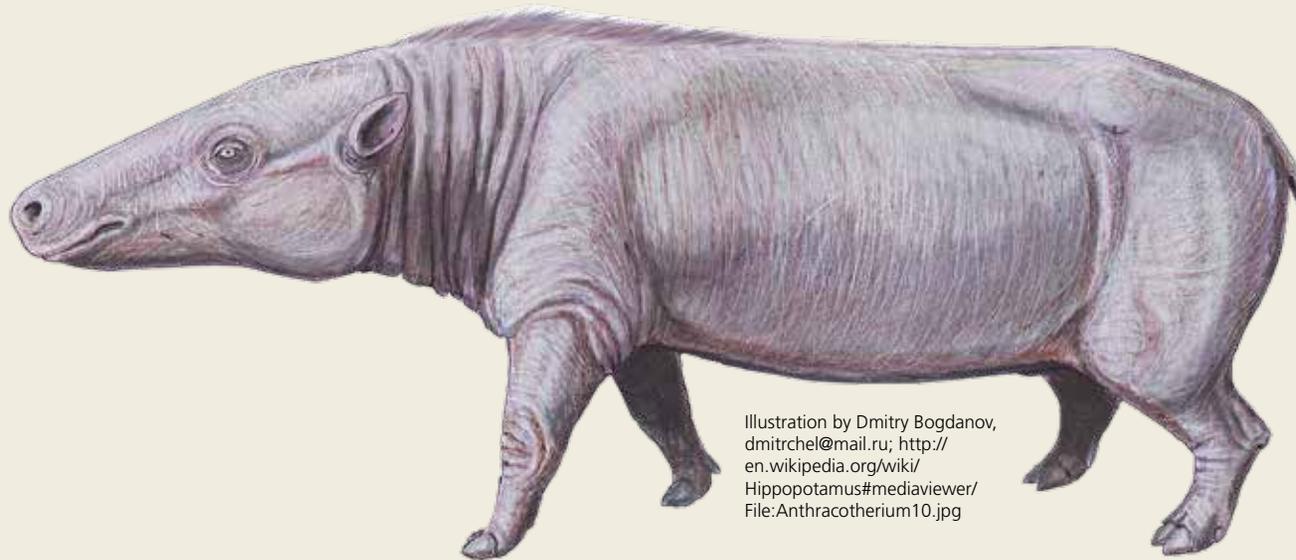
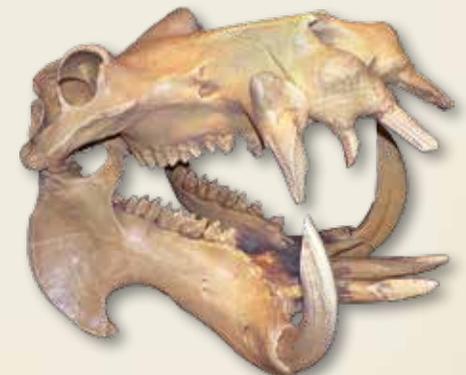


Illustration by Dmitry Bogdanov, dmitrchel@mail.ru; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippopotamus#mediaviewer/File:Anthracotherium10.jpg>

It is theorized that hippos and whales shared a common semi-aquatic ancestor roughly 60 million years before present. This hypothesized ancestral group likely split into two branches roughly 54 million years before present, with one branch evolving into cetaceans, and the other into the anthracotheres (see illustration above), a large family of four-legged beasts, the earliest of which would have resembled gracile hippos with small, narrow heads. Unlike the terrestrial anthracotheres, the protowhale identified as *Pakicetus* (see rendering upper right) and other early whale ancestors eventually underwent complete aquatic adaptation, foregoing land for the sea and evolving into the modern whale. Of the terrestrial anthracotheres, all became extinct during the Pliocene* Epoch except that which evolved into the modern Hippopotamidae (see image to right).

*Pliocene Epoch: 5.333 to 2.58 million years before present.

The architecture of a mammalian skeleton is readily apparent once one looks beneath the modern whale's sleek, fusiform exterior. Within the front flippers are the bones of the mammalian arm and hand, altered, but recognizable—the radius and ulna shortened; the wrist bone flat and disk-like; the multiple phalanges elongated. At the base of the spine, whales may carry a vestigial pelvis and the splinter-like remnants of hind-limbs—atavistic femora and tibiae buried in the whale's musculature. During gestation, embryonic whales temporarily acquire body hair, rudimentary ear pinnae, and olfactory lobes (traits of terrestrial mammals that are absent in adult whales). All fetal whales have teeth (simple cones or pegs), even the baleen whale. The nostrils of the fetal whale begin at the snout as in land mammals, then "drift" to the top of the skull becoming blowhole(s)—two in baleen whales; one in toothed whales. For centuries scientists have attempted to trace the path of the whale from terrestrial to aquatic mammal through the fossil record. With new finds, theories change—the theories themselves in evolution.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hippo_skull_dark.jpg (image isolated from background)

They Hunted Them from Kayaks

In the months of June and July the whales begin to make their first inshore visits to the Aleutian bays, where they follow up schools of herring and shoals of Amphipoda, or sea-fleas (krill), upon which they love to feed. The bays of Akootan (Akutan) and Akoon (Akun) were and are always resorted to more freely by those cetaceans than are any others in Alaska, and here the hunt is continued as late as August. When a calm, clear day occurs the [N]atives ascend the bluffs and locate a school of whales; then the best men launch their skin-canoes, or bidarkas, and start for the fields. "Two-holed" bidarkas only are used. The hunter himself sits forward with nothing but whale-spear in his grasp; his companion, in the after hatch, swiftly urges the light boat over the water in obedience to his order.*

—W.H. Elliott, *The Arctic Province*, 1886



H. W. Elliott
Akoon Island
1886

*In turn, Amphipoda of the family Cyamidae feed upon the humpbacks. Known as the whale louse, this crustacean is a skeleton shrimp, an external parasite that feeds upon flaking skin round the nostrils, eyes, genital folds, and in skin lesions of whales. The "louse" is species specific in feeding, even sex specific (especially in the case of baleen whales) with upwards of 7,500 living on a single whale of the species and sex of which they are associated.

THE WHALE FISHERY.

Aleuts planting glass, obsidian, and jade darts in a school of humpback whales, Akoon Island, Bering Sea. (Sect. v, vol. ii, pp. 61, 62.)

Drawing by H. W. Elliott.

The [N]ative hunter used, as his sole weapon of destruction, a spear-handle of wood about six feet in length; to the head of this he lashed a neatly-polished socket of walrus ivory, in which he inserted a tip of serrated slate that resembled a gigantic arrow-point, twelve or fourteen inches long and four or five broad at the barbs, and upon the point of which he carved his own mark. If [the hunter] is fortunate he will be within ten or twenty feet of the rising [humpback] calf or yearling, and as it rounds its glistening back slowly and lazily out from its cover of the wavelets the Aleut throws his spear with all his physical power, so as to bury the head of it just under the stubby dorsal fin of that marine monster; the wooden shaft is at once detached, but the contortions of the stricken whale only assist to drive and urge the barbed slate point deeper and deeper into its vitals. Meanwhile the [kayak] is paddled away as alertly as possible, before the plunging flukes of the tortured animal can destroy it or drown its human occupants.

—W.H. Elliott, *The Arctic Province*, 1886



The hunter who speared the whale would have to cut the spear out of the animal and leave some of the meat still on the spear. He would cook the meat and fat over an open fire. The hunter would have to eat the meat first. Nobody would touch the whale until the next day to see if that guy was still all right... because the people used poisoned tips for hunting the whale. You couldn't tell who was using it or what was being used, so they let the hunter eat it first.*

—Nick Galaktionoff, *Lost Villages of the Eastern Aleutians: Biorka, Kashega, Makushin*, 2014

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tikhonov_-_Aleut_in_Festival_Dress_in_Alaska_\(1818\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tikhonov_-_Aleut_in_Festival_Dress_in_Alaska_(1818).png)



An Alutiq hunter in festival dress with barbed bird dart and atl-atl (throwing board). Watercolor by Mikhail T. Tikhonov, 1818. Original in the Collection of the Scientific Research Museum of the Russian Academy of Fine Arts.

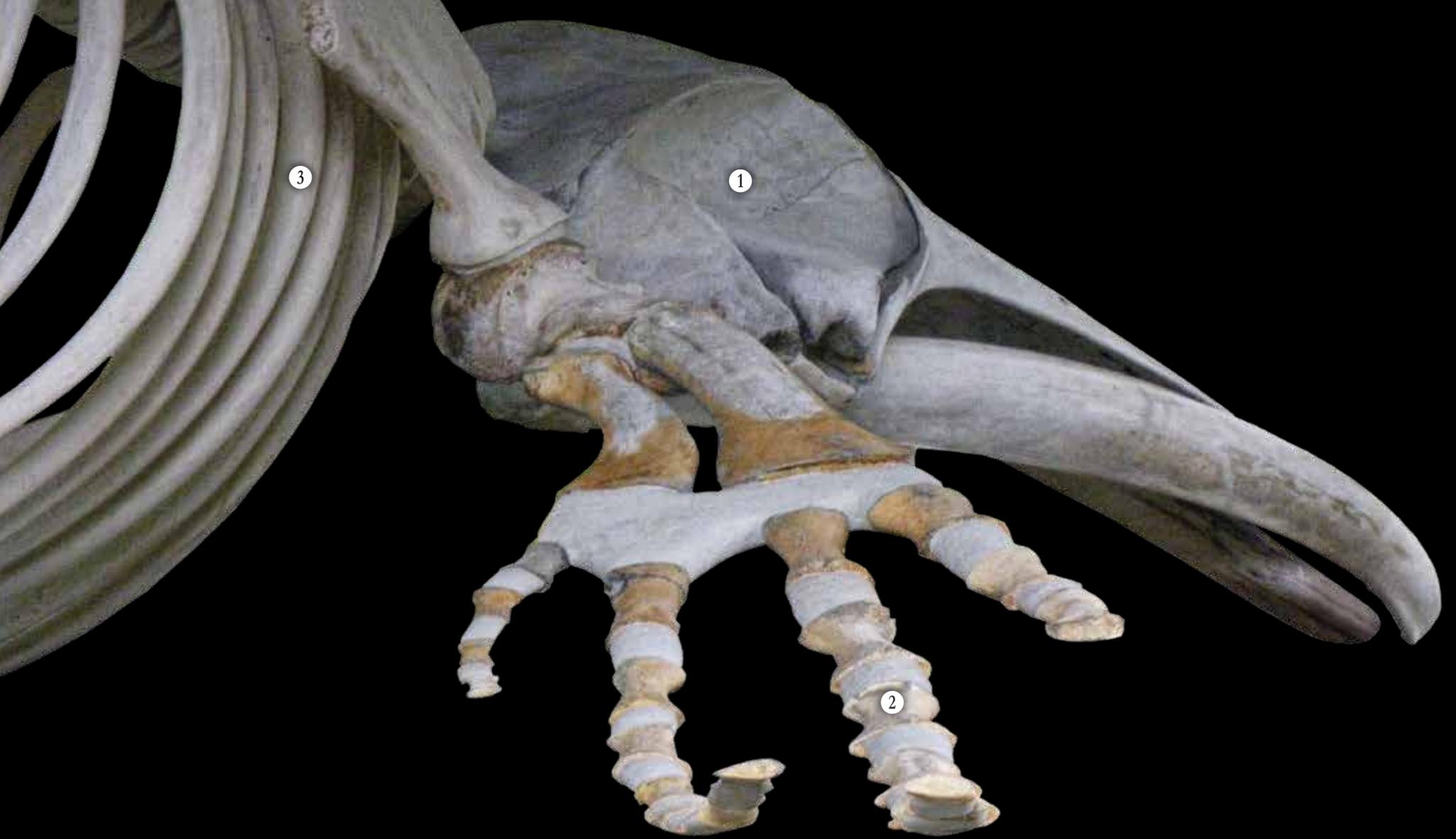
*The Alutiq of Kodiak Island to the east laced their stone lances with aconite, a poison derived from the dried root of monkshood—a plant associated with witchcraft in medieval Europe. It took roughly three days for the poison to do its work. It is known the Unanga[†] rubbed secretions of the human body, as well as human body fat, on their whaling points. Whether these substances were ingredients in a poison, talismans, or both, is uncertain.

Wounded [the whale] makes for the open sea, where 'it goes to sleep' for three days, as the [N]atives believe;[†] then death intervenes... if the waves and currents are favorable, it will be so drifted as to lodge on a beach... The business of watching for these expected carcasses then became the great object of everyone's life in that hunter's village; dusky sentinels and pickets were ranged over long intervals of coast-line... But the caprices of wind and tides are such in these highways and byways of the Aleutian Islands, that on an average not more than one whale in twenty, struck in this manner by [N]ative hunters, was ever secured... The lucky hunter who successfully claimed, by his spear-head mark, the credit of slaying such a stranded calf or yearling [old bulls and angry cow-whales were far too dangerous to hunt] was then an object of the highest respect among his fellow-men, and it was remembered well of him even long after death.

—W.H. Elliott, *The Arctic Province*, 1886

[†]The whaler secludes himself in a house where he too remains, without food or water, for three days. There he imitates the sighs and groans of an injured whale to effect its death and stranding. Emerging from seclusion on the fourth day, the hunter joins in the search for the harpooned whale. If the whale fails to appear, the seclusion ritual is repeated.

Deceased whalers of great skill were often mummified—a process practiced on every continent and indicative of both the utmost respect of the dead and an intimate knowledge of human anatomy. In the Aleutians, it was believed the "dried ones" could communicate with whales. Prior to the hunt, a whaler would visit a mummy cave and with the spirits of past whalers perform rituals intended to bring a favorable end to his endeavors. In a society where persons often lived into extended old age, whalers died young—the result of their dangerous pursuits, and, it has been conjectured, their association with the dead.

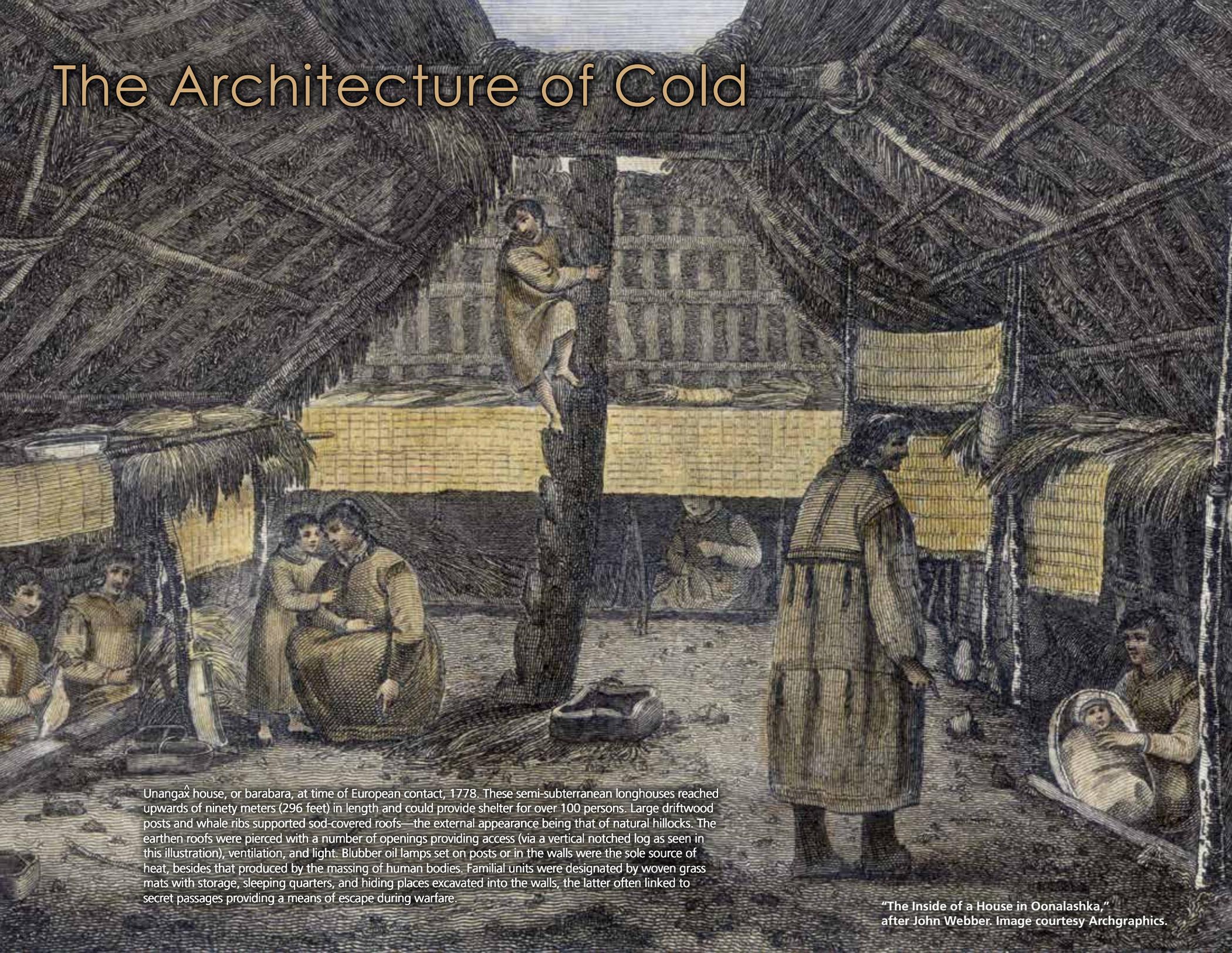


Above: detail, skeleton of humpback whale (Whale #68 "SNOW") showing #1 skull; #2 the bones of the flipper; and #3 ribcage. SNOW, a 46-foot long adult female, was struck and killed by a cruise ship in Glacier Bay in 2001. Her bones rearticulated, she is now on display at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. Photograph courtesy Kim Ney.

Illustration: Humpback whale.
<http://whaleopedia.org/animalfund/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Humpback-Whale.png>



The Architecture of Cold



Unanga^x house, or barabara, at time of European contact, 1778. These semi-subterranean longhouses reached upwards of ninety meters (296 feet) in length and could provide shelter for over 100 persons. Large driftwood posts and whale ribs supported sod-covered roofs—the external appearance being that of natural hillocks. The earthen roofs were pierced with a number of openings providing access (via a vertical notched log as seen in this illustration), ventilation, and light. Blubber oil lamps set on posts or in the walls were the sole source of heat, besides that produced by the massing of human bodies. Familial units were designated by woven grass mats with storage, sleeping quarters, and hiding places excavated into the walls, the latter often linked to secret passages providing a means of escape during warfare.

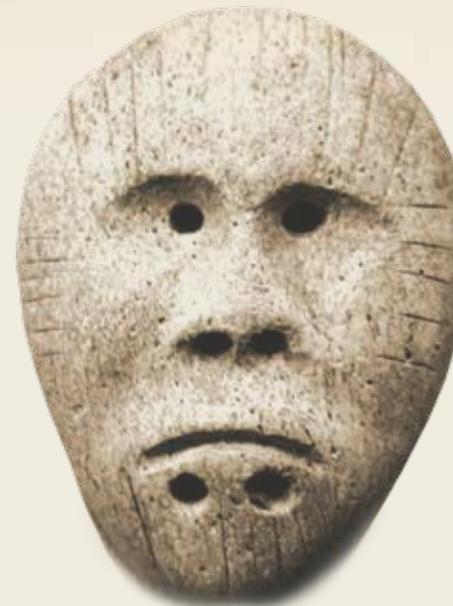
"The Inside of a House in Oonalashka,"
after John Webber. Image courtesy Archgraphics.

Late in the summer of 2003, [Archeologist] Rick Knecht perched on a steep hillside overlooking the North Pacific, marvelling at a strange labyrinth of stone emerging from an old marine terrace.

—*Archaeology*, Volume 60, No. 3, May/June 2007



House at *Tanaxtaxak*, the Amaknak Spit Site, Amaknak Island. Hearth (#1) in foreground left; sub-floor heating channels (#2,3) inside dwelling in rough “Y” shape. On this treeless island, archeologists found abundant charcoal remaining in the stone hearths. First recorded during World War II by naval officer and vocational archeologist Alvin Cahn, the site (designated “site F” by Cahn) dates to ca. 2500-3600 before present. “Before Present” is generally accepted as 1 January 1950, but is also interpreted as “Before Physics,” that is, before the proliferation of nuclear weapons testing altered carbon isotopes in the atmosphere. Image courtesy Museum of the Aleutians.



Archaeological Evaluation of *Tanaxtaxak*, the Amaknak Spit Site (UNL-00055) Final Report.

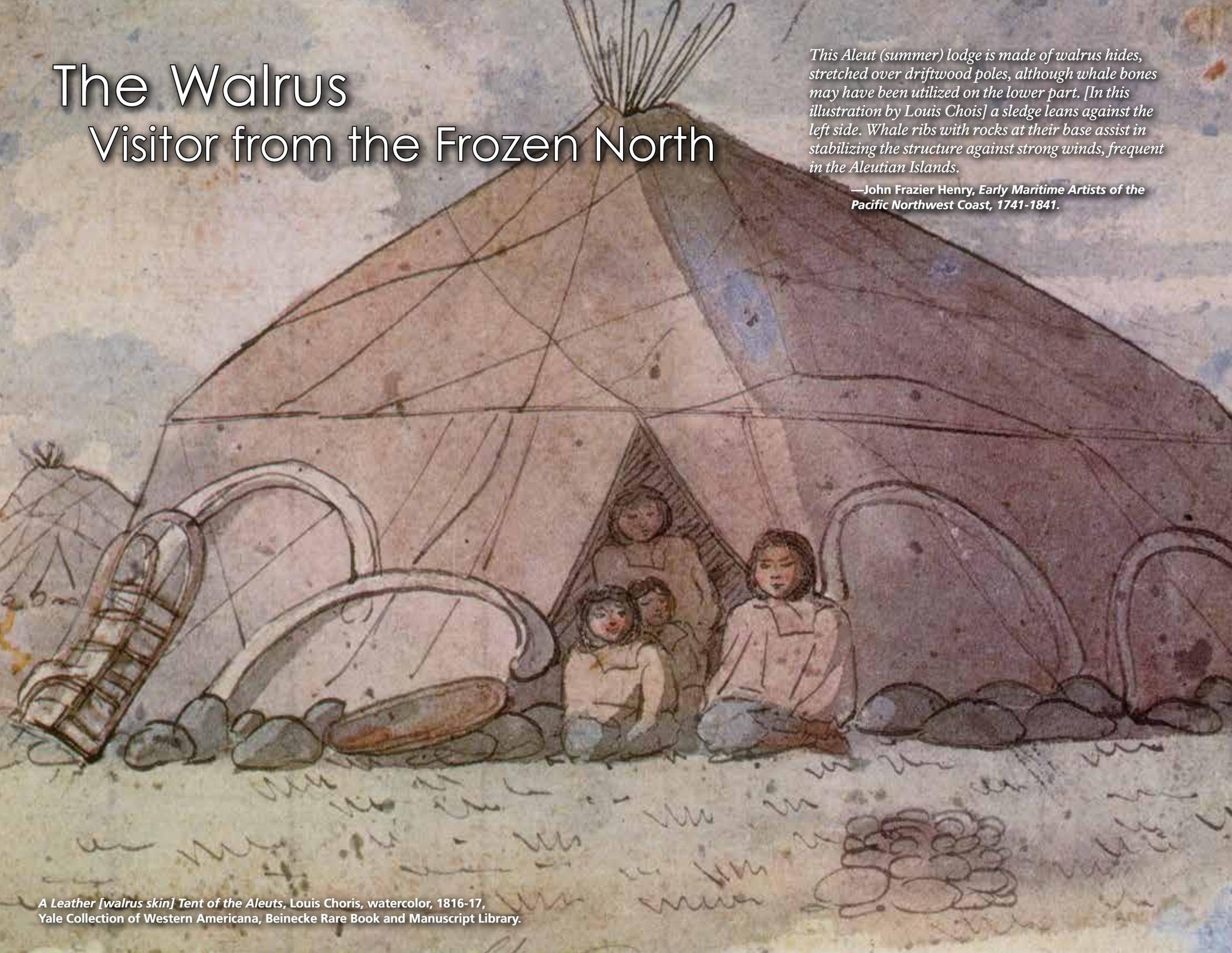
Detail: Anthropomorphic whale bone figure, *Tanaxtaxak*, the Amaknak Spit Site, Amaknak Island. Carving suggests two labret holes beneath mouth and linear tattoos fringing face. Grayscale image digitally tinted and isolated from background.

Four thousand years before present, the earth inexplicably grew cold, and the Bering Strait closed with ice. Sea mammals that yearly migrated north to the Pribilofs and Arctic Ocean were cut off from their summer rookeries and feeding grounds. To adapt, they established resident populations in the open Bering Sea to the south. This massing of animals in close proximity to the Aleutian Chain would be a great harvest for the Unanga...for nearly all their material goods and sustenance came from such beings. But to reap this harvest, the Unanga too must adapt to the sudden cold—*The Neoglacial*. On Amaknak Island, they reacted by adopting an architecture unique in the world—small, stone-lined structures, abutted one against the other. And outside these semi-subterranean “apartments”—stone hearths with chimneys and vents to draw combustible air. From the hearths extended stone duct work into the rooms, with heat radiating upwards through the floors. For 1000 years, the Unanga lived in such heated, aggregate dwellings, not merely surviving but thriving, leaving behind an archeological record of not only sophisticated architecture but social experimentation, technological invention, and fine art.

The Walrus Visitor from the Frozen North

This Aleut (summer) lodge is made of walrus hides, stretched over driftwood poles, although whale bones may have been utilized on the lower part. [In this illustration by Louis Choris] a sledge leans against the left side. Whale ribs with rocks at their base assist in stabilizing the structure against strong winds, frequent in the Aleutian Islands.

—John Frazier Henry, *Early Maritime Artists of the Pacific Northwest Coast, 1741-1841.*

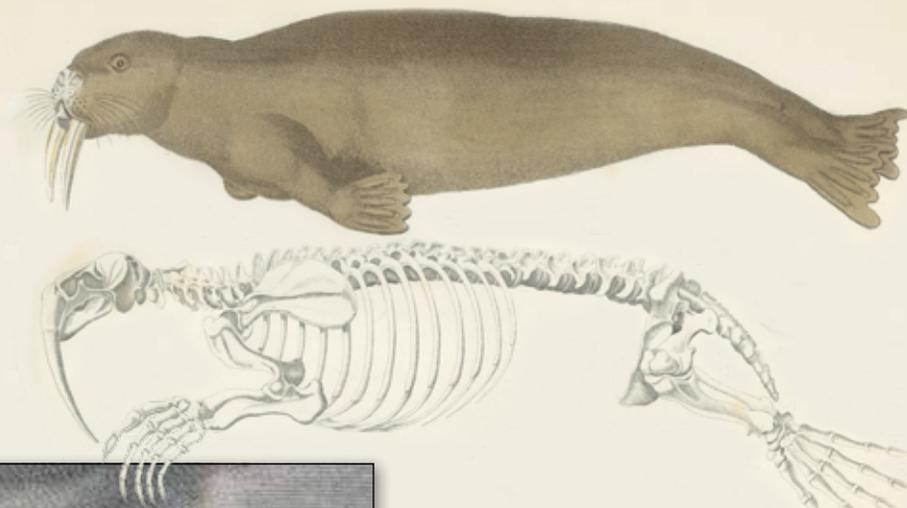


"I weep for you," the Walrus said:
 "I deeply sympathize."
 With sobs and tears he sorted out
 Those of the largest size,*
 Holding his pocket-handkerchief
 Before his streaming eyes.

—"The Walrus and The Carpenter"
 Lewis Carroll, 1872

*Although the Walrus and Carpenter share a meal of oysters in Carroll's poem, it is clams that form the mainstay of the walrus diet, the sea mammal capable of consuming as many as 3,000 to 6,000 mollusks in a single feeding session.

The walrus first stirs the sediment on the sea floor with its tusks, then clears the murky waters with jets of water expelled from its mouth and the waving of its flippers (usually the right flipper is dominant). With its sensitive whiskers (vibrissae) it identifies food items, then sucks them into its mouth. By disturbing the sea floor, the walrus releases additional nutrients which are in turn consumed by other creatures in the food chain.



Right: Illustration of walrus and walrus skeleton. From *Natural History for all Social Ranks*. Artist: Lorenz Oken, Stuttgart, Germany circa mid-1800s. Image courtesy Archgraphics.



A Party from his Majesties ships *Resolution* & *Discovery* Shooting Sea-Horses [for food], Latitude 71 North" (1784), showing ship's boat with crew firing muskets at walrus, little known animals at that time. Engraving based upon John Webber's original sketches and oil painting, 1778. The walrus in this rendering, with no experience of men with firearms, were "easy prey." Their faces, anthropomorphized, show puzzlement rather than fear or aggression. Captain Cook's crew's opinion of the epicurean value of walrus meat (described as potent and resembling horse meat with fishy overtones) was mixed. The location of this encounter is marked at Latitude 71 degrees north, the furthest northern point reached by a European explorer at that time. It is well north of the Aleutian Chain.

During the stormy months [walrus] now and then appear off the rocky promontories of the Fox Islands. The skin makes the most enduring baidarka covering because of its thickness and imperviousness to the sea. The tusks are fine ivory which the men carve into gambling dice and decorated art objects. Walrus blubber supplies a rich oil, more like that from seal than that of the whale. Walrus are considered dangerous animals to attack from small boats in the open sea, and even today a ship's dory loaded with men and rifles will avoid one of them. They do not come often to Umnak and Unalaska islands unless the Bering sea pack-ice drifts well down past the Pribilof Islands, for they are really creatures of the true arctic.

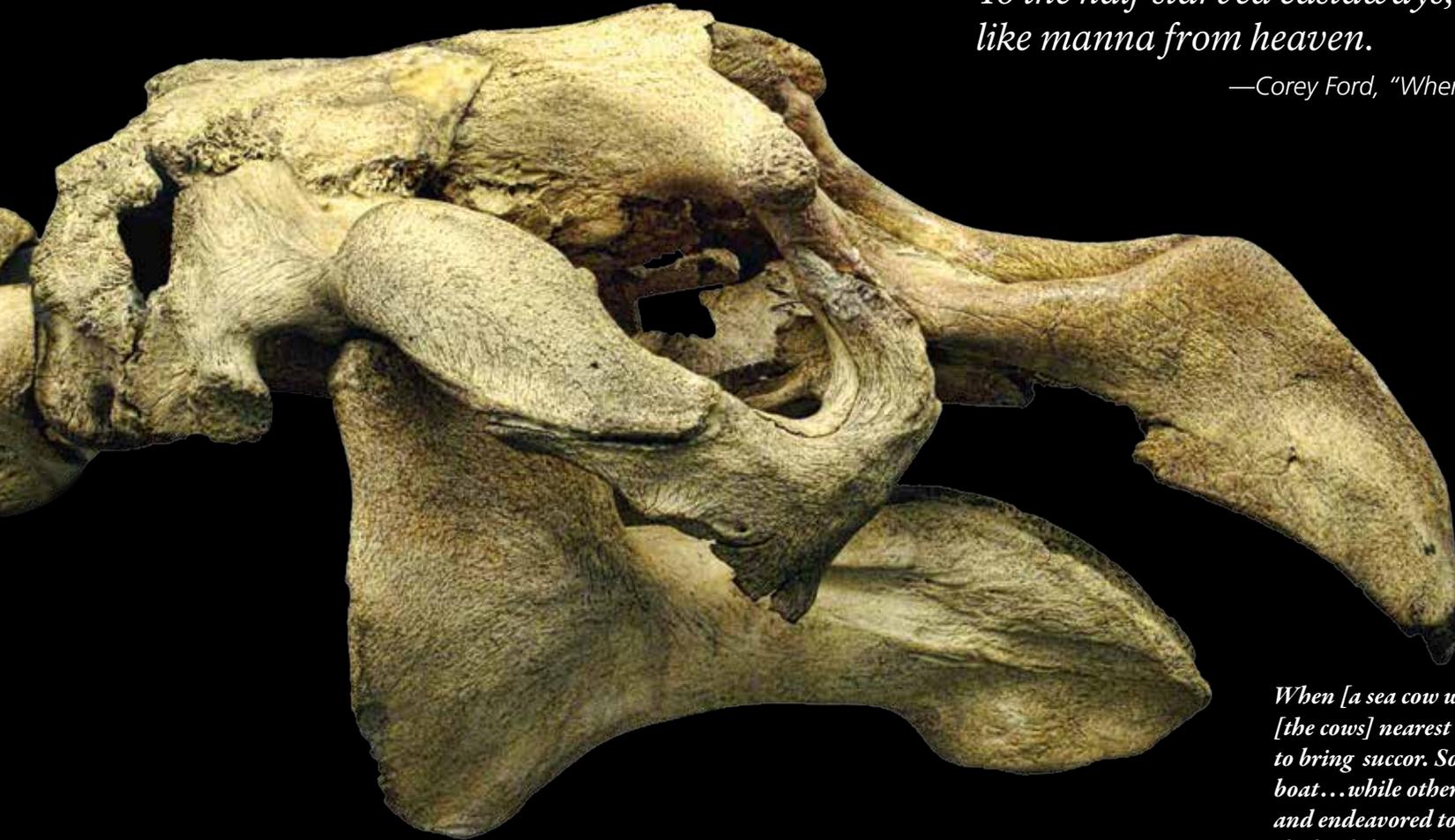
—*American Anthropologist*, "Aleut Natural-Food Economy," 1946.

Addendum: Modern distribution maps show the Aleutian Chain devoid of walrus, but in times of expanding arctic sea ice, in particular during the Little Ice Age (1300-1870), walrus did inhabit Aleutian waters. The Unangaʼx prized these visitors from the north, perhaps most for their hide which can weigh up to 1000 pounds and measure nearly 4 inches thick. The Unangaʼx used walrus hides as tent coverings during subsistence rounds and also as the hull of their large, open skin boat or *nigaalax*. These extremely seaworthy boats (capable of remaining afloat even when swamped) could carry 20 or more persons. Today walrus are threatened by a reduction in both the extent and thickness of arctic sea ice where the mammals gather and reproduce. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service is considering granting Endangered Species Act protections to the Pacific Walrus.

The Sea Cow

To the half-starved castaways, the sea cows were like manna from heaven.

—Corey Ford, "Where the Sea Breaks Its Back"



[The fat of the sea cow, which covered the body four inches thick, was] . . . firm, and shiny white, but when exposed to the sun takes on a yellowish tinge like May butter. Both the smell and taste of it are most delicious . . . and even greatly preferable to the meat of any quadruped . . . The fat of the calves is so much like fresh lard that it is hard to tell them apart, but their meat differs in no wise than veal.

—Georg Wilhelm Steller, naturalist,
Vitus Bering Expedition, 1741

When [a sea cow was] caught with a hook . . . [the cows] nearest began to stir and feel the need to bring succor. Some of them tried to upset the boat . . . while others pressed down on the rope and endeavored to break it, or strove to remove the hook from the wound by blows of their tail . . . It is a most remarkable proof of their conjugal affection, that the male, after having tried with all his might . . . and in spite of the beating we gave him, followed [his mate] to shore, and that several times, even after she was dead, he shot unexpectedly up to her like a speeding arrow. Early next morning . . . we found the male again standing by the female, and the same I observed the third day . . .

—Georg Wilhelm Steller, naturalist,
Vitus Bering Expedition, 1741

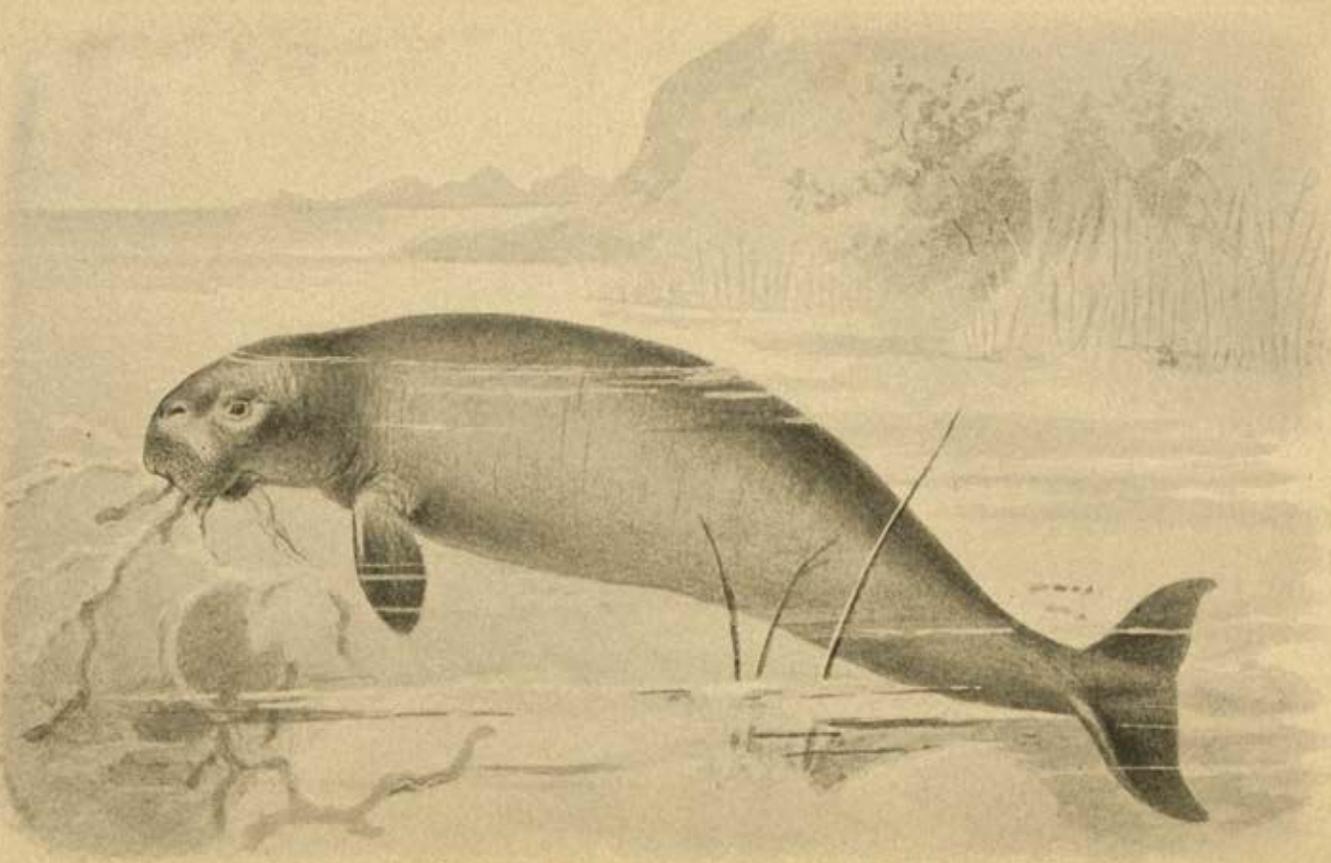


PLATE XXVI.

STELLER'S SEA-COW, RHYTINA GIGAS.
Found alive by Steller at Behring's Island. Length 19 feet 6 inches.

Under Steller's direction, the *St. Peters'* draftsman, Plenisner, made six accurate drawings of a sea cow to scale. These accompanied Steller's manuscript when sent to St. Petersburg, Russia after the expedition. The illustrations disappeared en route across Siberia and have never been found. Rendering of sea cow above from *Extinct Monsters: A Popular Account of Some of the Larger Forms of Ancient Animal Life*, 1893.

Every day...during our ill-fated adventure [on Bering Island] I had a chance to watch from the door of my hut the behavior and habits of these creatures...

—Georg Wilhelm Steller, naturalist, second Vitus Bering expedition. Description written during a ten-month stranding on what is now known as Bering Island in the Commander Islands, Russia. Twenty-nine of Vitus Bering's crew of seventy-seven died during the voyage to Alaska and forced refuge on Bering Island, including Vitus Bering. Roughly thirty years after Steller's observations of the sea cow, the creature would be hunted to extinction by Russian sailors, seal hunters, and fur traders exploiting the Aleutian Chain.



Die Säugthiere in Abbildungen nach der Natur, 1840–1855. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rhytinae_Stelleri_dentes.jpg.

Illustration of sea cow's "keratinous pads" used for mastication.

They fed in the shallows offshore, moving slowly forward, one forefoot after the other, half-swimming, half-walking like cattle grazing on a pasture of seaweed. Four or five minutes partially submerged, then they would raise their nostrils above water and blow—the sound like a horse snorting. Up to thirty feet in length, twenty-five in girth. Four tons and upwards. From navel to head, they resembled a land animal—from navel to tail, a fish with a whale's fluke. The head suggested a buffalo, and they chewed, not with teeth, but with horny plates like bovines. Their forefeet ended in "hooves" and with these the gluttonous "sea cows" loosened kelp from rocks to eat, their stomachs six feet long, five round, always hungry.

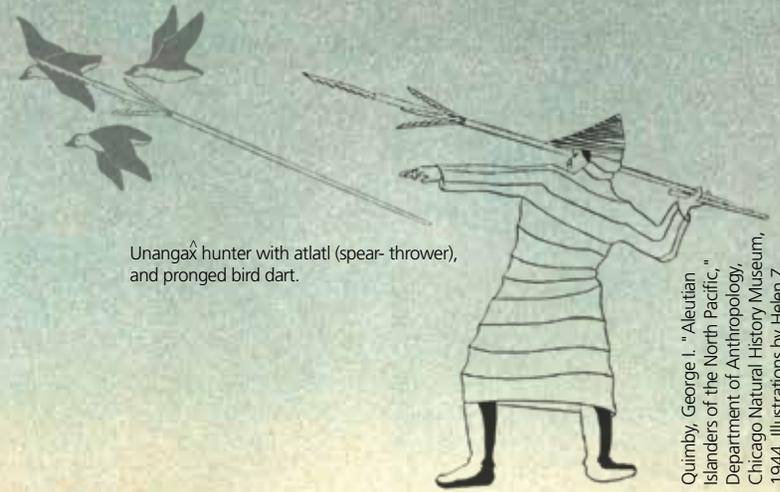
For ten months the shipwrecked crew of Vitus Bering's ship *St. Peter* watched the "sea monsters" fill their bellies. The cows came so close to shore and were so unafraid of men that the naturalist Steller could stroke their backs with his hand. The Russians were starving to death, but scurvy had left them too weak to hunt the sea cow herd. In desperation, they finally harpooned a cow and with great effort pulled it to shore. There they cut immense slices from the still living, struggling animal and found its fat and meat delicious.

The Emperor

The Emperor Goose which, by its coloration, is distinctive at great distances. This is a beautifully colored goose of medium size. The head is white with throat and foreneck of black fading into the breast. The body is of a slate-gray coloration, giving it the appearance of being a dull pale blue.

—From *Emergency Foods in the Aleutians*, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, (Intelligence) Alaskan Department, July 1943. Courtesy Michael Bouchette, Sherwood WI. (son of Captain Theodore Bouchette).

August, the Emperor Goose arrives, spreading east to west along the Aleutian arc from Kodiak to the Russian Commander Islands. The bird winters solely along the shore to forage and is therefore often referred to as the "beach goose." It is a gregarious bird usually found grouped in familial units. Weighing roughly 6 pounds and with a wingspan stretching some 3-1/2 feet, the Emperor was prized by the Unangaꝯ for its plumage and as a food source (although to the Native palate, duck was a superior meat).



Unangaꝯ hunter with atlatl (spear-thrower), and pronged bird dart.

Quimby, George I. "Aleutian Islanders of the North Pacific," Department of Anthropology, Chicago Natural History Museum, 1944. Illustrations by Helen Z. Quimby.

Plate IV, Emperor Goose-*Philacte canagica*, from *Surveys to Alaska*, 1893. Image courtesy Archgraphics.

R+J

Right now the emperors are plentiful around our area. The young ones just got out. We can see them all over...

—Steven Stone, village of Hooper Bay, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. After 30 years of a subsistence hunting ban on the emperor, Alaska Native hunters may again harvest the goose beginning 2 April-31 August, 2017. It is estimated the emperor now numbers as high as 170,000 individuals.

The [birdskin] parka for [the Unanga] in the local climate is an indispensable article. On the road it constitutes their bed and blanket and, one might say, home. With it they are not afraid either of wind or cold.

—Father Ioann Veniaminov, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalaska District*, 1839



Aleuti by G. Ferrario, 1826 after Martin Sauer's original *A Man and a Woman of Oonalashka* (Unalaska), 1802. This later tinted copper engraving adds a third figure after Johann Gottlieb Georgi, 1776-7 (at right) to Sauer's original Unanga couple with dog (Europeans noted that the dogs of the Unanga were particularly fierce). The new male figure wears on his head a "festival" hat—a full bird torso (perhaps a loon), split and gutted, with wings still attached. His parka is decorated with feathers along the shoulder seams and at the wrists, and perhaps along the body as well. The woman at center wears a ceremonial or festival gut parka made in the Russian "caped over-coat" naval style. The male at left wears a hunter's parka with attached hood. Under these waterproof gut "raincoats," the Unanga wore tanned birdskin parkas. Sixty horned puffin skins were needed to make one "sea parrot" parka—the seamstress requiring a full year to complete the garment. All parkas were decorated with bird beaks, claws and feathers; beard bristles of seal and sea-lion; sea otter fur; dyed leather; and caribou hair (a trade item from mainland peoples). Image courtesy Archgraphics.



[The geese] rose in a confused brown mass, almost in the face of the young hunter, who advanced rapidly, whirling the weighted cords [bola] about his head. At precisely the right instant... the Unanga boy straightened his arm in front of him and launched his missile with precision into the very middle of the flapping mass... Illustration and text from *The Young Alaskans*, by Emerson Hough, 1908.

In flight, the Unanga brought down birds* using bolas, spears tipped with barbed darts, and short recurve bows and arrows. On the ground, birds were captured in snare nets placed over known flight paths. In March, the Emperor would retire from the Aleutians to the Yukon-Kuskokwim flats to breed (producing a clutch numbering between 3-8 eggs). There its white head and hindneck would become stained rust-red from feeding in iron-rich tundra waters. Long a Native subsistence bird, the Emperor declined in number between the 1960s-80s. Until 2017, it was one of just three waterfowl species unavailable in Alaska for harvest, as governed by the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council.

*There are 271 different bird species that visit the Aleutian Islands or call them home. The Emperor Goose, which winters but does not breed on the chain, and other winter-only birds, account for 7% of the total.

Through European Eyes...

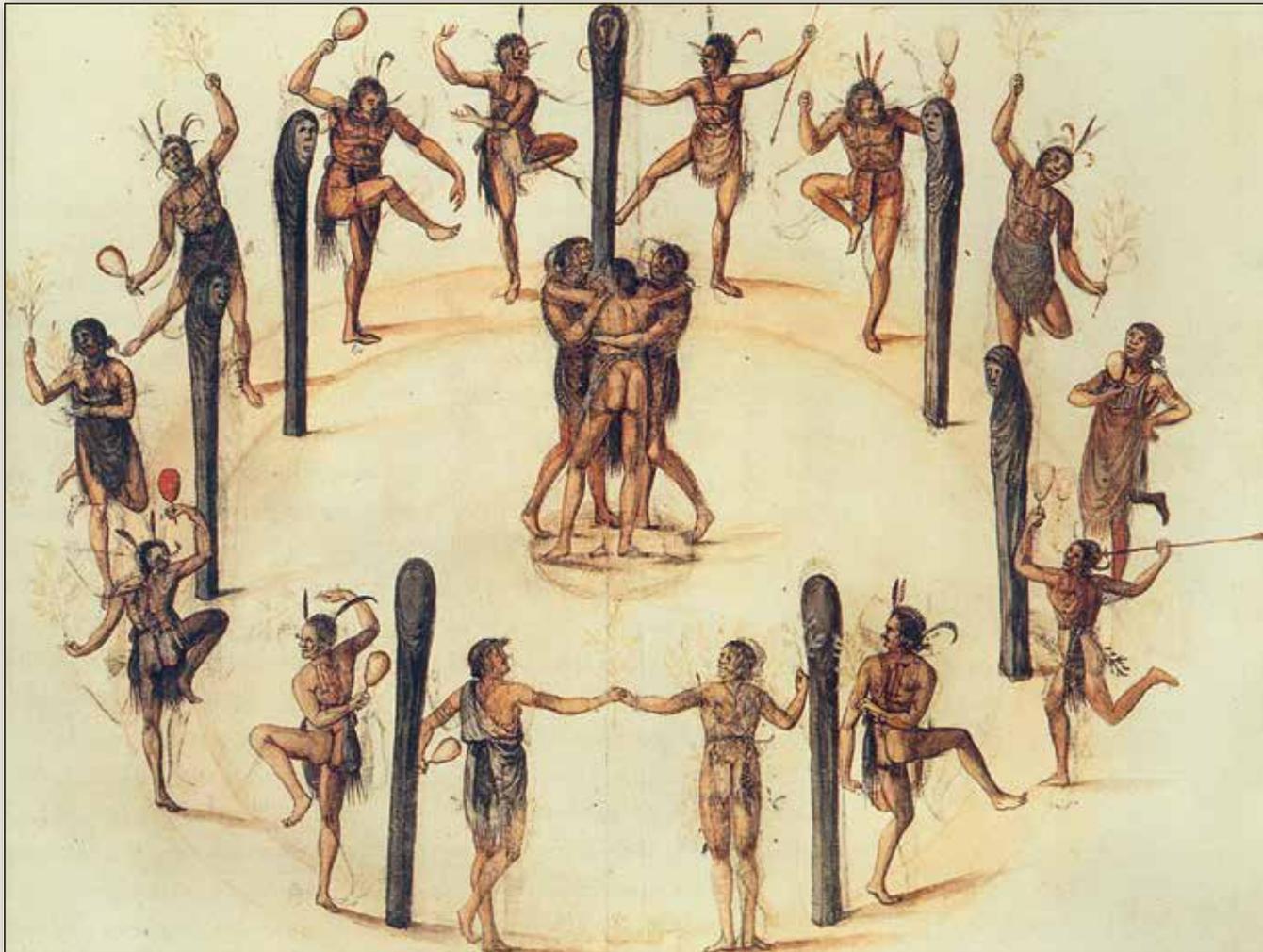


"Woman and Man of Unalaska in their Festival Clothes" in Gavriil Sarychev's *Account of a Voyage of Discovery to the Northeast of Siberia, the Frozen Ocean, and the North-east Sea*. London, 1806-07. Translation from the German courtesy Angelika Lynch. Image courtesy Archgraphics.

Weib und Mann von Unalaska in ihren Feierkleidern.

Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.

—Marcus Aurelius, Emperor of Rome, 161-180



Dancing Secotan Indians (original watercolor), Roanoke Island, North Carolina, John White, 1585. White's watercolors of the Native Americans of the Eastern seaboard predate the first body of "discovery voyage art" executed by Captain James Cook's artists by roughly two centuries and are the only extant record of the indigenous people of North America as encountered by England's first settlers. The widely distributed Theodore de Bry hand-tinted etchings of White's watercolors (1590) differ greatly from the artist's originals however. As seen above, White's North American Natives are depicted with brown skin and black hair. In the hand-colored engravings, they are shown with pale skin and blonde hair. One explanation—the prints were colored by a German artist who simply assumed that all peoples of the world appeared as he did.



"Woman of Unalaska (with implements" by Captain Mikhail Levashov, 1768. From *An atlas of drawings* by M.S. Levashov in the Hydrographic Section, Ministry of Marine, Petrograd.

The earliest European depictions of North American Native peoples, however striking they may be, were often distorted representations—images rendered through the ethnocentric lens of foreign artists, engravers, and colorists. In these images, Native American physiognomy and dress were often altered to imitate that of Europeans. The subjects' poses mimicked classic European statuary and the coloring, (applied by craftsmen far removed from the original environment) reflected the European fashion of the times or bordered on the fanciful. Nonetheless, these centuries-old images *are* important primary sources—the first, if flawed, pictorial records of the Native peoples of North America from Unalaska, Alaska to Roanoke Island, North Carolina.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_carolina_algonkin-rituale02.jpg

Illustration courtesy Archgraphics.

Knives, Lances, and Needles

A Woman of Oonalashka



A WOMAN OF OONALASHKA.

Unanga woman (above) with tattoos, labrets (lip plugs), nasal ornaments, and earrings. The incision for inserting labrets was the most extensive surgical procedure for body ornamentation among the *Unanga*, requiring two or three piercings in the lower lip into which were inserted pieces of bone, animal teeth, or other objects. It is thought these holes were cut early in the first year of life when a small plug was inserted from the inside to keep the opening from closing during healing. The lower end of a female's nasal septum was also pierced during early childhood with a hole large enough to hold a long bone (a nasal pin) as well as a string of beads or other objects. The nasal pin could also be a piece of bark, bone, or eagle feather shaft. Before the introduction of European trade beads, pieces of amber or coral would dangle from the nasal pin to the chin.

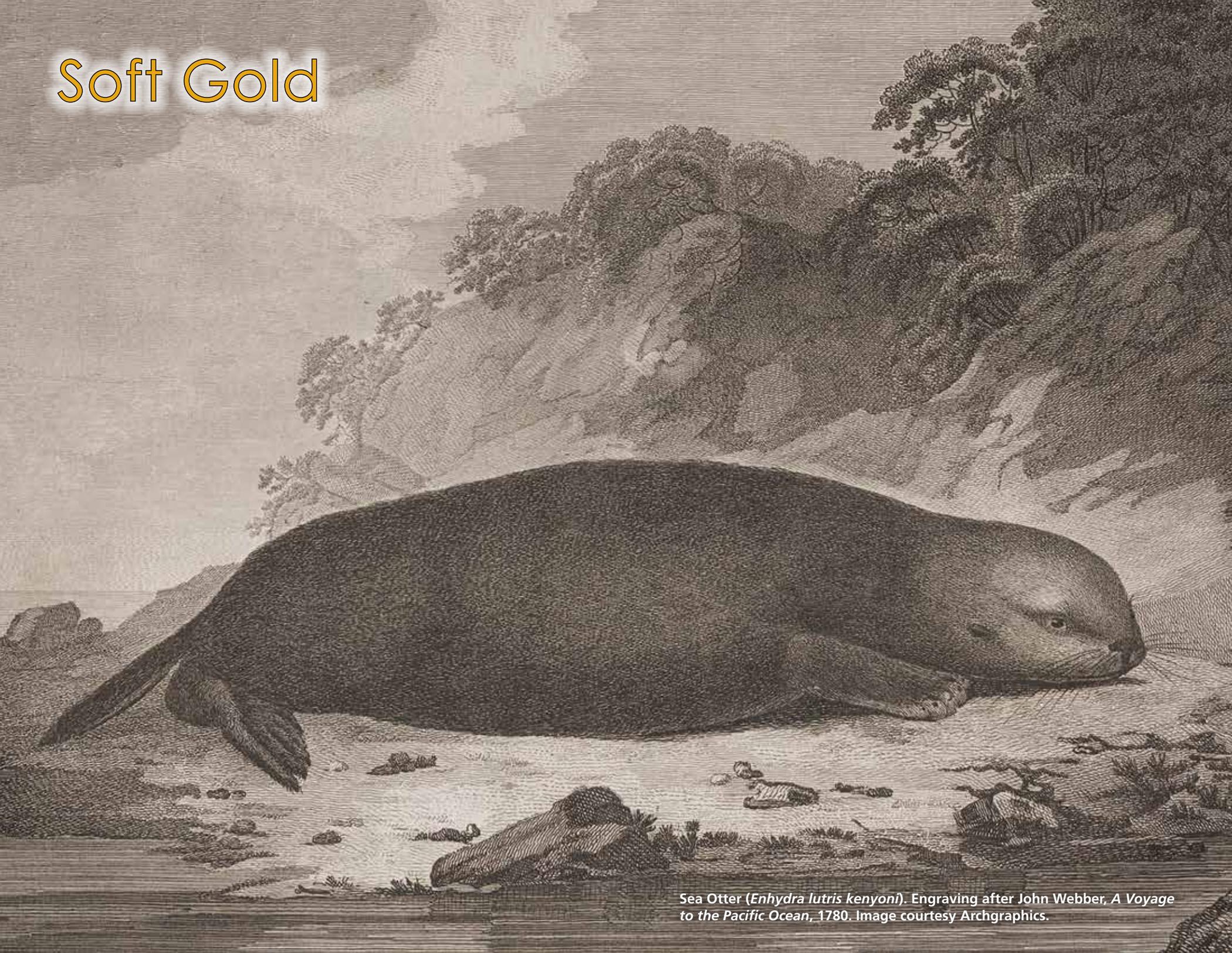
A Man of Oonalashka



A MAN OF OONALASHKA.

Traditionally, women were tattooed after their first menses, men after their first animal kill. Tattoos were pricked into the skin or "sewn" with needle and thread, the "ink" comprised of a black pigment of coal dust and urine. Males also pierced their nasal septa, and both sexes pierced their ears, inserting dentalium shells, bones, pieces of amber, feathers, dried bird wings, or skulls. Sea lion whiskers worn in a male's ears were a trophy, a sign he was a good hunter. Males also wore labrets made of walrus ivory, beads, and bones. It is thought such ornamentation was both decorative and symbolic of social standing, reputation, and elder status. It was, in any circumstance, a mix of surgical expertise and art.

Soft Gold



Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris kenyoni*). Engraving after John Webber, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, 1780. Image courtesy Archgraphics.

[The sea otter is] a beautiful and pleasing animal, cunning and amusing in its habits... They prefer to lie together in families... Their love for their young is so intense that...when taken away from them, [the females] cry bitterly...and grieve so much that...after ten to fourteen days they grow as lean as a skeleton...

—Georg Wilhelm Steller, 1742

One million hairs per square inch, blue-black and dusted with gold—the fur of the sea otter. When stretched, an otter pelt can reach a third again its size, and still a finger cannot be forced through the hair to touch the hide. It is this dense fur that allows the sea otter to swim the Bering Sea without an insulating layer of blubber. This pelt, not gold, drew the *promyshlenniki*—Russian fur hunters—eastward along the Aleutians beginning

in the mid-1700s. So hungry were the hunters for otter, they braved the Bering Sea in crude flatboats—*shitikas*—green planks bound with hide thongs. “Rough and unruly...ready to face death,” the *promyshlenniki* saw the Native Unangaꝯ not as human beings, but solely as weapons in the otter hunt. Tortured, murdered, decimated by disease and starvation, the Unangaꝯ population plummeted

from an estimated high of 20,000 to 2,000 persons within 45 years after Russian contact. And the sea otter—once thought to number upwards of 300,000 from Baja California to northern Japan—would be reduced to a few thousand animals living in isolated colonies. They were no longer the gregarious animals Georg Steller had first noted in 1742, but deathly afraid of men.



Image courtesy Royal Academy of Arts.

The Chinese Emperor Hongli (1711- 1799). The Mandarins were the catalyst for the sea otter harvest, prizing its pelt as trimmings for robes and hats. Payment for a single skin was 80 to 100 rubles—roughly the annual wage of a Russian fur laborer in the North Pacific.



<http://alaska.si.edu/media.asp?enlarge=991>
Notched ivory foreshaft with point—perhaps green obsidian (volcanic glass)—for hunting sea otter.



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b9/Lanpher_Furs_Natural_Black_Russian_Lamb_S65.jpg

Right: overcoat of natural black Russian lamb, unplucked otter fur collar and cuffs. Cost circa 1907: \$32,50. Illustration from “Lanpher Furs, North Star Brand. Lanpher, Skinner & Co., St. Paul, Minnesota.

Above: lateral view, sea otter skull. Aleutian sea otter pelts were first introduced to Russian fur traders by survivors of Vitus Bering’s shipwrecked crew. During their stranding on Bering Island the winter of 1741, the castaways hunted sea otters and used the skins as currency while gambling. The 1000 pelts they brought back to Siberia commanded high prices—32 times that for sable. Among those returning to Russia was Georg Steller, the first naturalist to scientifically describe the sea mammal.

Photograph by Francis Broderick, Archgraphics.

A Century of Servitude*

Nowhere, nowhere else could there possibly be so much teeming life. Every inch of earth is covered with writhing, barking, roaring, fighting fur seals...

—Libby Beaman, Wife of the Assistant Special Agent for the Seal Islands, St. George Island, 1880

"Seal Drove Crossing" by Henry Elliott, Saint Paul Island, October 20, 1872. UA482-2.

*Title taken from A Century of Servitude: Pribilof Islands Under U.S. Rule by Dorothy M. Jones.

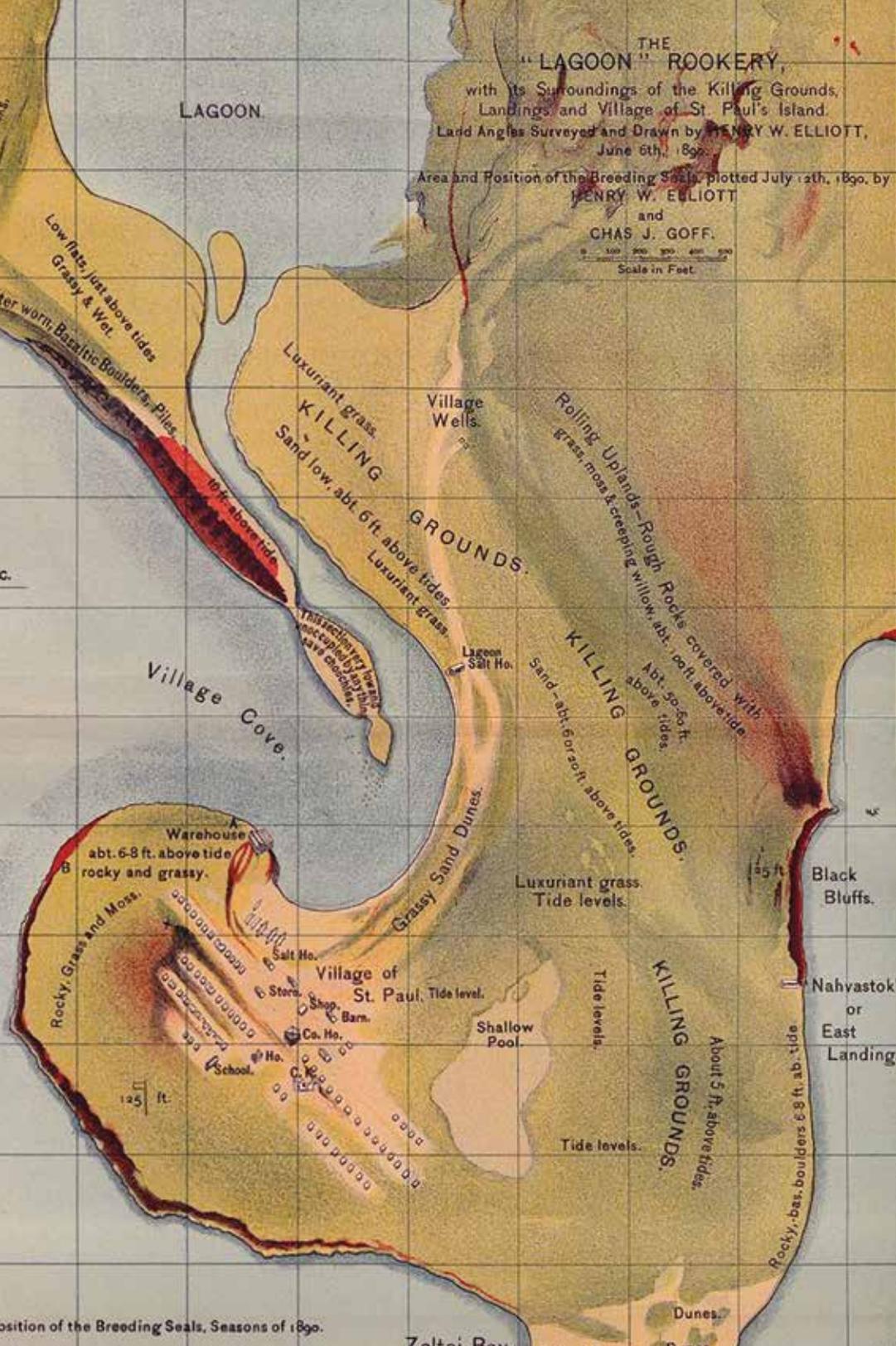
I was afraid to leave [St. George]... If you got out without permission, [the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries] reduced your sealing division, threatened not to give food to your family.

—Unanga^á sealer, St. George, name unknown

They were paid in food—1700 calories for fifteen hours of back-breaking, bloody labor. From the age of sixteen on, Pribilovian sealers were held in servitude by the U.S. government—treated not as human beings but as instruments in the herding, slaughter, and processing of seals. In 1867, the United States bought Alaska and the Pribilof Islands from Russia... bought the northern fur seal herd and the Pribilovians as well. For a century, the government owned both seal and sealer, bringing both to the brink of extinction in order to enrich the U.S. treasury.



Seal hunters, St. Paul Island, circa 1880, Russian colonial period. In 1786-87, Russian fur sealers transplanted villagers from Unalaska and Atka islands two hundred miles north to the uninhabited islands of St. George and St. Paul. There the Unanga^á worked as seasonal itinerent labor in the harvest of the northern fur seal. By the 1880s, permanent villages were settled on the two islands. Courtesy Alaska State Library, Gray & Hereford Photograph Collection, ca. 1880, ASL-P185-03.



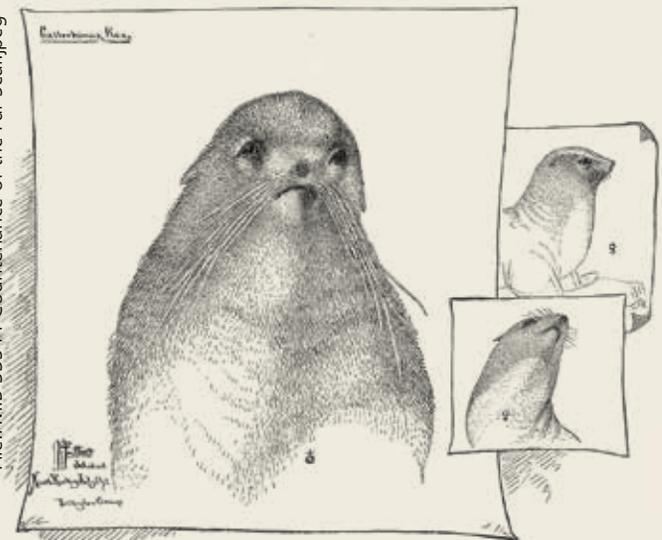
[Internment of the Pribilovians during World War II] caused great inconvenience and hardship, and resulted in the loss of more than a million dollars by reason of the discontinuance of [sealing]. . . I urge that arrangements be made to return the natives . . .

—Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes

Under U.S. rule, Pribilovians were designated “wards of the state”—children, in essence—with all aspects of their lives, including choice of spouse, dictated by Treasury Department Agents. In 1943, sealers were coerced to return to the Pribilofs from internment in southeast Alaska to harvest seals. Those serving in the military were furloughed to participate in the hunt. That year, Pribilovian sealers infused the U.S. war chest with 1.58 million dollars while their wives and children wasted away in the internment camp at Funter Bay.

It was not until 1966 that Pribilovians were granted U.S. citizenship—over one hundred years after the abolition of slavery.

File:FMIB 33544 Countenance of the Fur-Seal.jpeg



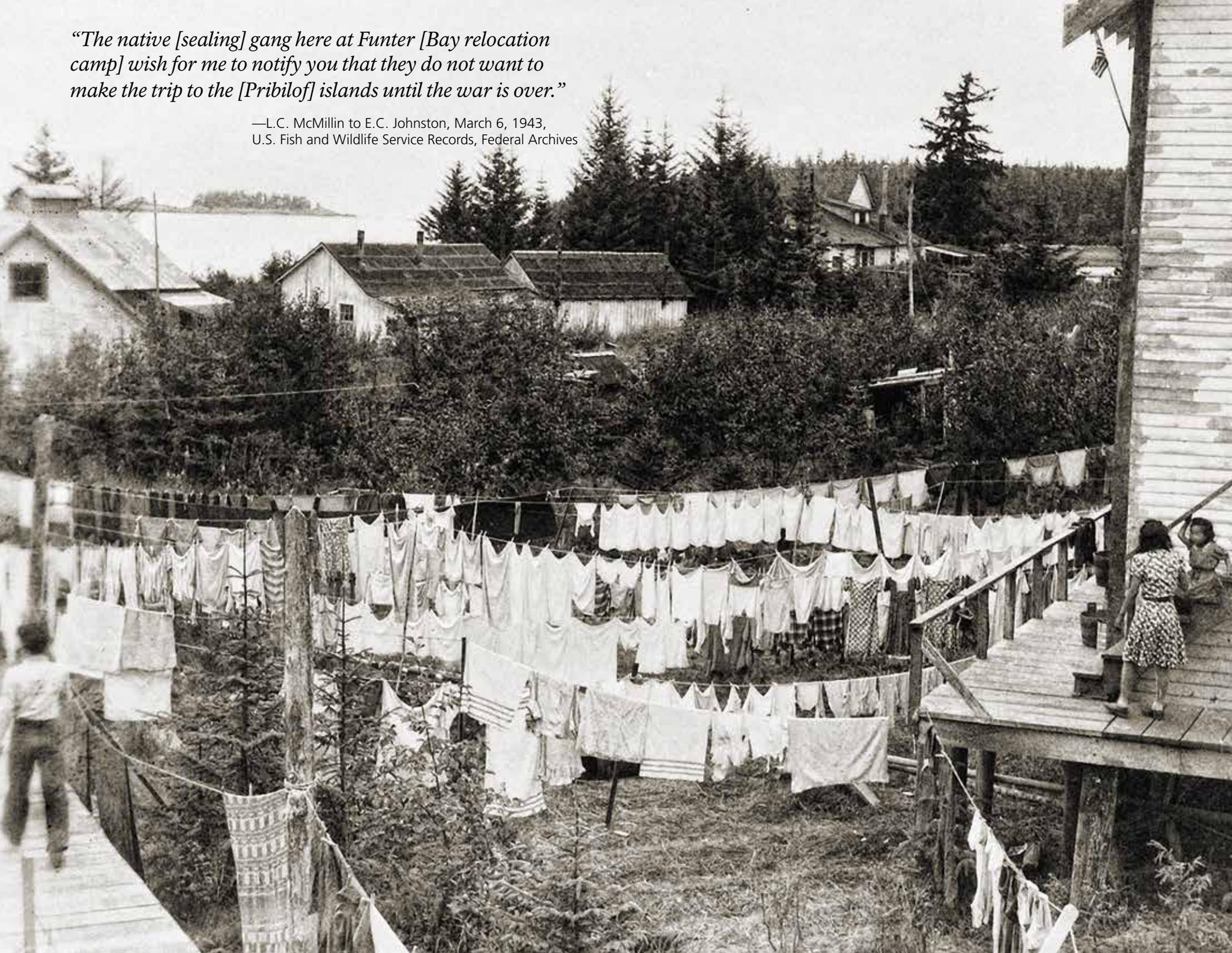
THE COUNTENANCE OF CALLORHINUS—A LIFE STUDY OF AN ADULT MALE FUR-SEAL. (Full face of old male, profile and under view of female heads.)

Above: faces of the fur seal, Henry Elliott, 1873. Left: Village of St. Paul surrounded by the “Killing Grounds,” Elliott 1890. In 1905 Elliott coauthored a document that would eventually become the 1911 North Pacific Fur Seal Convention—the first international treaty dedicated to the conservation of wildlife.

Facing page: Funter Bay relocation camp, St. Paul villagers. Thirty-two Unanga would die here. UAF, Fredericka Martin Collection, 91.223.272.

“The native [sealing] gang here at Funter [Bay relocation camp] wish for me to notify you that they do not want to make the trip to the [Pribilof] islands until the war is over.”

—L.C. McMillin to E.C. Johnston, March 6, 1943,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Records, Federal Archives



Windows into Heaven

There is good evidence that St. Eugenia was a martyr at Rome in the early ages, buried in the cemetery of Apronian on the Via Latina. But when her true story was forgotten there became attached to her name a legend... It relates that she put on male dress and became an abbot of a monastery in Egypt; she was accused of sexual misconduct (her being presumed a male) and cleared herself by declaring her (true gender); she then went to Rome, and after various fabulous occurrences, was beheaded for her faith.

—A Dictionary of Saints,
Donald Attwater, 1965

СВ. ЕВГЕНІЯ

СВ. ЕВГЕНІЯ

Detail of Saint Venerable Evgeniya (Eugenia) after National Park Service restoration. In 1996, the World Monuments Watch designated the Aleutian and Pribilofian icons as among the world's 100 most endangered sites. The National Park Service had organized conservation as early as 1990 as part of its Inventory and documentation of the icons and furnishings of the Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox Church National Historic Landmark. Image courtesy National Park Service and National Archives.

[It is said that] the first icon, 'The Savior not Created by Human Hands,' was made by Christ himself—his image miraculously transferred to a cloth used to wipe his face.

—Heaven on Earth



Icon of "St. John the Evangelist" (after National Park Service conservation), Church of the Holy Ascension, Unalaska, Alaska. The bird at top right is an eagle believed to be able to stare directly into the sun without harm and thus symbolic of a Christian's ability to look, without flinching, upon death—not as the final step—but the first towards eternal union with God. Image courtesy National Park Service and National Archives.



Anfesia Shapsnikoff and her grandson Vincent Tutiakof, ASL-P233-UN224.

In defiance of U.S. military order, Anfesia Shapsnikoff, together with the Church Committee, secreted the icons of Unalaska's Church of the Holy Ascension to the internment camp at Burnett Inlet in SE Alaska. There the paintings were hung in a small church built by the Unanga̅ men. When weather permitted, the Unanga̅ aired the icons. They coated them with 3 in 1 machine oil—the only "preservative" that could be scavenged. But still the ever present damp of the rain forest permeated the canvasses. The icons began to mold, then flake. Brittle oil paint, centuries old, cracked and curled and fell away. In desperation, the Unanga̅ applied shellac to slow the icons' decline, but the mix of oil and shellac darkened the once glowing paintings and they began to recede into the dusk.

Left destitute by their long internment, the Unanga̅ were unable to afford conservation of the icons after returning to their home islands in 1945. For 55 more years, they would watch as the icons, the "windows into heaven," continued to decay.

The Bell Ringer



Nicholai Lekanoff in the bell tower of the Church of the Holy Ascension, Unalaska.

[Nicholai Lekanoff] has been the little backbone that has kept [the Church of the Holy Ascension] standing... He loves that cathedral and especially those bells. It is obvious when you see or meet him.

—Okalena Patricia (Patty) Lekanoff-Gregory



Photograph courtesy Josy Shangin.



Jet Lowe. NPS, HAB5 AK, November 1984.

Bells, Church of the Holy Ascension, a designated National Historic Landmark.

Left: Nicholai Lekanoff, Sr. at Makushin, August 31, 2009. Nicholai returned to his birthplace village as part of the Lost Villages project, a joint collaboration between the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ounalashka Corporation. The project is described in detail in the NPS publication *Lost Villages of the Eastern Aleutians: Biorka, Kashega, Makushin* by Ray Hudson and Rachel Mason, NPS anthropologist. In 2005 Nicholai's daughter Patty wrote of her father: "[Nicholai] has always talked about going back down to southeast [Alaska] and see where he was [interned] for almost three years, and now, he wants to put a marker on his brother Steve's grave down in Burnett Inlet [former relocation camp]... He said he will get a marker for his brother Lazar who died here in Unalaska shortly after the bombing. He said it was a tough four years: his mom died, maybe TB or heart, he wasn't sure, in 1940; his dad in 1941, kidney stones; his little brother Lazar from TB in 1942; and his other brother Steve in Burnett Inlet in 1943." (Personal communication: Patty Gregory/author.)

Nicholai Lekanoff climbs the steep bell tower stairs, then four rungs of a ladder to stand atop a small platform. He waits for a nod from below, his signal to begin, and then sets in motion the bells of the Church of the Holy Ascension. Nicholai's body moves rhythmically. He "dances" with the seven bells that hang before him, swinging them with his feet, his knees, and hands. It is a

quiet day, the tower windows open, and the toll of the bells—the deep vibrato of ringing metal—carries over Unalaska City. July 22, 1942, Nicholai, his wife Polly and her parents Mike and Dora Kudrin were taken from their Unalaska home and interned at an abandoned fish cannery in southeast Alaska. There, in the tower of a handbuilt church, Nicholai rang three small bells brought from Unalaska. Upon his

return to Unalaska in 1945, Nicholai was made "starosta," or caretaker (third starosta in 1948/second starosta in 1952), of the Church of the Holy Ascension. Under Nicholai Lekanoff, the bells of Unalaska rang through relocation and return. Their sounding now proclaims not only the Unangaḡ deep love of God, but gives voice to the people themselves, declaring loud their place in their ancestral home. Today, at

the age of 92, Nicholai Lekanoff no longer rings the bells at Unalaska. His daughter, Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory, is one of those who toll the bells these days. In Sunday dress and high heels, she works the heavy bronze bells. She rings them for God, she says, and prays for those who have gone before.

“Hell Roaring Mike”

When I am in charge of a vessel, I always command; nobody commands but me. I take all the responsibility, all the risks, all the hardships that my office would call upon me to take. I do not steer by any man's compass but my own.

—Captain Michael Augustine Healy
spoken during his court-marshal in 1896



Courtesy United States Coast Guard,
U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Captain Healy, with his pet parrot,
on the quarterdeck of the Revenue
Cutter *Bear*, circa 1895.

Capt. Mike Healy is a good deal more distinguished person in the waters of the far Northwest than any president of the United States... He stands for law and order...and if you should ask in the Arctic Sea, 'Who is the greatest man in America?' the instant answer would be 'Why, Mike Healy.'

—*New York Sun*, January 1894. Healy's career was not without controversy, however. A great friend of Alaska Natives, Healy also participated under orders in the punitive bombardment of the Tlingit village of Angoon in 1884. Admired by his crews and charged with enforcing alcohol laws, a court marshal in 1896 found him guilty of seven charges, among them "Tyranous and abusive conduct to inferiors," and "Drunkness to the scandal of the Service." Seven years later he was restored to captain and given command of the cutter *Thetis*. No figure such as Healy can live life so large without confrontation.



Image courtesy National Park Service.

Le Petit Journal, 28 August 1906, reported that an armed force of the Revenue Cutter *McCulloch* engaged Japanese seal poachers, Attu Island. Refusing to surrender, four Japanese were felled on the beach and twenty-two taken prisoner. Two hundred seal skins were seized. "This bloody incident led to complications between the Emperor of Japan (du mikado) and the Government of the United States." (Translation from the French by Linda Cook). Although dramatic, the author and illustrator of this incident took great artistic license.* The event occurred at St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs on July 16 and was fought between the resident agent, W.I. Lembkey, Unanga guards and Japanese sealers. The Cutter *McCulloch* (one of five Revenue Cutters commanded by Captain Michael A. Healy during his career) did not arrive until the fight was over. The spruce forest, of course, is French fantasy.

*Personal communication: Ray Hudson/publication author.



Image courtesy United States Coast Guard, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"The U.S. Revenue Cutter *Bear*, Bering Sea and Arctic Cruise 1900." (The Revenue Cutter Service was the predecessor of the United States Coast Guard.)

Born one of nine children of an Irish immigrant father and enslaved mother, Michael A. Healy rose to become the first man of African-American descent to captain a vessel of the United States government. Given command of the flagship of the U.S. Revenue Bering Sea Force, the Cutter *Bear*, in 1885, Healy was charged with patrolling northern seas from the otter hunting grounds at Kodiak to far western Attu; north to the Pribilof sealing islands; and northward still to Barrow and the whalers in the Arctic Ocean. "Woe to any mutineer, seal poacher, or liquor trader who fell to Healy's tender mercies. In law enforcement he preferred the instant and strong correctives of the frontier..." Healy was also a man of great empathy, in particular for Alaska Natives whose very survival was then in jeopardy. "Never make a promise to a [N]ative you do not intend to keep to the letter," was Healy's standing order. In turn, Alaska Natives came to respect Healy and his "Fire Canoe," the steam-driven *Bear*. For twenty years, Healy served the Arctic—a place far removed from his birthplace in Georgia. In that time, he and the *Bear* became the stuff of legend.

Enemy Aircraft off Coast



Coast Guardsmen were warned to be prepared for incendiary bombs along New York's waterfront where millions of dollars of war supplies are crowded onto wooden piers. Dock Commissioner John McKenzie said that he had received word from Mitchel Field shortly before 1 p.m. to be on the alert... that several hundred [Japanese] planes were off the East Coast and that their estimated time over Long Island was about 2 p.m.

—Chicago Daily News, 9 December 1941



Dr. W.M. Whitehead clears a path to his backyard Juneau bombshelter, 1 January 1942. The concrete shelter measures 9 inches thick and can house Whitehead, his wife, and three children. It is said to be the only private shelter in Alaska. Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, America feared a Japanese invasion of the U.S. mainland. The winter of 1942, the beaches of the western states were guarded against attack; towns were blacked out; the night skies cut by searchlights. February 25, 1942, formations of Japanese planes were reported over Southern California and “the air...erupt(ed) like a volcano” with anti-aircraft fire. In the morning, residents of Long Beach-Santa Monica awoke

to find anti-aircraft shrapnel littering their sidewalks, housetops, and rose gardens. But the enemy planes proved illusory—the “Battle of Los Angeles” nothing more than a case of frayed nerves. U.S. fears of an invasion were not without warrant, however. Japanese I-boat submarines prowled the West Coast of the United States making bold attacks on U.S. shipping, at times no more than twenty miles distant from their ports. The undersea ships

stood offshore Oregon and California, shelling a fort and oil field. Aircraft launched from Japanese submarines dropped incendiary bombs in the Pacific Northwest in attempts to tinder the ancient forests into firestorm. And a land invasion would come... but far to the north of the continental United States, to two small islands named Attu and Kiska at the western tip of the Territory of Alaska.



Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

Photograph caption reads: “AT ATTENTION—Hitherto little publicized but always vigilant, the unpaid observers, 100,000 of them on the Pacific coast, are typified by Mrs. C.H. Spitzer and Mrs. B.H. Hill, seen in photo above on duty at San Rafael post.” *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 April 1942.

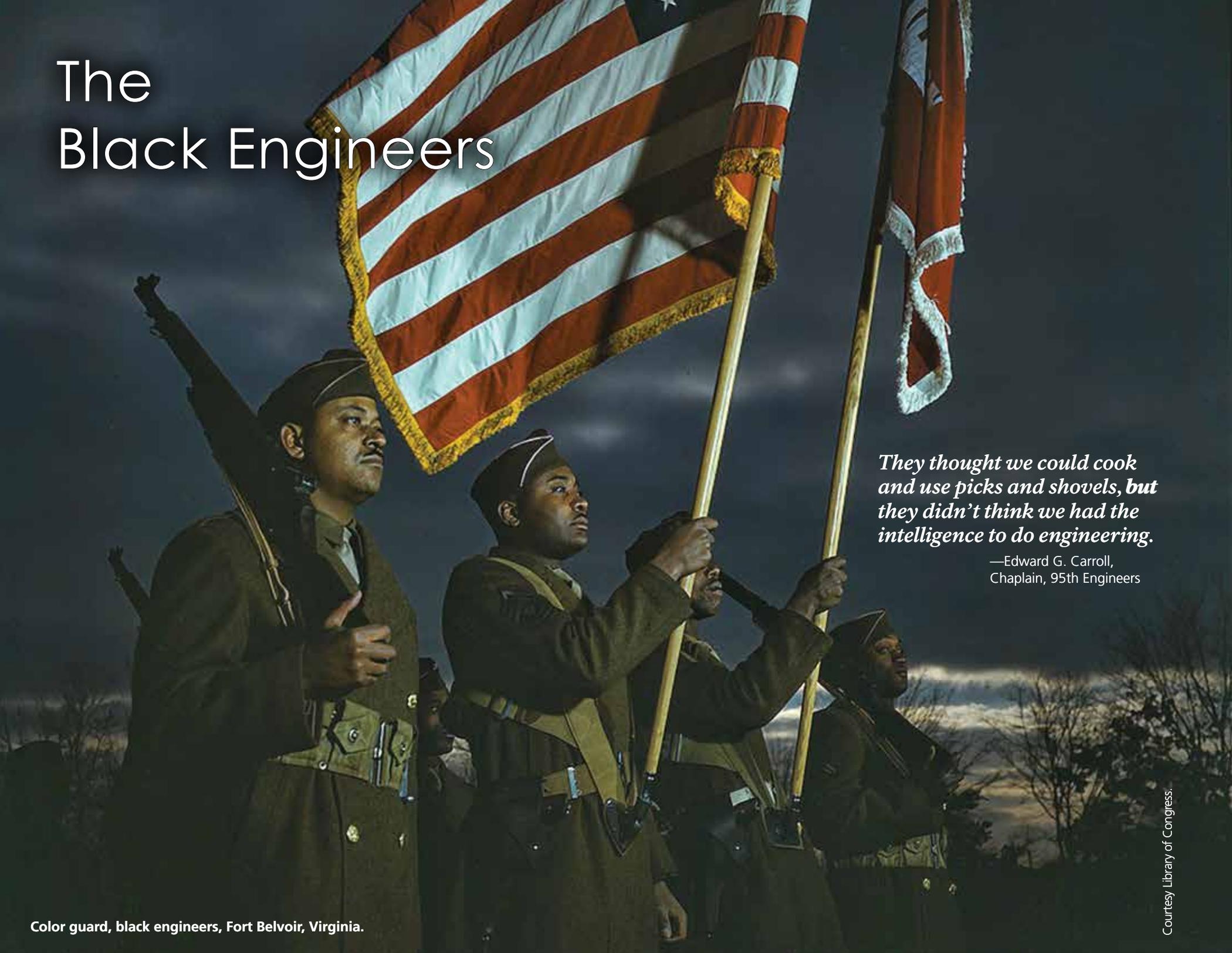
The Army and Navy were on the prowl today for an enemy aircraft carrier that sent at least two squadrons of planes in reconnaissance flights over industrial plants ringing San Francisco Bay... Army interceptor planes followed the first of the “unidentified” squadrons, but were unable to determine where they finally went. The Navy then took up the search for a plane carrier, presumably lurking off California’s coast, and possibly 500 or 600 miles at sea.

—*The Chicago Daily News*, 9 December 1941

I don’t think there’s any doubt the planes came from a carrier.

—General John L. DeWitt, Commander IX Corps, charged with defense of the western U.S. and territory of Alaska

The Black Engineers

A color guard of Black engineers in military uniforms marching with an American flag and another flag against a dark sky. The soldiers are in profile, looking forward. The American flag is the largest and most prominent, held by a soldier in the center. Another flag is visible to the right. The background is a dark, cloudy sky.

*They thought we could cook
and use picks and shovels, but
they didn't think we had the
intelligence to do engineering.*

—Edward G. Carroll,
Chaplain, 95th Engineers

[Black soldiers in Alaska] will interbreed with the Indians and Eskimos and produce an astonishingly objectionable race... which would be a problem here from now on.

—General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Commander Army Forces Alaska

[do not] go to town... [do not] say a word to the ladies.

—Paul Francis, 93rd Engineers



Courtesy Library of Congress.

Black engineers using a Caterpillar tractor to widen the nascent Alaska Highway, 1942. The road was built to supply the airfields of the "Northwest Staging Route" through which U.S. made aircraft were ferried to the Soviet Union as part of the Lend-Lease agreement.

The 93rd, 95th, 97th Regiments—the "Negro Engineers"—one-third of the 10,000 soldiers charged with cutting the Alaska Highway—1,428 miles across tundra and permafrost... along glaciers, across rivers, and through mountain passes. Construction was initiated after the Pearl Harbor attack, then spurred on by the Japanese invasion of Attu and Kiska. The 97th and their white counterparts, the 18th Engineers, raced to compete different segments. When they met at Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory, 25 October 1942, it was the 97th that was victorious. By then all "were worn down, their clothing [in tatters] their equipment unserviceable..." Both white and black had suffered extreme cold, hordes of mosquitoes, and the monotony of "miles and miles of nothing but miles and miles." But only black soldiers were forbidden to visit nearby communities. They were isolated in the wilds, forced to stay the bitter winter in tents, and worked hard, "in two reliefs on a twenty-four hour schedule." It was agreed, at project's end, they would be quickly transferred below the forty-ninth parallel so as not to intermingle with Alaskans. But General Simon Bolivar Buckner—a Kentuckian, the sole son of a Confederate General—in desperate need of engineers, ordered the 93rd to the Aleutians. There they would build at Cold Bay, Fort Glenn, then Adak. It was dubious reward for a job well done by the 93rd.

The winter of 1942-43, temperatures dropped to -60°. Paul Francis (see quote above) left two frostbitten toes on the pioneer road. Another black soldier, ordered to stay with a broken vehicle, was found frozen the next morning. Ten black soldiers who refused an order to ride in the open back of a truck were found guilty of "common sense," not "insubordination," and were exonerated by an appeals panel. Photograph at right: Frost rimes an Army engineer's face and clothing. Courtesy Alaska State Library, Fred B. Dodge Photograph Collection, ASL-P42-100.



Alaska's Japanese-Americans

I want to forget the day I lost my country. The day I lost my future. The day all of me was drained, and I felt empty. I want to forget the day we were herded like cattle into a prison camp. What did we do wrong? What was our crime? Who do we pledge allegiance to now?

—Sylvia K. Kobayashi, Japanese-American interned in Puyallup, Washington, and Minidoka, Idaho



War Relocation Authority camp, Tule Lake, California—a detention center for “security risks,” and a “segregation center” for the “disloyal” considered for deportation to Japan. LC-USW36-786

I don't want any of them here. It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen, he is still a Japanese... we must worry about the Japanese all the time until he is wiped off the map.

—General John L. DeWitt, Commander IX Corps, charged with defense of the western U.S. and territory of Alaska

A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched...

—Los Angeles Times editorial

Kawabe, Kimura, Fukuyama and Tatsuda. Beginning 7 December 1941, roughly 200 Alaska Japanese men, women, and children were rounded up and transported to internment camps in the badlands of the western United States. Immigrants and U.S. citizens alike—any person with a one-sixteenth quantum of Japanese blood. About 150 of the Alaskans were interned behind barbed wire in the “sagebrush dust bowl” of

Minidoka, Idaho. There they segregated themselves in the overcrowded barracks of Area A, Block C—a place they called the “Alaskan Way.” Some were the children of Japanese fathers and Alaska Native mothers. They had taken up the subsistence lifeway, knew only the hills and rivers of their Alaska

homeland. A fatherless boy from Wiseman had never even seen another Japanese except for his own Japanese-Eskimo face in the mirror. Nonetheless he was interred as a risk to the security of the nation. Today, ten Japanese internment camps are preserved as National Park Service historical landmarks, “reminders that this nation failed in its most sacred duty to protect its citizens...”



Japanese-American G.I. (left) interrogating Japanese survivor of Banzai attack (center), Attu Island. Upwards of fifty Japanese-American soldiers took part in the U.S. invasion of Attu acting as translators and interrogators. It is said each was assigned his own Caucasian bodyguard, as they were “...in double jeopardy—a target of the enemy and a target of their own men.” Japanese-American soldiers served in the U.S. Army in both the Pacific and European theaters, shedding their blood while their families remained incarcerated in their own homeland. Minidoka Camp, Idaho accounted for one quarter of all Japanese-American military volunteers and suffered the highest casualty rate. Hawaii, where the high population of Japanese-Americans made internment camps impractical (largely because of their importance to the economy) accounted for the majority of volunteers. “Questioning” by Edward Laning. Courtesy Eleventh Air Force Office of History.



Japanese-American mother presenting her G.I. son a *senninbari*—a protective talisman worn into battle. “In Camp Jerome (Arkansas)” by Henry Sugimoto, 1943.



“Nisei [Japanese-American] Soldiers Returning the Flag of 442nd to the President [Truman]” by Henry Sugimoto, circa 1965. The 442nd Regiment was the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in the history of American warfare. Roughly 14,000 men served, earning 9,486 Purple Hearts, eight Presidential Unit Citations, and twenty-one Medals of Honor.

EUREKA

We took the Beaches with Higgins Boats...Africa! Solomons! Channel! New Guinea! Attu!

In foreground—a Higgins early model Eureka landing craft with rounded bow. The lack of a forward ramp forced troops to disembark over the gunwales exposing them to greater enemy fire. These Eureka were used solely by the British, primarily in commando operations. Background—a M3 Light Tank "Stuart" rolls off a Higgins LCM (landing craft, mechanized). No tanks were lightered ashore during the U.S. amphibious assaults on Attu and Kiska islands.



Andrew Higgins... is the man who won the war for us... If Higgins had not designed and built those LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel), we never could have landed over an open beach. The whole strategy of the war would have been different.

—Supreme Allied Commander,
Dwight D. Eisenhower



Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

Verso of above photograph reads: BEYOND THE FOG--BATTLE WITH THE JAP[ANESE] ON ATTU--Pushing their way through slate seas and fog, from transports, [Higgins] landing boats bearing the fighting men... to battle from a destroyer which guards the invasion fleet. This is one of the first U.S. Navy photos of actual fighting scenes at Attu.

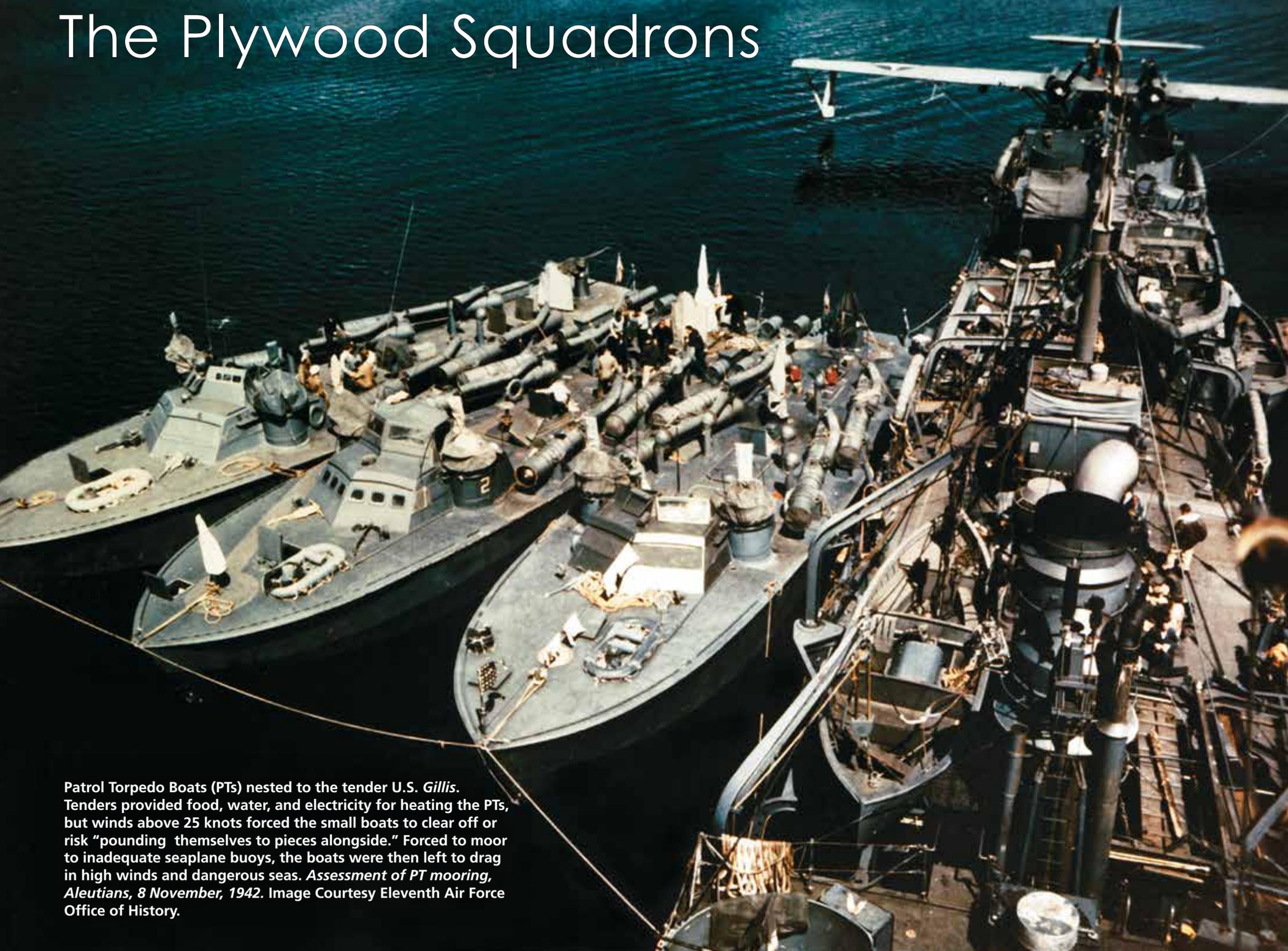


Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

Verso of above photograph reads: OLD GLORY WAVES FROM JAP[ANESE] LANDING BOAT--The American flag is prominently displayed from this captured Jap[anese] landing boat which a group of Americans are bringing ashore on the beach at Massacre Bay on Attu, where American troops have started the final cleanup of the Jap[anese]-occupied island in the Aleutians. (This Daihatsu-Class, "large motorized boat," was used by the Japanese during the Second Sino-Japanese War through World War II [1937-1945]).

Andrew Jackson Higgins—a "rough-cut, hot tempered Irishman" ... a Louisiana lumberman turned boat builder. In the 1930s Higgins began making wooden, shallow-draft craft for fur trappers and oil prospectors running the Louisiana swamps. These men needed a boat that could be put aground, then retract itself from the bank without damage. To withstand such forces, Higgins formed a "spoonbill-bow" of one hand-carved piece of pine, making the bow the strongest part of the boat. Next, a fabricating error distorted the original hull design. This "error" forced aerated water from under the boat at midship, allowing only solid water to reach the propeller at the stern. The propeller now bit into water not air (cavitation). Boat speed increased to 20 mph, while the craft drew only 10 inches. Higgins named the boat "Eureka." Believing the Allies would need thousands of such amphibious craft, Higgins began in earnest to sell his design to the Navy, but it was the Marines, who needed to put men ashore at beachheads, that wanted the Eureka. The final missing piece of the craft came into place in 1937 when Higgins was shown a photograph of a Japanese ramped boat (Daihatsu) offloading vehicles at the mouth of the Yangtze River. To quickly fill an order of 26 of these "LCVPs," Higgins' workers built a complete spoon-bill bow Eureka, then cut off the bow and installed a hinged ramp. It was this variation of the Higgins boat that carried out the amphibious landings at Attu and Kiska islands during the Aleutian Campaign.

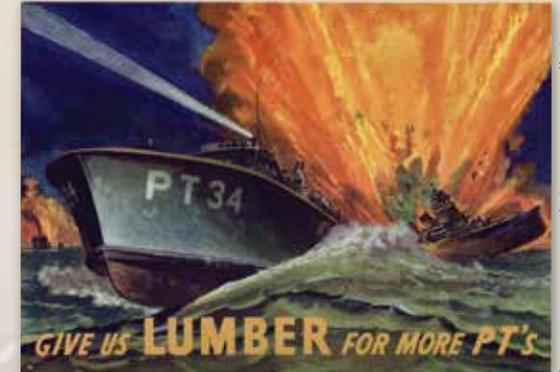
The Plywood Squadrons



Patrol Torpedo Boats (PTs) nested to the tender U.S. *Gillis*. Tenders provided food, water, and electricity for heating the PTs, but winds above 25 knots forced the small boats to clear off or risk "pounding themselves to pieces alongside." Forced to moor to inadequate seaplane buoys, the boats were then left to drag in high winds and dangerous seas. *Assessment of PT mooring, Aleutians, 8 November, 1942*. Image Courtesy Eleventh Air Force Office of History.

“...side planking from deck to waterline smashed in, nine tranverse frames broken...watertight bulkhead smashed, four by six foot section of deck carried away, forward living compartment taking on water, the keel...broken forward... the rudder controls damaged beyond repair.”

—Damage assessment of PT 22 after being rammed by PT 24, 6 January 1943 in the vicinity of Unga Island. Conditions: night, no moonlight, visibility very limited, wind gusts to 40 knots, temperature 15 degrees, deck of PT 22 iced over, stern light extinguished by ocean spray. Four Pt boats attempted to keep in Vee formation by flashing spotlight at five minute intervals.



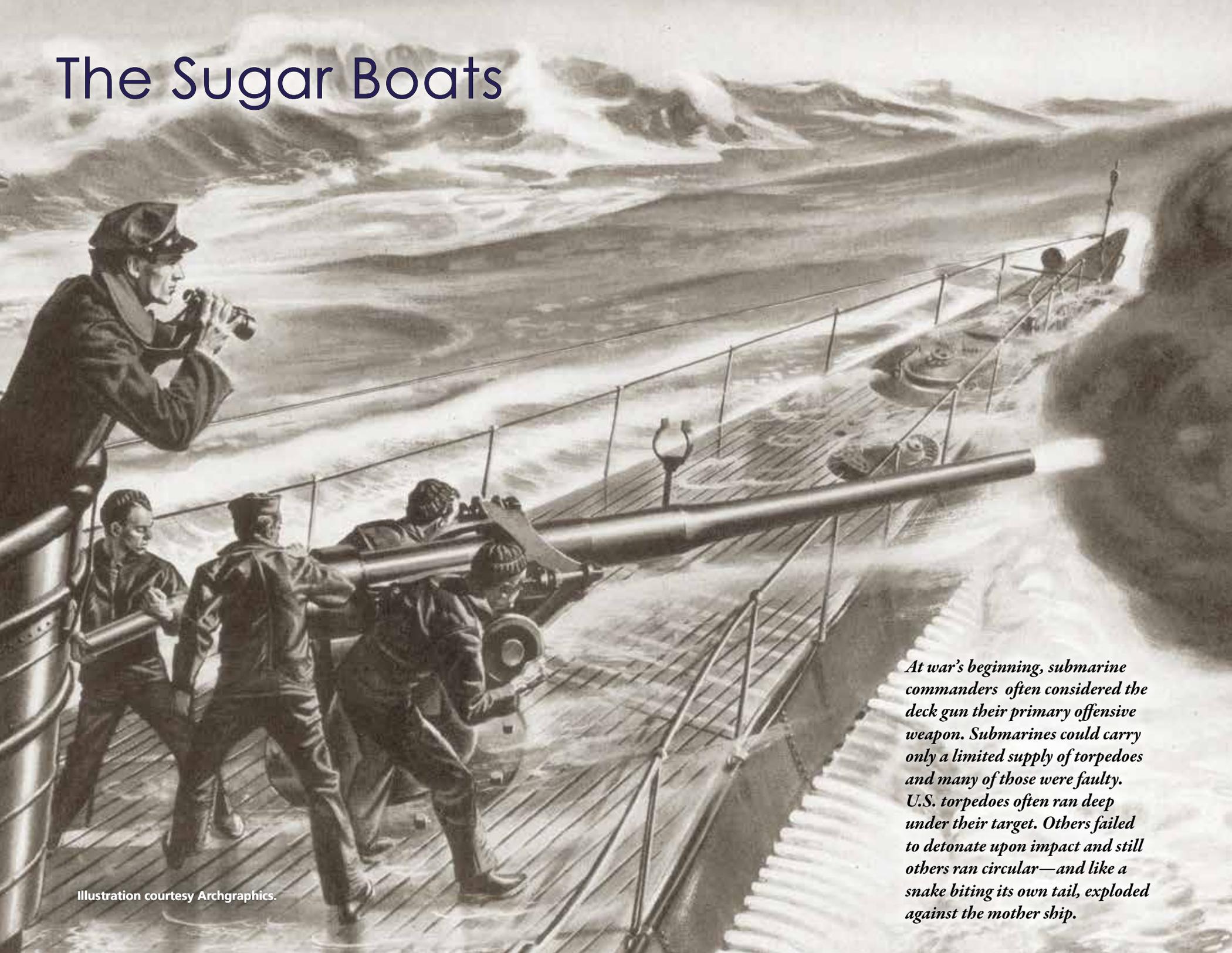
U.S. propaganda poster, 1943.

A sharp “v-shaped” hull—a racing boat hull constructed of Mexican mahogany secured by thousands of rivets and screws. Three Packard Motor Car modified aircraft engines—taken together the same punch as those on a B-17 bomber. Speeds up to fifty knots. Four torpedoes, machine guns, cannon... whatever the crew could scavenge and bolt to the deck. In time, these boats would become night fighters in the South Pacific. Strike fast against Japanese destroyers and cargo craft. Metals were in short supply and these small wooden boats were cheap to make. Some would say they and their crews were “expendable.”

In the Aleutians, in sub-freezing temperatures, flying ocean spray could coat the topsides of PTs with ice four inches thick. Searchlights, compass, torpedoes, machine guns, and cannon were rendered useless; radio antennae snapped. Crew conning the boats were rimmed with ice making navigation impossible. And below, the hull was slick with frozen condensation so that sailors had no footing. Radio receivers were shorted, water systems frozen, and faulty mufflers choked boats with carbon monoxide gas. “Plywood coffins” some called the PTs. These boats would bravely wage battle in the Aleutians, but their enemy would not be the Japanese, but the Bering Sea. Their victory was survival.

Verso of above photograph reads: On patrol off Attu. A fast U.S. Navy PT boat is half submerged in spray as it guts through a heavy sea.

The Sugar Boats



At war's beginning, submarine commanders often considered the deck gun their primary offensive weapon. Submarines could carry only a limited supply of torpedoes and many of those were faulty. U.S. torpedoes often ran deep under their target. Others failed to detonate upon impact and still others ran circular—and like a snake biting its own tail, exploded against the mother ship.

Heavy sea over bridge. All hands on bridge bruised and battered. Officer on Deck suffered broken nose. Solid stream of water down hatch for 65 seconds. Put high pressure pump on control room bridges; dry after two hours... Barometer 29.60; thirty knot wind (moderate gale).

—The log of the S-23, 13 February 1942, seventh day at sea on her first war patrol out of Dutch Harbor. After jettisoning torn sections of her superstructure, the sub continued patrol of the great circle route from Japan. She would be at Dutch Harbor on 3 June to off-load injured crewmen when Japanese carrier aircraft attacked.



Mother's Day

July 5, 1942, in her first action at sea, the Gato-Class USS *Growler* closed on three Japanese destroyers in Kiska Harbor. Her first torpedo went awry, but three others struck home, severely damaging the *Kasumi* and *Shiranui* and sinking the *Arare*. This single action accounted for the majority of enemy vessels damaged or sunk during Aleutian submarine operations in 1942. In 1943, *Growler* was refit in Queensland and nicknamed the *Kangaroo Express*, her bow art—kangaroos. On her 11th patrol, 1944, out of Australia, she was sunk in a wolf pack attack on a Japanese convoy. There is no conclusive evidence for the loss of the *Growler*. She may have been depth-charged or fallen victim to the circular run of one of her own torpedoes. Image: USS *Growler*, May 1943. Painting by McClelland Barclay courtesy the Navy Department Library.

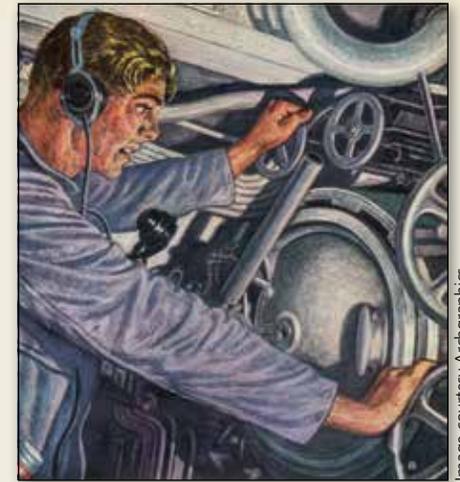
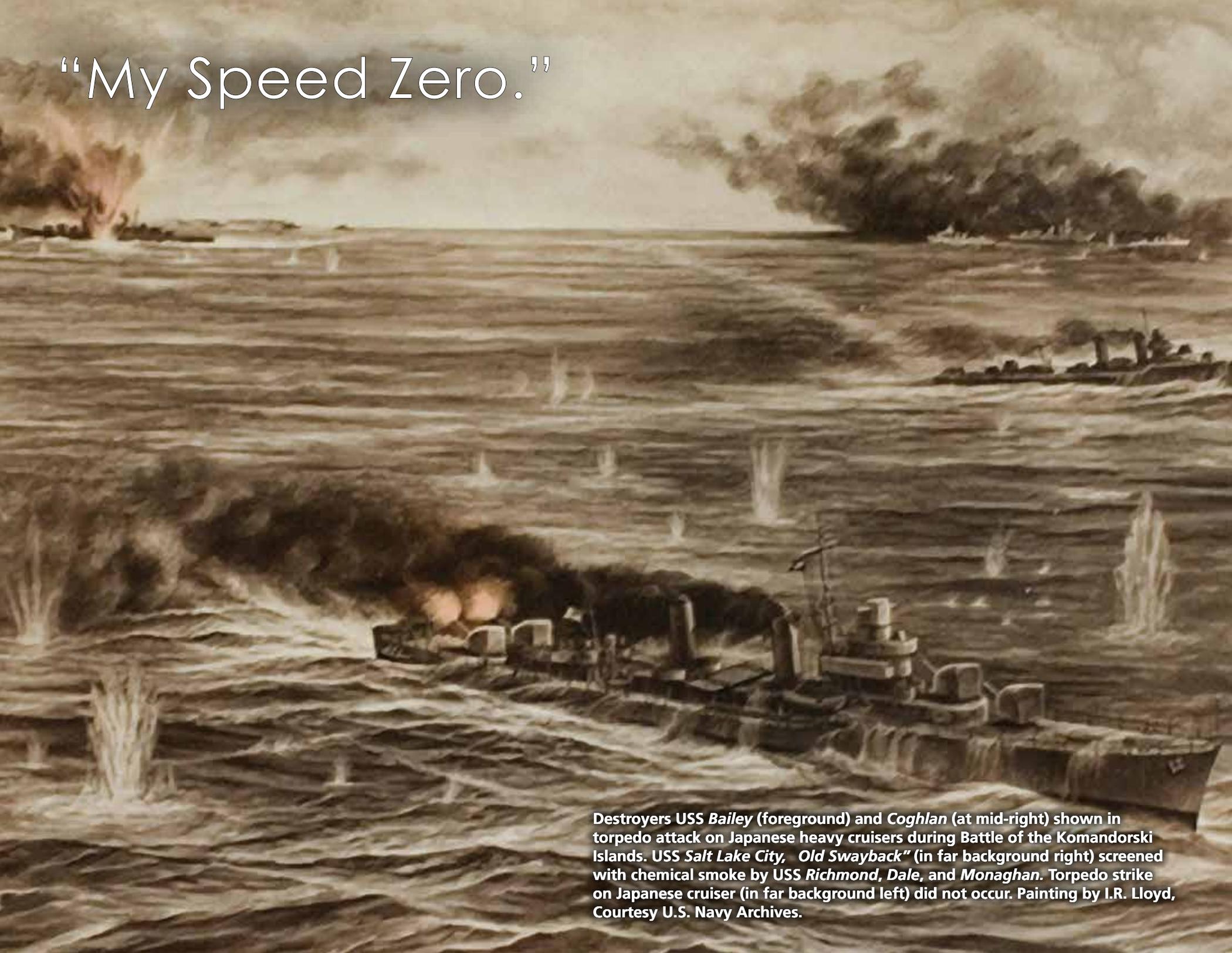


Image courtesy Archgraphics.

S Class boats carried 12 “tin fish”—eight stored in the torpedo room and four ready to run in the tubes.

The S Class—“Sugar Boats” the submariners called them. Laid down in the early 1900s, they measured only some two hundred feet in length, twenty or so at the beam. Designed as offshore patrol vessels charged with protecting the eastern seaboard of the United States, the S Class were pressed into service in the Aleutians in 1942—a desperate stopgap against Japanese naval aggression. These small undersea boats were never meant to work open blue water like the Bering Sea. There they were tossed about like driftwood, superstructures torn away by breaking waves, control planes and propellers damaged, rudders fouled. Even at periscope depth, the boats’ fatigued hulls leaked. Seawater shipped aboard shorted electric lines, the cables burning red like candlewicks. Flooded batteries put off poisonous chlorine gas, driving all crewmen topside in heavy, broaching seas—the ship left to follow its own course unmanned. And the battered submarines dove only to hide or do battle. Submerged, the air was a sour perfume of exhausted oxygen, sweat, and diesel fuel. From the steel walls a steady, strange rain fell, condensation from body heat and breath. Surface sailors both feared and mocked the submarine, calling them “sewer pipes, pig boats.” They were likened to assassins striking in darkness with a knife, then quietly slipping away undetected.

“My Speed Zero.”



Destroyers *USS Bailey* (foreground) and *Coghlan* (at mid-right) shown in torpedo attack on Japanese heavy cruisers during Battle of the Komandorski Islands. *USS Salt Lake City, Old Swayback* (in far background right) screened with chemical smoke by *USS Richmond, Dale, and Monaghan*. Torpedo strike on Japanese cruiser (in far background left) did not occur. Painting by I.R. Lloyd, Courtesy U.S. Navy Archives.

This day the hand of Divine Providence lay over the ship.

—USS *Salt Lake City* log, 26 March 1943, Ens. F.R. Floyd.

Dawn, 26 March 1943, 100 miles south of the Russian Komandorski Islands, the Japanese Fifth Fleet and U.S. Task Group 16.6 met by happenstance. Outgunned, the light ships of the U.S. Task Group attempted to retire, covered by the 8-inch guns of the heavy cruiser *Salt Lake City*. *Old Swayback* struck first, sending two shells into the bridge of the Japanese flagship, the heavy cruiser *Nachi*, at twenty miles distance. But after roughly three and one-half hours of continuous battle, *Swayback*, her hull breached, boilers flooded, lay dead in the water. U.S. destroyers hid her in smoke, then in desperation made a torpedo attack on the Japanese heavy cruisers. USS *Bailey* closed to within 10,000 yards, then launched a spread of five torpedoes. In turn she was hit twice by Japanese fire. Believing the battle lost, the sailors of Task Group 16.6 watched in disbelief as the Japanese fleet suddenly retired westward, its ammunition nearly spent, and left the battle.



Photograph courtesy National Archives.

Officers in the ward room of the *Salt Lake City* plot a tract chart (post engagement) of the Battle of the Komandorskis, 29 March 1943.

At 10:00 am, roughly one and one-half hours into battle, the first armor-piercing shell struck, tearing a hole in her hull, flooding the engine room . . . the propeller shaft. Another shell hit the forward main deck, 260 pounds of high explosive, tearing down through decks, exiting below the waterline without detonation—a dud. Somehow the USS *Salt Lake City*—*Old Swayback*—kept up 30 knots of steam . . . two heavy Japanese cruisers stalking 10 miles back, “laddering” salvos, trying to find their gunnery range. Preternaturally, the *Swayback*’s Captain, Bertram Rodgers, swung the heavy US cruiser from starboard to port and back again, “chasing the salvos,” searching for safe waters amidst the giant spouts kicked up by the Japanese bombardment—at times 15 shells fired in unison. Rodgers was fighting a “retiring action.” In retreat he could only bring to bear *Swayback*’s two after turrets—Rodgers five guns in answer to a Japanese broadside of twenty. And the continuous percussive blast of *Swayback*’s after guns tore loose her own rudder stops, then ammunition and powder for the guns grew exhausted. At 10:59, *Old Swayback* was struck again, amidships. At 11:03 another serious hit to the hull, rupturing oil tanks, bulkheads. At 11:50, white smoke poured from the cruiser’s stacks—sign that the ship’s boilers were extinguished by sea water. The signal officer raised “My Speed Zero,” as *Swayback* lay dead in the water. It is said, a Japanese shell carried the signal flag away a second after it was raised.

Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

It has been estimated some 2000 shells were fired at *Old Swayback* during the Battle of the Komandorski Islands, but only four struck home. In the end, the heavy cruiser steamed away under her own power. She would fight for the remainder of WWII, then in July 1946, the ship would be anchored, “speed zero,” off Bikini Atoll as a test vessel. *Old Swayback* survived two atomic bomb bursts . . . then finally sunk, 25 May 1948, as a gunnery target hull.

The Territorial Guard

Major Marston's "Tundra Army"



"Sign up for the Alaska Territorial Guard at the School on Little Diomedede Island" by Henry Varnum Poor. Major Marston stands in background, center, under U.S. flag. Image used with permission of the artist's son, Peter Poor.

I called upon you...to organize, to arm, to prepare to defend your home, your children, your women...every able-bodied [Native Alaskan] joined on first call...I salute you, the tundra army for what you have done...your willingness to do your part in defending the shores of Alaska.

—Army Air Corps Major “Muktuk” Marston, 2 September 1945, V. J. Day, Nome, Alaska



“Two Kotzebue Eskimos (Alaska Territorial National Guard)” by Henry Varnum Poor. Image used with permission of the artist’s son, Peter Poor.

From Nome to Metlakatla and west to the Pribilofs, over 6,000 Native Alaskans enlisted in Major “Muktuk” Marston’s “tundra army”—the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG). There were 78 guardsmen on the Aleutian island of St. Paul, 46 on St. George. There were guardsmen on Belkofski, on Unga, and at King Cove. Native men and women alike, aged 12 to 80, served in the

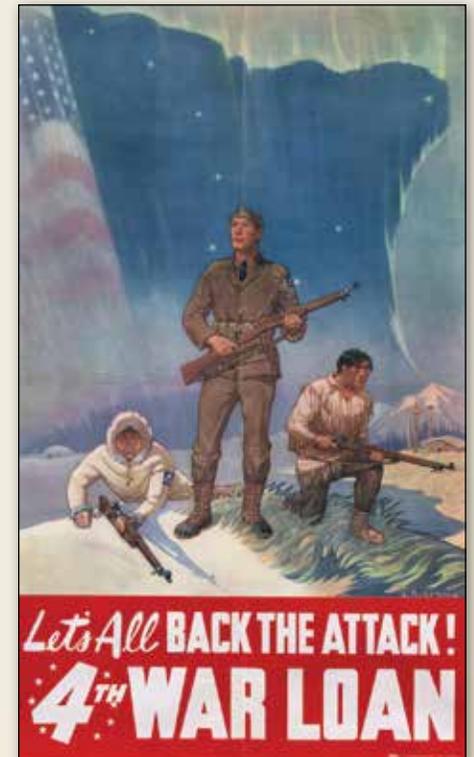
defense of the coast of Alaska. They were issued World War I uniforms and single-shot Springfield rifles. There was little ammunition and no pay.

In 1947, the guardsmen were disbanded without government recognition. Even so, most members continued to drill and patrol. Former guardsmen served on

the Alaska Statehood Committee and/or as delegates to the Alaska Constitution Convention and were instrumental in obtaining statehood status for Alaska in 1959. In 2000, Alaska Senator Ted Stevens sponsored a bill to issue Honorable Discharges to all members of the ATG. It is thought those still alive now number only a few.



“Major M. R. Marston, Kotzebue, Alaska, July 22, 1943” by Henry Varnum Poor. Image used with permission of the artist’s son, Peter Poor.



Alaska Territorial Guard recruitment poster.

Castner's Cutthroats

So we had to use little rubber rafts to go ashore... All we had was a little oar about three feet long. We had a rough time going ashore. Offshore wind, cold...

Drafin "Buck" Delkettie, Alaska Scout



"Castner's Cutthroats," the Alaska Scouts, landing on Attu. This is the only known combat photograph of the Scouts in operation in the Aleutians. Courtesy Alaska Veterans Museum Archives.



Alaska Scouts in the mountains. The men wear heavy, rubber waders, their faces blackened against snow glare. At left bottom are two "Trapper Nelson" packs with folded sleeping bags at top. Courtesy Alaska Veterans Museum Archives.

We taught [the Army instructor] how to do things our way. How to take bear out of the woods, how to make our own snowshoes, how to go into the woods and catch your own food, how to just plain survive...

—Drafin "Buck" Delkettie, Native Alaskan Scout, "Castner's Cutthroats"

Alaska Natives, sourdough prospectors, hunters, trappers, and fishermen. Sixty-five men selected by intelligence officer Colonel Lawrence V. Castner as the Army's reconnaissance scouts in the Aleutians. They were hardened, dangerous men—"Bad Whiskey Red," "Aleut Pete,"

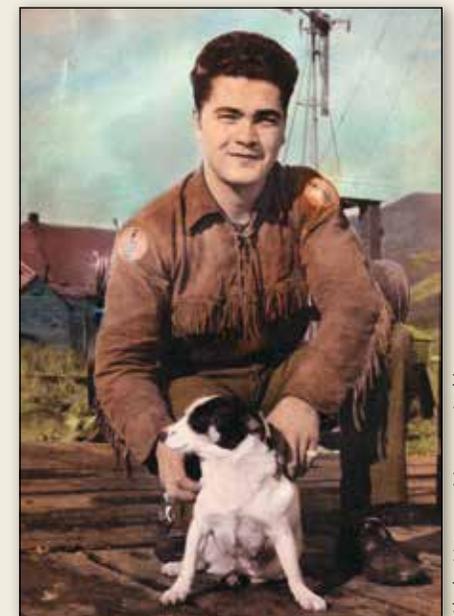
and "Waterbucket Ben." They chose their own weapons, their own "uniforms," and foul-weather gear. Their leadership was based on pragmatism, not rank. Whoever had the most experience in a situation, he was the one who led. The "Cutthroats" scouted Adak, Amchitka, Attu, and Kiska,

coming ashore in rubber rafts off-loaded from submarines, amphibious aircraft, and ship. Small parties of men, five or so in strength—an unorthodox army—lightly-armed, mobile, living off the land and searching out the Japanese.



Alaska Veterans Museum Archives.

Alaska Scout Drafin "Buck" Delkettie. In March 2007, roughly 62 years after his service ended, Buck was awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Bronze Star, Good Conduct Medal and the World War II Victory Medal. He passed away later that same month.



Alaska Veterans Museum Archives.

Alaska Scout William "Billy" Buck in fringed hide jacket. Unit Patch on Buck's right shoulder is that of the Kiska Island invasion force *Corletts Long Knives*.

The Thugs



I still think with special horror how little history for the Force there would have been had the Jap[anese] still been on Kiska. I think few realize how close to a suicidal assignment our part of the operation was.

—Member, First Special Service Force



"Patrol Dismissing Camp [Kiska]" by E.J. Hughes. CWM 19870003-007. Beaverbrook Collection of War Art. © Canadian War Museum.

They came to Fort Harrison, Billings, Montana in summer uniform—Bermuda shorts and knee socks... in Highlanders' plaid kilts, sporrans, and bright white spats. They strutted down the street, and the local cowboys in jeans and big hats stared in disbelief. But the Billings girls loved them. *Canadians*—all volunteers in the First Special Service Force—the brainchild of an eccentric Brit named Geoffrey

Pyke. Pyke (known equally for genius and bad hygiene) envisioned an elite commando unit dropped into Norway to attack oil facilities and hydroelectric plants. Problem was, he hadn't figured how to get the men out afterwards... In Helena, the Canadians met their Yank counterparts in the Force, the Yanks proud of their reputation as jailbirds, thieves, and murderers—"Thugs." After some "misunderstandings," Canadian and

Yank recognized each other as fighting men. Together, they were worked harder than any other army unit—trained to parachute, to ski, to be experts in the fine art of high explosives. They were saboteurs looking for something to blow up, but the Norwegians had bowed out, fearing the Force would destroy the entire infrastructure of Norway. Finally the brass settled on the Aleutians, but the Force would find only frustration in the invasion of Kiska.



"Corporal in Battle Order" by E.J. Hughes.

These men... these erstwhile undisciplined brawlers and malcontents, these formerly undistinguished farm boys, teachers and choir singers... had been conditioned to look upon the Force as their home, the Forcemen their only peers...

—*The Devil's Brigade*; Authors:
Robert H. Adelman, George Walton

We had our screwballs—maybe more than our share. Screwballs they may have been, but they were damn good screwballs and fighting screwballs. I was proud to be part of the Thugs. The enlisted men were superb (U.S. and Canadian), every damn one of them.

—Colonel Robert M. Stuart

The 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment

“...wax on their skis
and bacon grease on their cheeks.”*

Tyrolean traverse over gorge with City of Unalaska in background (note red-roofed church), Instructor Sergeant Bob Niss, 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment, North Pacific Combat School (NPCS). The NPCS trained army infantry units in “amphibious, mountain and ‘muskeg’ combat techniques.” Photograph by Charles C. Bradley. Image courtesy Denver Public Library.

*Peter Shelton, *Climb to Conquer*

“Too beautiful a place to die.

—Harry Porschman, 87th Mountain Infantry, Kiska

We were exhausted, disgusted, and ashamed. And we knew we’d done all the [friendly fire] killing ourselves.

—Roger Eddy, 87th Mountain Infantry, Kiska

The 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment—the “ski club,” some called them in derision. At first membership was select and rarefied—Ivy League boys, ski champions, and top athletes. But in time the regiment would come to include all types of “rugged outdoor men...mountaineers, timber cruisers, (and) cowboys.” Before daybreak 15 August 1943, 3000 of the 87th put ashore Kiska Island ready for battle with the Japanese. Loaded with near 90-pound packs, they scaled an almost vertical cliff face on the island’s northern shore, then

pushed to the top of Kiska’s 1800 foot mountain spine. The division arrived at their objective mid-morning, day one—no Japanese sighted. But during the night confusion descended. “There was a lot of rifle fire. Every time a helmet poked up through the fog, everyone let go...” In the morning, 17 U.S. soldiers were found dead, three times that many wounded—all from “friendly fire.” As tragic as the event was, U.S. brass had estimated nearly 100 percent casualties for the regiment in actual combat on Kiska, but nobody had told the ski troops that.



Cover, *The Saturday Evening Post*—ski trooper, 10th Mountain Division [formerly 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment]. Painting by Mead Schaeffer, 1943.

Courtesy Denver Public Library



Sergeant Walter Prager, 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment, Bald Mountain, Sun Valley, Idaho. Image taken during production of an MGM Army mountain warfare training film.

“Explosion” and the Dogs of Kiska

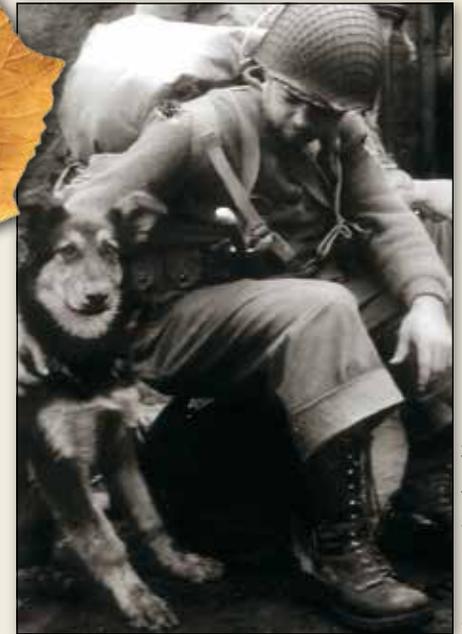


A dog, at middle right,
greet's Allied troops landing
unopposed on Kiska Island.
“Kiska Raid” by Edward Lanin.
Courtesy U.S. Army Center of
Military History.

We dropped one hundred thousand propaganda leaflets [on Kiska], but those dogs couldn't read.

—Eleventh Air Force Pilot

Right: U.S. propaganda paper leaflet with Japanese text. This object (with translation) may be seen at the Aleutian World War II Visitor Center, Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Courtesy Museum of the Aleutians. Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.



Explosion reunited with Allied troops. An Army censor has scratched the "Corletts Long Knives" shoulder patch from the soldier's shoulder.

TALES OF KISKA

*O here's to mighty ComNorPac
Whose kingdom lay at cold Adak
Whose reign was known in fame for fog
And capture of two couple dogs*

It was not the Japanese, but a handful of dogs that met the 7,300 Allied troops wading ashore at Kiska Island 15 August 1943. A brown and white mutt, tail wagging, greeted Ensign William C. Jones. Stunned, Jones recognized the dog as *Explosion*—the same pup he had given to the ten-man Kiska U.S. Navy weather crew 15 months prior. Born at Dutch Harbor the night a small dynamite shack detonated, *Explosion* remained true to her name. Cared for by the Japanese after her owners were taken prisoner, she had survived the relentless Allied bombardment of Kiska.

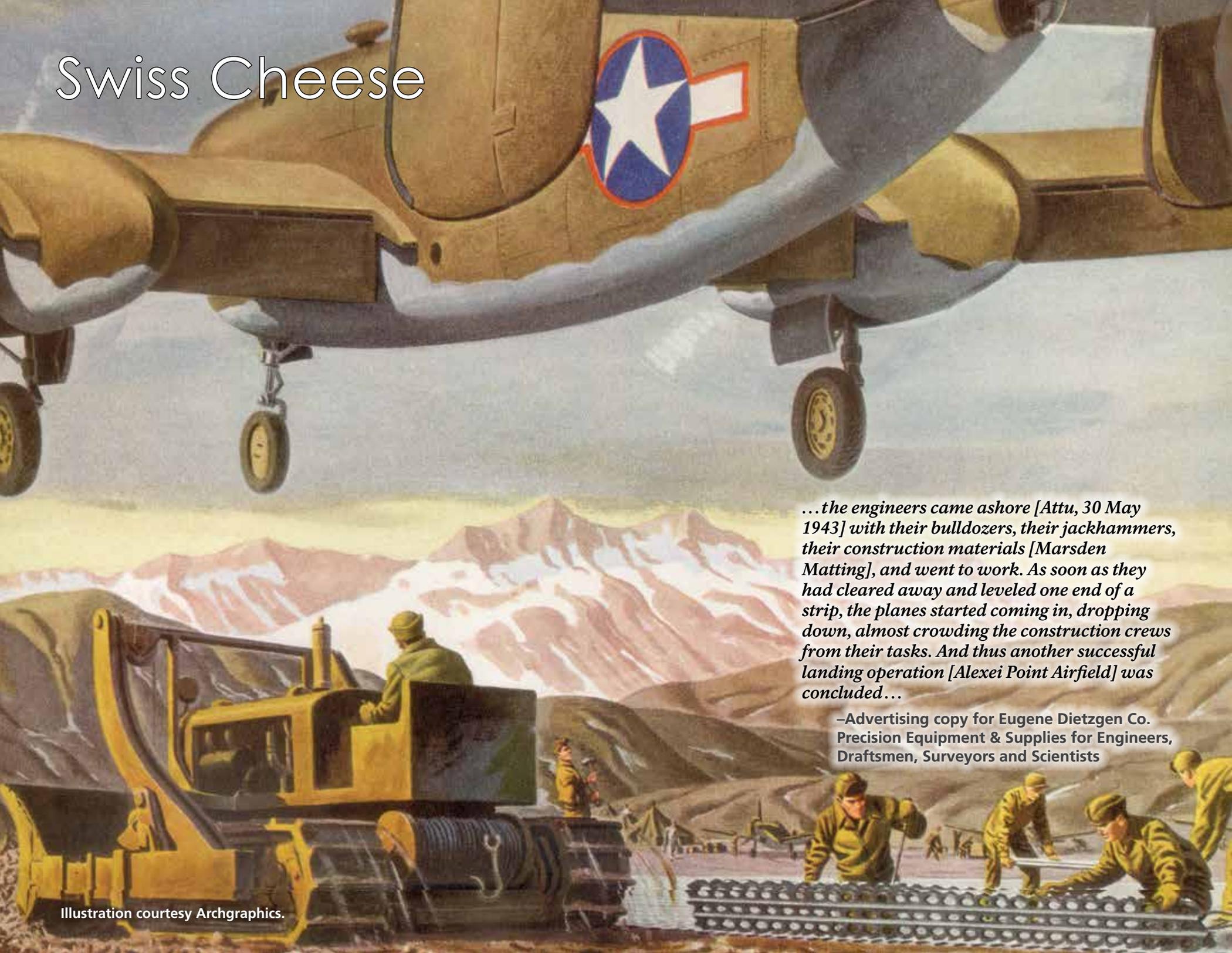


7 June 1942, the Japanese invaded Kiska. Within days, they captured nine crewmen of the U.S. Aerological Detail stationed on the island. Only Petty Officer William C. House, aged 29, escaped. He climbed into the mountains and found a cave by a lake and streams. Here he stayed fifty days, eating grass, scavenging shellfish and anglerworms. His body withered to eighty pounds, his thighs no bigger round than a child's arm. 28 July, House tied a cloth scrap to a stick and surrendered. All members of the Aerological Detail survived the war as POWs. Chief Petty Officer William C. House, top row, third from left. The detail's pet, the dog *Explosion*, bottom row.

Courtesy National Archives.

Courtesy National Archives.

Swiss Cheese



...the engineers came ashore [Attu, 30 May 1943] with their bulldozers, their jackhammers, their construction materials [Marsden Matting], and went to work. As soon as they had cleared away and leveled one end of a strip, the planes started coming in, dropping down, almost crowding the construction crews from their tasks. And thus another successful landing operation [Alexei Point Airfield] was concluded...

*—Advertising copy for Eugene Dietzgen Co.
Precision Equipment & Supplies for Engineers,
Draftsmen, Surveyors and Scientists*

Gentlemen, we want you to build a good portable airport. It must be strong, light... safe and inexpensive. It must be so simple that it can be laid on any fairly level piece of land with a few days work. It must be so foolproof that if some parts are lost, it will still be useful. It must be safe for any type of airplane, under any weather conditions. It must be so light that it can be transported swiftly and easily to any spot.

—U.S. Army Air Corps

...the year's greatest achievement in aviation warfare...

—General "Hap" Arnold, U.S. Army Air Corps, commenting on the "Marston Strip" airfield used during war games in Camp Mackall, North Carolina, 1941



Unloading Marsden Matting, Amchitka Island, 12 October 1943. Roughly 2 million tons of Marsden* Matting was produced during the 1940s. A truly utilitarian product, war surplus matting was used for road and bridge construction in the U.S.; by early southeastern U.S. auto racing teams as track; and in the Pacific, particularly Papua New Guinea, as fencing and roadway barriers stretching in some cases for miles. In at least one instance a section of matting, canted upright, was reused to store wine bottles in France. Photograph courtesy National Archives.

*"Marsden" is generally accepted as a misspelling of Marston, North Carolina where the first large scale test of the matting took place November 1941.



Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

This segment of Marsden Mat was photographed on Gambell Street in Anchorage, Alaska. Painted rust-red, set upright and welded to support poles, it serves as part of the property boundary for a local bar.

Pierced* Steel Planking (PSP), Marsden Matting—"swiss cheese." Each metal sheet of portable runway weighed roughly 66 pounds, measured 10 feet 15 inches on the long side. Cape Field at Fort Glenn, Umnak Island, required an initial 80,000 sections to complete. It was the first airfield laid in the Aleutians—expedient, crude, dangerous. The matting could bounce landing aircraft 30 feet in the air; tear the guts out of a damaged plane coming in nose down or trying to belly land—the spark of metal on metal igniting ruptured fuel tanks. Under the wheels of heavy bombers the flexible mats rode up in steel waves. Nonetheless, in the Aleutian Theater, where nature and topography, above all, dictated the methods of war, Marsden Matting was quickly adopted. It would serve the Army Air Force well in its frenzied push westward in the Aleutian Chain—the foundation of airstrips at Adak and Amchitka. So successful was the matting it saw continued use in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Even early NASCAR racing gave the mat a nod.

* Each plank was pierced 87 times, reducing weight and promoting drainage, a critical feature in the wet Aleutian environment.

Feeding the Bear*

The P-39 Airacobra



*Title taken from *Feeding the Bear: American Aid to the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* by Hubert van Tuyl.

P-39 Airacobras support Russian ground troops during the battle for Stalingrad. "Stalingrad Story" *Bellringer* magazine, August 1943. Courtesy Niagara Aerospace Museum collection, Niagara Falls, NY.

We must be the great arsenal of democracy.

—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, architect of the Lend-Lease program, 29 December 1940

If we see that Germany is winning, we ought to help Russia, and if we see Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many [of each other] as possible.

—Senator (later President) Harry S. Truman, June 1941



Lend-Lease U.S. aircraft, like the Airacobra, that were bound for Russia were ferried from the Lower-Forty-eight through Canada to Fairbanks, Alaska. There Russian pilots took the controls. Nearly 8000 aircraft were delivered to the Soviets by way of the Alaska-Siberia Air Route, with only 133 lost to weather or pilot error.

P-39 configured to Aleutian Campaign specs. Courtesy United States Air Force Museum.

The U.S. made Bell P-39 Airacobra. The Brits didn't want it, Lend-Lease or not. After one combat mission, the RAF rejected the aircraft, dumping their P-39s on the Soviets. The USAAF in Europe declined the fighter as well. The plane literally sucked for air above 20,000 feet—the rarefied atmosphere where heavy bombers and their fighter escorts

flew. The P-39 was relegated to secondary theaters—the Southwest Pacific, the Aleutians, and as Lend-Lease, to Russia. The Soviets loved the *Kobrushka*, the “little cobra”...loved the 37mm Oldsmobile cannon mounted like a stinger in the propeller hub, and the machine guns on fuselage and wings. Fired in unison, the P-39's heavy weaponry

could disintegrate German aircraft in low-altitude dogfights. Soviet P-39 pilots scored the highest number of individual kills attributed to any U.S. fighter type during WWII. President Roosevelt fed the hungry *Russian Bear* a diet of nearly 5000 P-39s. Even Joseph Stalin admitted, “Without American production the United Nations could never have won the war.”



Russian ace Alexander Pokryshkin, credited with 59 German kills. Awarded three times the gold star of “Hero of the Soviet Union,” Pokryshkin was shunned by the Soviet Air Force at war's end. His transgression: preference for the U.S.-made P-39 over Soviet-designed fighter aircraft. Painting by S. Priskein.

In the Aleutians, Airacobras of the 54th Fighter Group flew seventy-five sorties against Kiska, strafing ground targets and antiaircraft and providing top cover for bombers. The group was credited with downing ten Japanese aircraft and awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation. In the end however, the P-39 fell victim to its unique tricycle landing gear which could not stand up to the Aleutian's primitive airfields. Early in December 1942, the Airacobras retired gracefully from the Aleutian Theater.

Death Stalked the 54th*



"Crash Landing" (P-38, Adak Island) by Odgen Pleissner.

*Title taken from *The Aleutian Warriors* by John Haile Cloe.

Ground crews were having to lift numb and exhausted [P-38] pilots from their cockpits. The constant specter of death and the . . . exhausting seven-and eight hour missions . . . watching the fuel indicator needle steadily move towards empty, were rapidly aging what once used to be young and carefree boys. Pilots complained of severe headaches and nervous apprehension.

—John Haile Cloe, *The Aleutian Warriors*

Those pea shooters [P-38 pilots] are a bunch of blood-thirsty sons of guns.

—Diary entry, Lieutenant Billy Wheeler



Squadron patch: <http://www.asisbiz.com/usaf/images/USAAF-343FG54FS-0A.jpg>



<http://worldwarwings.com>



P-38s of the 54th Fighter Squadron in formation over Aleutian coast.
Photograph by Col. Kent Ramsey.

The Japanese called the P-38 “two planes, one pilot” because of its unique architecture. Twin booms housing two turbo-supercharged 1,000 hp engines, each propeller spinning in opposition to the other to eliminate torque. In the center “nacelle” was the pilot’s bubble canopy, and in the nose, the weapon cluster—two 50 caliber machine guns and a 20mm cannon. Fired in unison against lightly armored Japanese fighters, the weaponry had a devastating “buzz saw” effect.

In the Pacific Theater, the P-38 was credited with more kills than any other USAAF aircraft. The 54th Fighter Squadron claimed the first two aerial victories of the war in the Aleutian Campaign—two Japanese *Mavis* floatplanes, 4 August, 1942. P-38 pilots of the 54th flew bomber escort from Cape Field, Umnak Island to Japanese held Kiska Island—1200 miles to and back. It was the only fighter aircraft in the Aleutian Theater with such range. But for the

pilots—fresh flight school graduates with no training in instrument navigation—the missions over such great and wild distances would prove nearly suicidal. Within a year, roughly half of the original thirty P-38 pilots were dead. For most, the Bering Sea was their grave.



Bottom: Newspaper clipping of 54th Fighter Squadron pilot. Caption reads: “Captain Morgan A. Griffin, complete with goggles and beard is typical of the pilots fighting in Alaska.” (Griffin is credited with one confirmed aerial kill.) Courtesy Museum of the Aleutians.

Above: A posed, sanitized, and perhaps color tinted view of Griffin. The 54th Squadron Fighter patch (inset upper left) is partially visible under his flotation device.

The B-25

Attu and Kiska were a costly speculation for the Japanese, thanks in large measure to North American B-25 Mitchell bombers and other hard-hitting Army and Navy planes.

On this front—as in Africa, China, the South Pacific and over Europe—'North American Sets the Pace' with damaging blows at enemy ships, planes, land installations. In desert heat or Aleutian fog, the Mitchell has proved its versatility and striking power with each passing day of global air war.

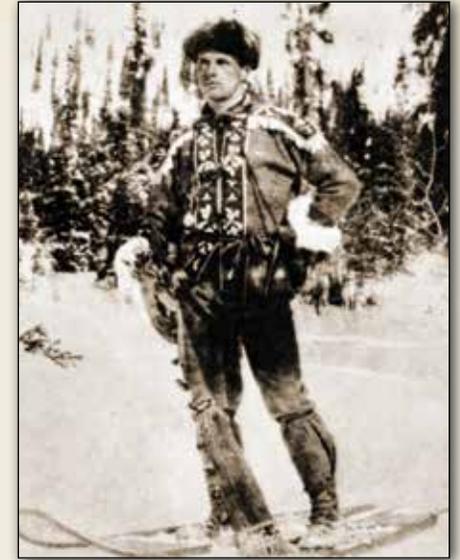
—North American Advertisement

An early B-25 Mitchell medium bomber (perhaps A or B model) with "greenhouse" plexiglass nose, limited armament and crew. The three Japanese vessels burning simultaneously in Kiska harbor are fiction.

I believe that in the future, whoever holds Alaska will hold the world. I think it is the most important strategic place in the world.

—Major General William Mitchell (rank awarded posthumously)

William "Billy" Mitchell, likely Fort Egbert, Eagle, Alaska, circa 1903. As a Lieutenant in the Army Signal Corps, Mitchell helped string telegraph wire across the Alaska wilds. Deployed to both the Philippines and Alaska in the early 1900s, and touring the battlefields of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Mitchell concluded that conflict with the Japanese was inevitable and that such a war would be fought principally in the air. In the photograph at right, Mitchell wears a beaver fur hat and beaded velvet on moose hide jacket. He holds a rifle in a fringed scabbard—all items of Interior Alaska Athabaskan culture. Image courtesy Eleventh Air Force Office of History.



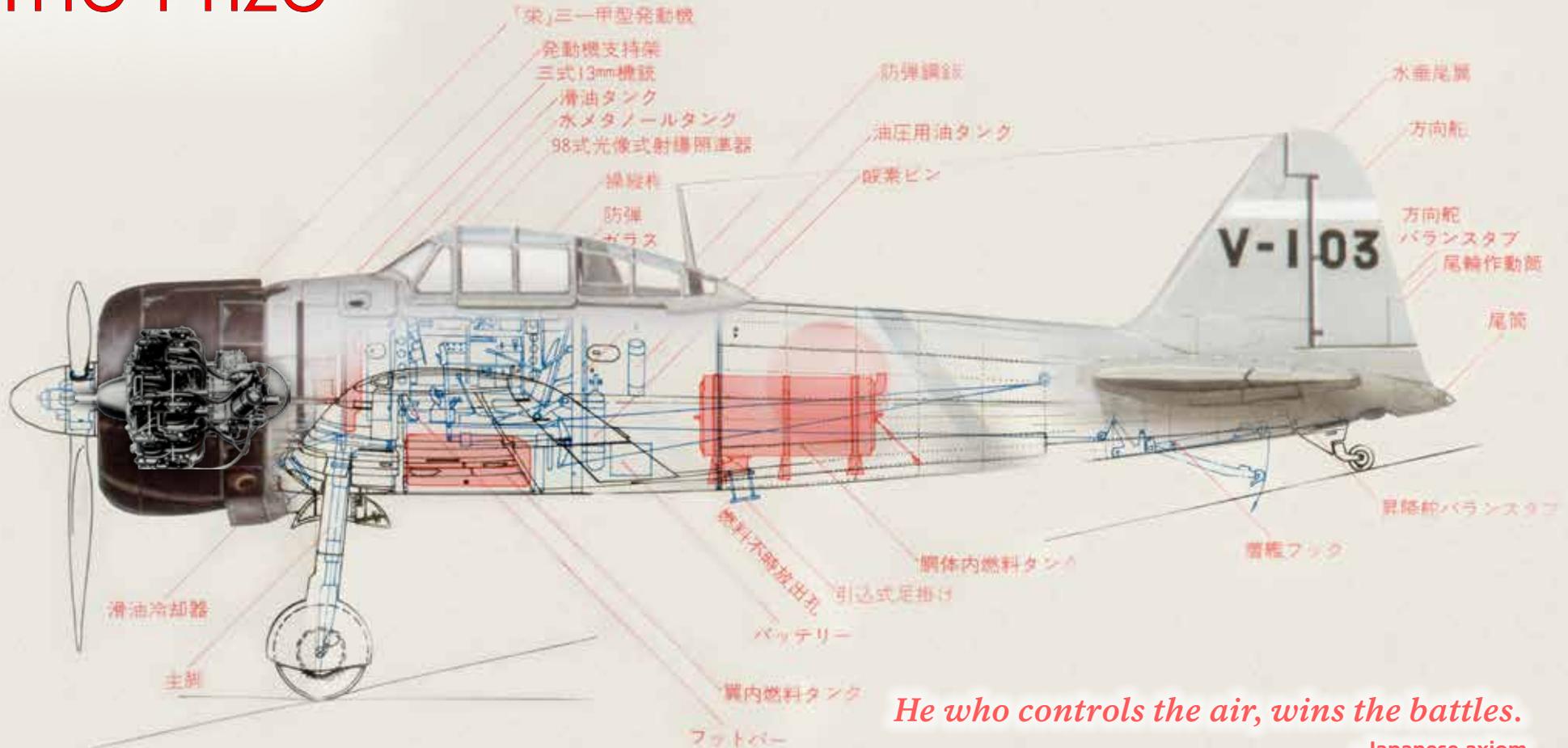
Photograph courtesy Library of Congress.

Assembling the North American B-25 Mitchell at Kansas City, Kansas, 1941. Of the nearly 10,000 B-25s produced, over 6,000 were manufactured at this North American Aviation plant. Among the many variants of the aircraft was the H series—a weapons platform able to "bring to bear 10 machine guns coming and 4 going, in addition to a 75 mm cannon, 8 rockets and 3,000 lbs of bombs." The copilot position was eliminated in this version with a navigator/gunner manually operating the 75 mm cannon, one of the largest weapons fitted to an aircraft. Due to significant recoil and slow rate of fire, the cannon was phased out in later models—the B-25 returning to its original role as medium bomber.

The "slab-sided" B-25 Mitchell medium bomber—designed 1939; maximum range: 1,350 miles; maximum speed: 272 mph; bomb load external: 8 x 250lb bombs on hardpoints (model-specific); bomb load maximum in internal bay: 3000lbs. It was the B-25B, modified for carrier takeoff, that first took the fight to the Japanese homeland, striking Tokyo during the Doolittle Raid, 18 April 1942. In the Aleutians, the Mitchell acted in consort with B-24 heavy bombers during the bombardment of Kiska Island. The heavies attacked first, approaching target at high altitude, then "pickling" off their bomb loads (often blindly through dense overcast). The B-25s followed at medium to low altitude under heavy Japanese anti-aircraft fire,* targeting Japanese shipping in harbor and land installations. During the battle for Attu Island, Mitchells provided air support for U.S. troops in their hard fight through the Japanese held mountains.

*Unlike the B-24, which tended to catch fire, B-25s were renowned for their ability to survive significant battle damage (the aircraft could fly quite well with a single engine). In the U.S. island-hopping campaign in the South Pacific, Mitchells continued their anti-shiping role and low level attacks—flying just above the jungle canopy, dropping time-fused bombs that allowed the aircraft to escape the detonation of its own ordnance. The B-25 Mitchell is the sole aircraft named in honor of an individual: Major General William "Billy" Mitchell, the father of the United States Air Force.

The Prize



He who controls the air, wins the battles.

—Japanese axiom

Jiro Horikoshi, a 33 year-old aircraft designer, grew depressed when confronted with the engineering feat presented him by the Japanese Navy. He was to secretly build a carrier fighter that was exceedingly light, one with great dogfight agility and the “long legs” of a bomber—an aircraft far superior to any flying the skies of 1939.

Horikoshi’s approach was radical. To cut weight, he reduced or eliminated steel forgings. He ignored standard stress factors, sacrificed armor and protective plating for the pilot. There was no bulletproof windscreen, no emergency canopy release. The main fuel tanks did not seal themselves after bullet strikes. By consciously trading sturdiness for agility and flying distance, Horikoshi had created a lightning quick fighter with a glass jaw. In the fall of 1940, roughly one year before Pearl Harbor, Claire Chennault, commander of the American Volunteer Group in China—the “Flying

Tigers”—provided Washington with photographs and performance estimates of a new, seemingly invincible Japanese fighter that had entered the Second Sino-Japanese War. This aircraft dominated the skies over China, downing imported Russian and American-made planes. The U.S. War Department, believing the Japanese intellectually incapable of constructing an aircraft superior to western fighters, dismissed Chennault’s report as “bunk.” But by 1942, the Japanese Zero, the “aerodynamic impossibility,” controlled the sky over the entire Pacific Theater.

4 June 1942, the second day of the Japanese bombardment of Dutch Harbor, the P-40s of the 11th Fighter Squadron, commanded by Claire’s son, Lieutenant John S. Chennault, will dogfight the Zero over Umnak Pass. The aerial battle will earn the U.S. squadron the name “The Aleutian Tigers.”

The Akutan Zero was a treasure...no other captured machine has ever unlocked so many secrets at a time when the need was so great.

—Rear Admiral William N. Leonard, retired

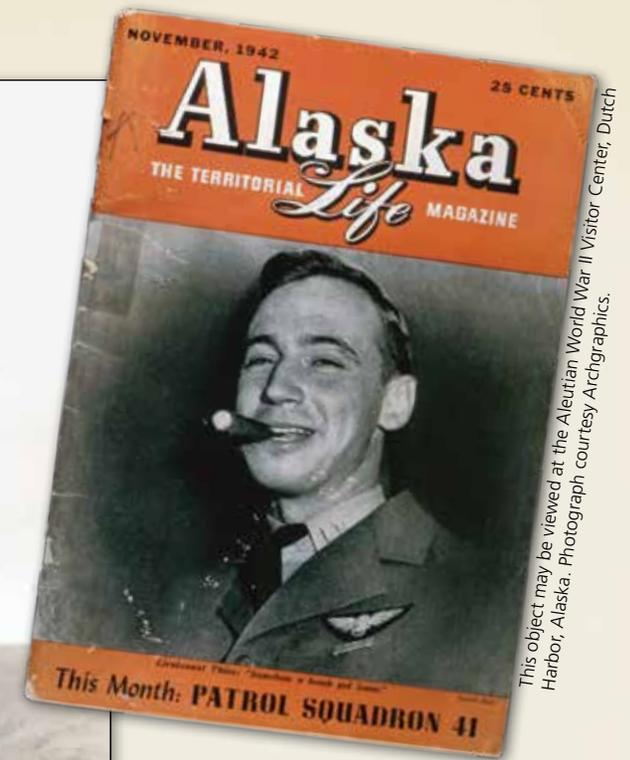
Never attempt to dogfight the Zero.

—U.S. Informational Intelligence Summary No. 85



Photograph courtesy Museum of the Aleutians.

Lieutenant William Thies (standing behind propeller with notebook) and the crew of PBV VP-41 examine the "Akutan Zero." Of the thousands of U.S. antiaircraft rounds fired skyward from land and ships in harbor during the Japanese bombardment of Dutch Harbor, only one finds its mark—a .50 caliber shell that severs the oil line of a Japanese Zero piloted by Tadayoshi Koga, 4 June 1942. Recovered from Akutan, the aircraft was shipped south to San Diego, repaired, and test flown in mock combat. "We now had the answer for our pilots who were being outmaneuvered and unable to escape a pursuing Zero."—Test Pilot Lieutenant Commander Eddie R. Sanders. Photograph courtesy Museum of the Aleutians.



This object may be viewed at the Aleutian World War II Visitor Center, Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Photograph courtesy Arctographics.

Lieutenant William Thies, ubiquitous cigar in mouth, on the cover of *Alaska Life, The Territorial Magazine*. Due to secrecy, no mention of the 10 July 1942 discovery of the "Akutan Zero" can be found within the covers of this November 1942 issue.

Roughly one month after the Japanese bombardment of Dutch Harbor, William Thies found himself flying south of the Aleutian Islands, lost in the arctic twilight. Thies flew by dead reckoning, the shifting winds slapping his lumbering flying boat off course, the rough North Pacific below him devoid of any landmark. At dawn, Ensign Robert Larson took a sextant shot of the low-lying sun. With location fixed over the Shumagin Islands, Thies reoriented and flew a direct route back to Dutch. He remembers second pilot, George Raptist, nauseated by the bouncing PBV, leaving the cockpit. Raptist made his way to the left waist observation blister to vomit. Below, on Akutan Island, Raptist saw the gray belly of an overturned airplane. Thies banked the PBV and descended, marking the location of a Japanese Zero in a field of tall, waving grass.

Chow...*

*We are now getting fresh food. Morale has hopped up 100 percent.
We existed for two months on canned and dehydrated foods.*

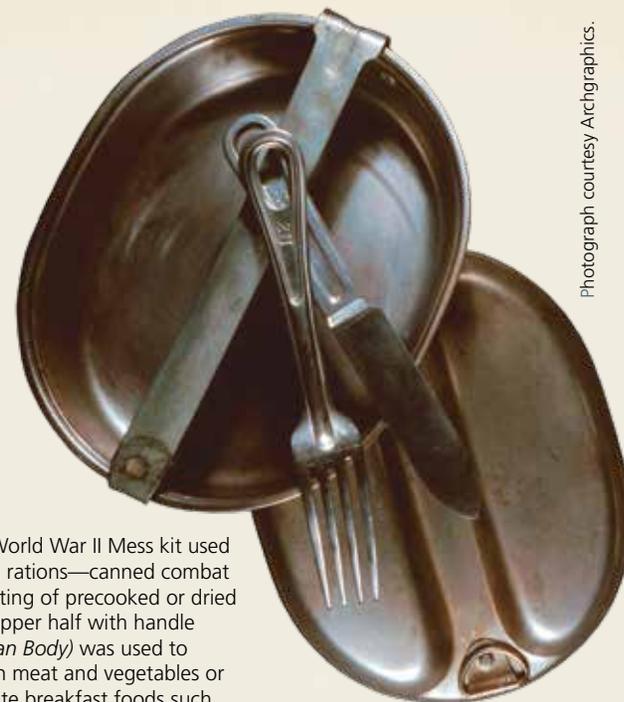
—Alaska Defense Command censorship program postal intelligence analysis, Officer,
Alaska's Hidden Wars, Secret Campaigns on the North Pacific Rim, Otis Hays, Jr.

*The phrase “chow down” originated in the U.S. military during WWII in reference to the Chinese practice of consuming dog (in this case, the *Chow* dog)—a millennia-old Chinese norm. U.S. servicemen in WWII, however, perhaps felt that eating military rations was as repugnant as consuming one’s own pet, or “chow.” In fact, the term “chow” used in association with food predated the naming of the Chinese canine, but such is the convoluted origin of slang.



Day after day—C rats—corned beef hash and watery navy beans, Vienna sausage, Spam, dried onions, dried potatoes, dried eggs. And for dessert “C-biscuits,” canned fruit salad, jam and canned butter. “Salve,” they called the ersatz butter. The yellow stuff wouldn’t freeze no matter how far the temperature dropped.

One, two years with nothing fresh to eat. It ruined the soldiers’ health. They succumbed to pneumonia, yellow jaundice, Aleutian “malaria.” Without vitamins their mouths abscessed. Some left all their teeth in the Aleutians like old-time sailors suffering scurvy.



Right: U.S. World War II Mess kit used to prepare C rations—canned combat meals consisting of precooked or dried foods. The upper half with handle (the *Meat Can Body*) was used to heat C ration meat and vegetables or to reconstitute breakfast foods such as powdered eggs. This object may be seen at the Aleutian World War II Visitor Center, Dutch Harbor, Alaska.

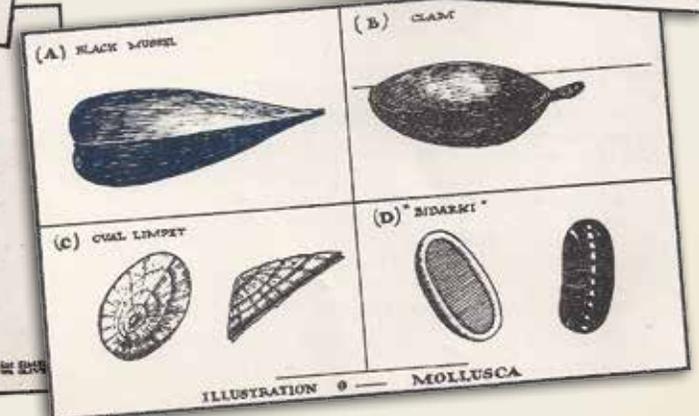
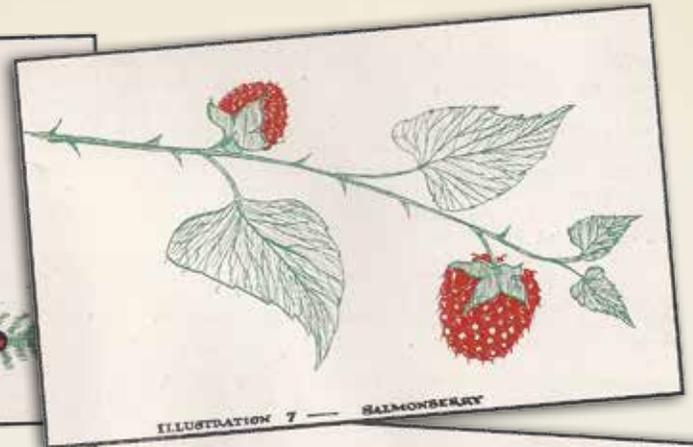
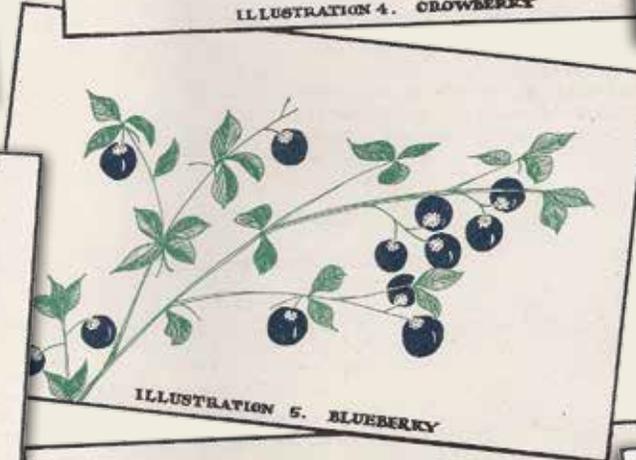
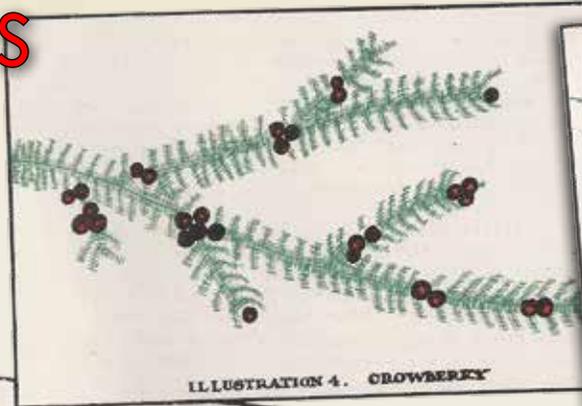
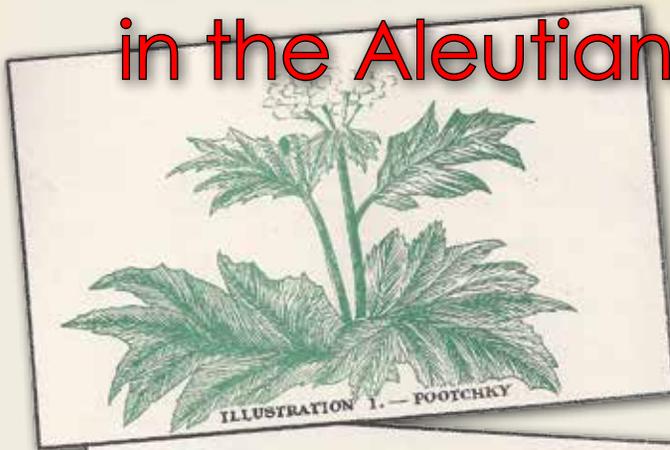
Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

*A soldier stood at the Pearly Gate.
His face was wan and old.
He gently asked the man of fate.
Admission to the fold.
“What have you done,” St. Peter asked.
“To gain admission here?”
“I’ve been in the Aleutians
For nigh unto a year.”
Then the gates swung open sharply
As St. Peter tolled the bell.
“Come in,” said he, “and take a harp.
You’ve had your share of hell.”*

Warrant Officer
Boswell Boomhower, 1943

A 1941 C ration, B Unit (bread/dessert portion): three biscuits, chocolate fudge, three sugar cubes, and small tin of instant coffee. In 1943, a ration board reviewing soldiers’ medical examinations after long-term use of C rations recommended they be used as sustenance no more than five continuous days. Image courtesy U.S. Army.

Various Edibles in the Aleutians



WARNING MUST BE GIVEN FOR THESE ITEMS

Illustration 1.—[Pootchky can be] peeled and eaten like celery [but] care must be taken not to touch the milky excretion at the break in the stalk to the lips or face. If touched to the face causes sores comparable to those effected by poison ivy. From 24 to 36 hours after contact, the tiny itching blisters spread to join and make a running sore. A scab forms and heals in two or three weeks.

Illustration 9A.—There is an old adage which says, "When the tide is out, the table is set." The Black Mussel will be found in clusters fastened to rocks and boulders by weedy strands. Boil or bake this mussel and eat it as you would a clam. Take care not to harvest those near the high-water mark, as they may bring on nausea. The Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries characterizes it as an "excellent sea-food" and has launched studies to determine its possibilities as a new food source for wartime.

Illustrations and abridged text from *Emergency Foods in the Aleutians*, Assistant Chief of Staff G-2 (Intelligence), Alaskan Department, July 1943. Courtesy Michael Bouchette, Sherwood WI. (son of Captain Theodore Bouchette).

The purpose of this publication is to aid the individual who may become separated from his unit by describing and illustrating various edibles to be found in the Aleutians.

There are no deadly poisonous plants. Likewise, asleep under shelter, no one needs fear the danger of poisonous insects or reptiles. There is to be no fear of wild big game. Foxes, otter, and eagles, which are harmless, constitute the biggest game on all islands west of Unimak (Island).

—Emergency Foods in the Aleutians (hereafter EFITA),
Assistant Chief of Staff G-2 (Intelligence), Alaskan Department, July
1943.

TROUT—Trout are elusive and difficult to catch without hook and line, though sometimes they may be dammed into little pools and captured by hand. One man's ingenuity in capturing them is as good as another's. Natives sometimes make a brush-net of many twigs to catch them up against a bank. All trout in Aleutian streams are excellent food. There are DOLLY VARDEN trout, sometimes called Salmon Trout; RAINBOW trout, also called Steelhead; and the CUTTHROAT (rarest) to be found in Aleutian streams. Most common is the Dolly Varden, which often runs with the salmon, attaining length of 24 to 30 inches. It has a steel colored head-top and back, pink spots on greenish and yellowish body, pink meat. (Text excerpted from EFITA.)



Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

Chief Mike Hodikoff and son "Little Mike" dipnetting below falls, Attu Island. May 1942, Chief Hodikoff informed the U.S. Navy that Japanese fishing boats had taken measurements and soundings in Attu's harbors and left survey stakes on land. Attu would be occupied by the Japanese 7 June 1942, roughly one month after this photograph was taken..

*E*mergency Foods is at once ethnography, survival guide, and reportage of Japanese surveillance and fishing activities in the Aleutians as known in 1943. The following are but a few sample entries from the publication, edited here for brevity and with minor additions by compendium author:

➡ The male Poggy, a sea fish, is brilliant red; the female greenish. Rightly prized by the UnangaꝔ for its taste. Drop your jig in the ocean 10 to 20 feet deep and with swift, short jerks you will get a strike.

➡ Crab grounds lie close to shore, but only the Japanese seem to know which are edible and how to catch them. [The UnangaꝔ avoid crab, believing they feed on the bodies of the drowned.]

➡ Octopus [ranging in spread from 2 to 14 feet] may become tangled in fishing line. The UnangaꝔ severed the eight tentacles and boiled them for the "buttons" or suckers—a delicacy. The Japanese smoked and dried the tentacles of small octopuses.

➡ The Japanese know better than anyone but the [UnangaꝔ] that the extent of the Bering Sea cod bank lies more than a thousand miles along the Aleutians. From Unimak to the Komandorski Islands, they have fished in all kinds of weather the year around. (Alan May, Aleutian archeologist, reported in his journal that "[pre-war] Attu has been completely surveyed by the Japanese under the pretext of collecting flowers and butterflies...")

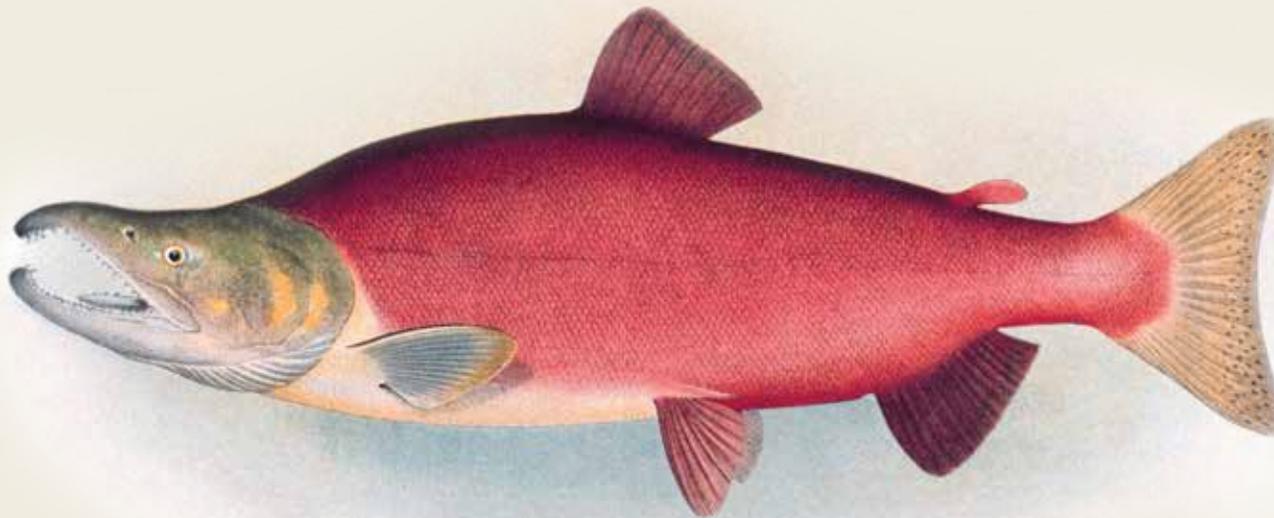


Image courtesy NOAA.

SALMON... the Red salmon, or Sockeyes, are smaller [than King salmon] and run more abundantly well into May and June. This salmon loses its silvery scales only to turn a fiery red after it enters fresh water. The male, as in all species, develops a protruding lower jaw vested with huge teeth to protect its mate and keep away marauding trout which seek to eat its spawn as it is laid in quiet streams and lakes. [Red salmon are caught by the UnangaꝔ], stripped of their backbones and dried. This is known as 'Eukala.' When the stripped salmon are soaked overnight in a salt brine [strong enough to float a potato] and smoked, this is called 'Badleek.' These are foods prepared for winter use and comprise a goodly portion of the Native diet. Salmon during these months may easily be caught even with bare hands. (Text excerpted from EFITA.)

GAS!

WWII U.S. Navy gas mask.
This object may be seen at the World War II Visitor Center, Dutch Harbor.
Photograph montage courtesy Archgraphics.





Japanese Special Landing Naval Force in gas masks and rubber gloves during chemical attack near Chapei, Battle of Shanghai, 1937.

Fear of poison gas was not unfounded. The Japanese had made frequent use of mustard gas and the blister agent “Lewsite” against Chinese troops and civilians in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45). And the United States, appalled by casualties suffered during the battles for outlying islands, considered deploying gas during the planned invasion of mainland Japan, estimating that taking the home islands would cause 1.2 million U.S. casualties, with 267,000 deaths. The U.S. Army’s Chemical Warfare Service estimated that “Gas attacks of the size and intensity recommended on... 250 square miles of [Japan’s] urban population might easily kill 5,000,000 people and injure that many more.” But, as the attrition of the battle for the Pacific rose, use of the U.S. secret atomic wonder-weapons became inevitable. Forgoing gas attack (and fire bombing), the U.S. atomized the cities of Hiroshima (90-140,000 dead estimated) and Nagasaki (39-80,000 dead estimated) with nuclear weapons. The Japanese surrendered six days after the Nagasaki detonation.

To avert a vast, indefinite butchery, to bring the war to an end, to give peace to the world, to lay healing hands upon its tortured peoples by a manifestation of overwhelming power at the cost of a few explosions, seemed, after all our tolls and perils, a miracle of deliverance.

—Winton Churchill, arguing the use of the atomic bomb formally outlined in the Quebec Agreement between the U.S. and the United Kingdom.

...the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices, has been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilised world.

—Third Geneva Convention,
17 June 1925



The horror of gas warfare in the trenches of World War I was still strong in the minds of WWII military planners. It was the fear of reprisal, however, rather than moral aversion, that largely precluded such weapons from being employed on the battlefield in the second great war. “Gassed” by John Singer Sargent. Dressing station at Le Bac-du-Sud near Arras, 1918, Imperial War Museum.

In the evening the U.S. forces used gas, but no damage was done because of strong winds.

—Dr. Paul Tatsuguchi, Battle of Attu, 14 May 1943

Although poison gas was not used in the Pacific Theater during WWII, both Japanese and American believed the other willing to deploy the ephemeral killer. During the Japanese aerial bombardment of Dutch Harbor, 3 June 1942, some U.S. servicemen donned gas masks with the protective coverings still on the filters. Unable to breathe, they nearly suffocated in their panic. During the battle for Attu, Japanese diaries reported the use of gas-filled artillery shells by the United States. These were actually white phosphorous rounds, horrific weapons in their own right. At battle’s end, many of the Japanese Northern Garrison’s dead on Attu were found with gas masks in place.

Cannikin



Infrared photograph, Cannikin test site, Amchitka Island, September 1971. Healthy vegetation presents as false-color "red" using this photographic method.

... the island [Amchitka] is actually part of a small crustal block being torn apart by oblique subduction — the entire western Aleutian arc is being sheared and extended. The arc is not a stable, unchanging feature, but rather one undergoing rapid internal deformation... and is therefore one of the least stable tectonic environments in the United States.

—Geotimes, March 2002; Authors: John Eichelberger, Jeff Freymueller, Graham Hill, and Matt Patrick

Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.



Verso of above photograph reads. "Headquarters Alaskan Air Command (AAC). Night portrait of Aleutian DEW Line (Distant Early Warning) site." Image circa mid-to-late 1950s, the latter date reflecting a decline in Aleutian AAC DEW Line activity as the Soviets switched from atomic bomber aircraft to intercontinental ballistic missiles, necessitating development of a Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS). The Cannikin W-71 nuclear warhead was part of a nascent anti-ballistic missile defense system briefly deployed in the 1970s. The 3,500 member strong Aleut League filed a lawsuit to stop the test. The Supreme Court approved the shot 4-3. The warhead was detonated five hours after their decision.



Courtesy Atomic Energy Commission.

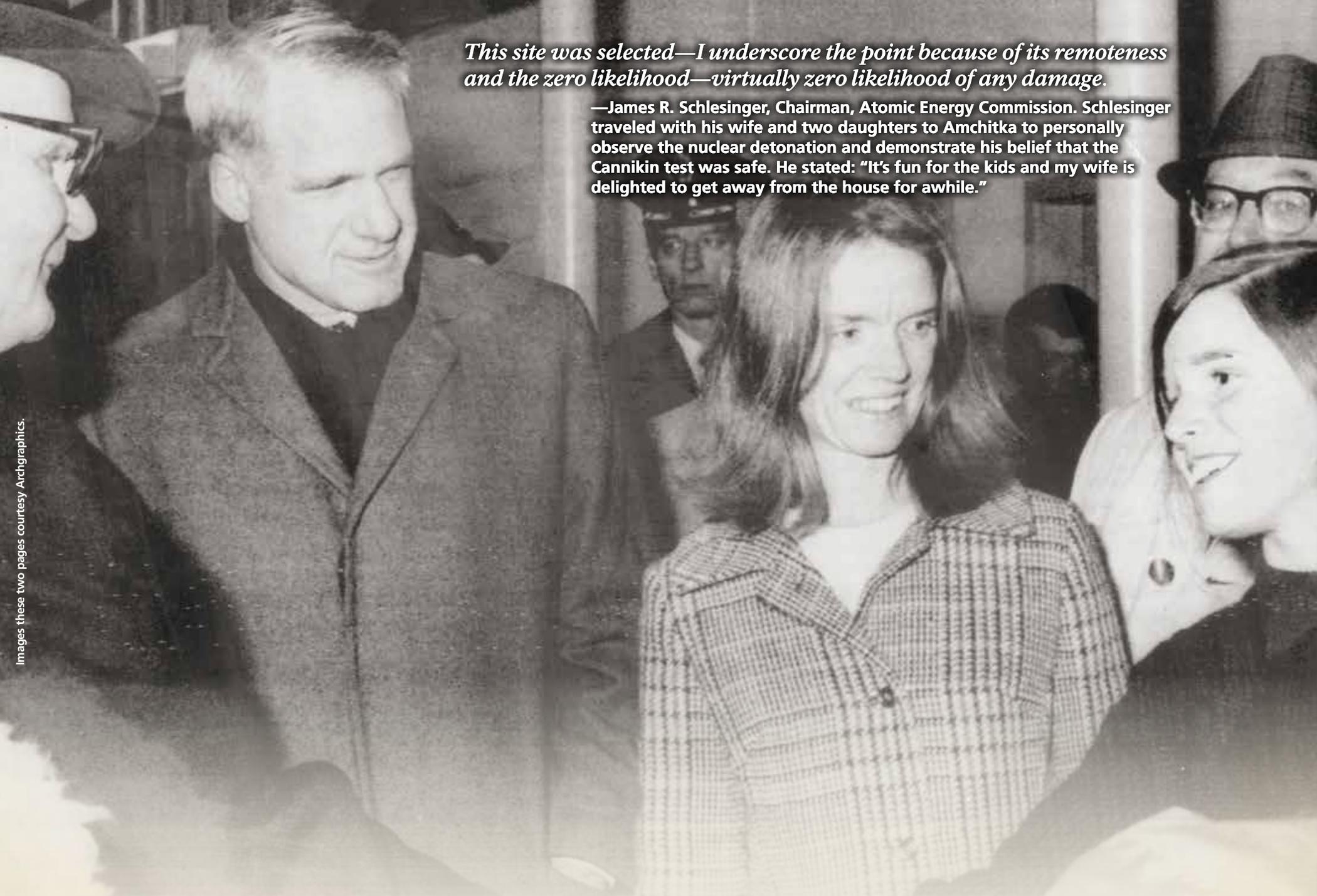
Workers lower the Cannikin W-71 warhead mounted in Spartan Missile body into borehole. This weapon test, the largest conducted by the U.S., was considered too great for the Nevada testing grounds.

President Richard Milhous Nixon calls via White House hotline 6:30 am, 6 November 1971, giving the shot a thumbs up. At 11 am, a 5-megaton W-71 nuclear warhead, designated *Cannikin*, detonates at the base of a 6,150 foot deep borehole drilled in Amchitka Island. Immediately, the rock adjacent to the exploding warhead melts and vaporizes. An underground cavern forms, magma puddling on the floor. A first wave of fractures reaches out into distant rock. A second wave collapses the cavern roof and a "chimney" is blown to the surface. Most radionuclides remain within the magma pond which turns partially to glass, but others travel with vaporized rock to settle within the chimney. Above ground the blast lifts the island's surface 15 feet in elevation as far as 2000 feet from the borehole. From newly formed faults, groundwater is violently expressed, and a crater forms a mile wide and 40 feet deep. In two days, waters from White Alice Creek, dammed by faulting, fill the crater, forming Cannikin Lake. "A good fishing spot, really large trout."* The blast measures 7.0 on the Richter scale.

*Teleconference: DOE Nevada Official with author prior to archeological survey of Amchitka Island, 1985.

This site was selected—I underscore the point because of its remoteness and the zero likelihood—virtually zero likelihood of any damage.

—James R. Schlesinger, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission. Schlesinger traveled with his wife and two daughters to Amchitka to personally observe the nuclear detonation and demonstrate his belief that the Cannikin test was safe. He stated: “It’s fun for the kids and my wife is delighted to get away from the house for awhile.”



Images these two pages courtesy Archgraphics.

Verso of photograph reads: “BOUND FOR AMCHITKA--Reeve Aleutian Airlines president Bob Reeve greets Atomic Energy Commission chairman James R. Schlesinger, his wife, Rachel, and their 13-year-old daughter Anne near Anchorage today where the AEC official stopped enroute to Amchitka Island to monitor Saturday's underground nuclear test. Schlesinger said he was taking part of his family, including a 9-year-old not in the picture, to the test site to demonstrate his 'high degree of confidence' in safety precautions surrounding the blast.”



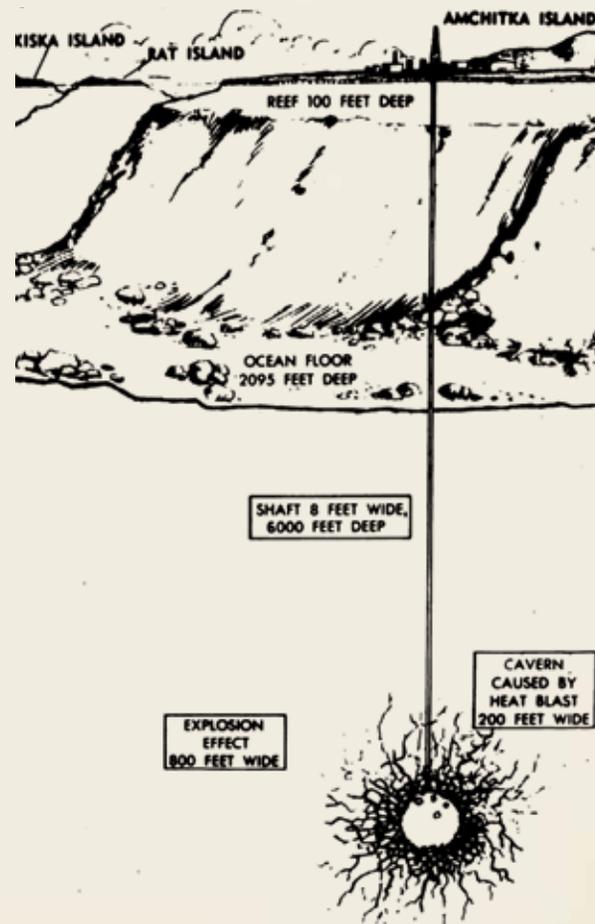
"Posters being distributed in Kodiak, Alaska depict potential dangers of the planned Amchitka nuclear test as visualized by opponents."

I hear that there is going to be a blast on Amchitka in the fall of this year. Nobody from the Federal Government has talked with me about it. I am against the blast because I think it will destroy the food.

—Steve Mike Hodikoff, 40-year-old resident of Atka and subsistence fisherman, 13 August 1971 (the Aleut League v. the Atomic Energy Commission, U.S. District Court of Alaska)

The Cannikin detonation threatens possible destruction or most serious harm to the lives, property, commerce and culture of the Native people living in the Aleutian Island area.

—Iliodor Philemonof, President, Aleut League



"Artist's view of Amchitka blast," by Russ Arasmith, 1971.



The Shores of Eden

[The Attuans] are by far the happiest and best of all the Natives because they live in such a remote situation... They don't want to be brought into closer touch with the world.

—U.S. Coast Guard Officer (unnamed), quoted in *Stepping Stones from Alaska to Asia*, Isobel Wylie Hutchinson 1937.

Attuan mother and child, perhaps Annie Golodoff (born 1919, Attu) and her baby, Victor. In 1940, Annie Golodoff married fellow Attuan Mike Borenin and bore their child Victor in March 1941. Victor died 2 November that same year, and Annie and Mike divorced sometime post June 1941. Annie then became Chief of Attu Mike Hodikoff's common-law wife. Their child, Anecia, was born and died in captivity in Japan 1943. Annie died in Japan that same year. Photograph by Malcolm J. Greany, July 1941, Attu. Courtesy Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, ASL-P306-2836.

Word came down yesterday that a (Japanese) landing had been made on two of the furthestmost and utterly useless islands.

—Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy

The less I remember the better.

—Attuan Villager and Japanese prisoner John Golodoff

Attu Island—rock, reef, and tundra, forty miles by twenty. From the 3000-foot crest of its highest point, one could see how it sat... a small, jagged stone falling away to the seas. To foreign eyes it was desolate and forlorn—“the loneliest spot this side of hell.” But to 43 Native Attuans, the place was the heart of the universe. The Attuans were a true island people, their finite world charged with import, their sense of self deeply rooted in the landscape, the encircling sea, and wildlife.

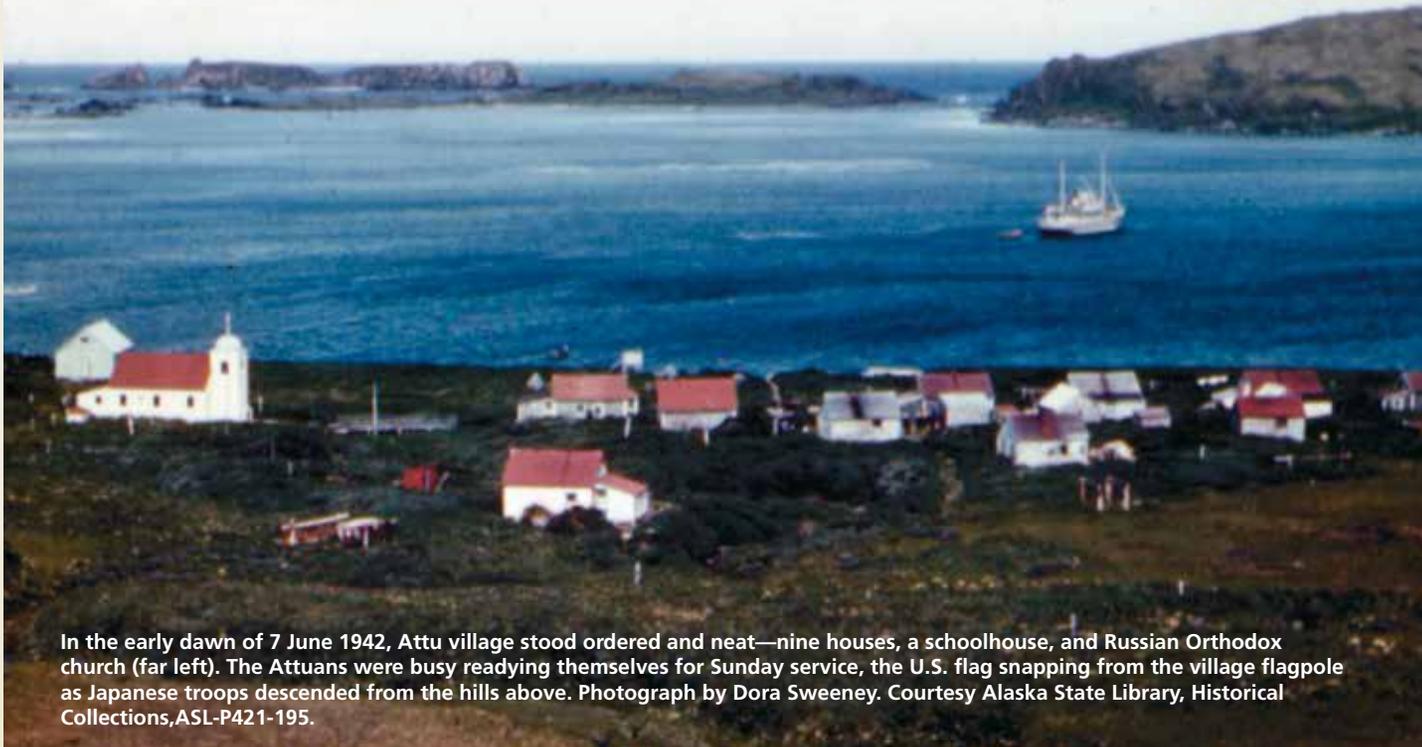
On June 7 1942, the Attuans were taken by the Japanese as prisoners of war. It was the beginning of three years of extreme deprivation and sorrow. Nearly forty percent would die in Japan and those that survived would never return to “the shores of their little Eden.”*

*Isobel Wylie Hutchinson

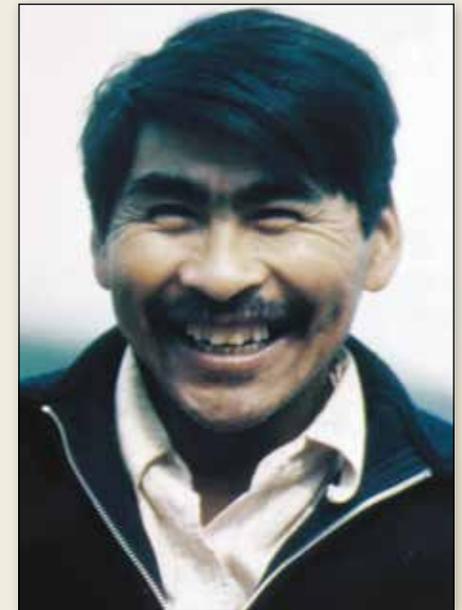


Japanese prisoners, Parascovia and Tatiana Lokanin, #22 & 23.

Courtesy Aleutian Pribilof Island Association.



In the early dawn of 7 June 1942, Attu village stood ordered and neat—nine houses, a schoolhouse, and Russian Orthodox church (far left). The Attuans were busy readying themselves for Sunday service, the U.S. flag snapping from the village flagpole as Japanese troops descended from the hills above. Photograph by Dora Sweeney. Courtesy Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, ASL-P421-195.



Attuan Chief Michael Hodikoff (above) and his son George died as captives of the Japanese in 1945, both driven to eat poisonous garbage to stave off starvation. In all, five of the ten Hodikoffs would perish as Japanese prisoners.

Photograph by Malcolm J. Greany, July 1941. Courtesy Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, ASL-P306-2834.

Biorka

Government officials refused to fund the restoration of four communities, virtually ringing the death knell for Attu, Biorka, Kashega and Makushin.

—DEAN KOHLHOFF, *WHEN THE WIND WAS A RIVER*

Biorka prior to World War II. Church and graveyard are located at top end of village. Fish drying or boat racks stand between houses and beach. Courtesy University of Alaska Fairbanks 1985-0012-00050.

Biorka had been a strong village clean up to the war. Biorka was doing good.

—Henry Swanson

The little Native village there was a picture of desolation. When the Natives were suddenly evacuated they left most of their goods behind. Their looted houses were almost lost in petrusky (cow parsnip) and the long, coarse grasses that were reclaiming the village back to the wilderness. The island was swarming with foxes (that) had not been trapped since the war began. They had eaten everything imaginable, even the hide covers of the bidarkis, which lay like skeletons on the beach. The foxes had made themselves at home in the deserted houses, tearing up furniture and beds in their voracious search... Biorka won't be a nice place for my Aleut friends to come home to.

—Simeon Oliver



Remnants of Biorka Village, circa 1980s. Location suggests that the lone standing, but badly deteriorated building was the village church.



"Preparing to plant a cross at Biorka." Photograph by Gregory Jones, September 2, 2010. This visit was carried out with the support of the National Park Service's Lost Villages project. Elders and descendants from the Lost Villages oversaw the newly constructed crosses, donated by the Ounalashka Corporation, raised upon the former sites of the churches of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. Rain droplets distort the photograph.

The village of Biorka sat on a narrow crescent of land separating the salt water of Beaver Inlet from a fresh water lake. Pre-war Biorka counted eighteen residents living in four households (see photograph preceding page). In 1942, the U.S. government removed the Unanga of Biorka to Southeast Alaska—to an old Civilian Conservation Camp at Ward Lake. They would be interned there until the end of the war. Upon repatriation to the Aleutians in 1945, the government resettled the villagers in Akutan, not Biorka, primarily for financial convenience. But several determined villagers returned to Biorka where “with no help, no lumber, no groceries,” they scratched out a life. It was home again, but only for a few years. George Yatchemenoff was the first to leave the village for Unalaska stating that if he was only younger he could face the hardships. Nick Galaktionoff stayed at Biorka for three years and buried his small son there. Gradually all moved away. In 1965 Andrew Makarin returned to the empty village. With lumber he scavenged from collapsed houses and remnants of the church roof he built a small protective structure (see weathered structure at left) over the site of Biorka’s church altar. As of 2010, this building still stood.

No man is an island entire of itself...

—John Donne
MEDITATION XVII
Devotions upon Emergent Occasions

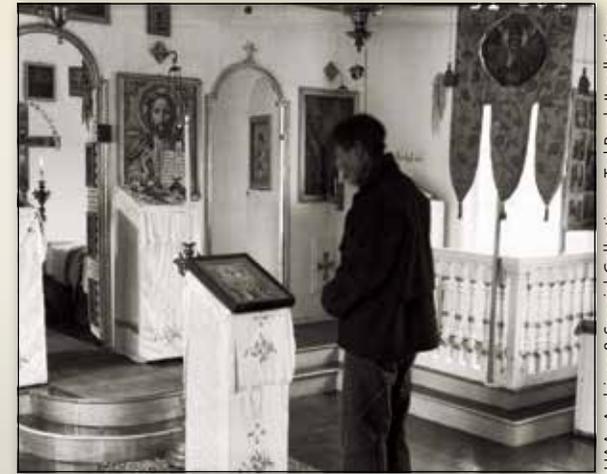
Cornelius Kudrin, right, and George Borenin, left, at the Chernofski sheep ranch, 1948. The pair traveled once a year from their homes on Kashega Island to the ranch, crossing 35 miles of open sea in a small boat. Courtesy Alaska State Library, Catron collection, photographer H.D. Catron.



George Borenin... was waiting hopefully for the day when people would return and live in the empty, ghostly houses he watched over. Even if people didn't return to Kashega, he had decided to remain so that the small community church would be cared for. Once a week, on Saturdays, he held services with only the wind to join him in chanting the liturgy and only the shadows as congregation.*

—Theodore P. Bank, "The Past Ages of Unalaska."

*In danger of being plundered by outsiders after the departure of Borenin, Kashega's icons were collected by Father Basil Nagoski in the early 1960s and transferred to The Church of the Holy Ascension in Unalaska.



George Borenin inside Kashega chapel. Banks photo: uaa-hmc-0068-series 16-f7-2 Bank.

Denied reoccupation of their home by the U.S. Federal Government following internment, only two Unanga men returned to Kashega Village after WWII—George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin. They used monies they had earned at the sealing station in the Pribilofs to buy supplies and materials to care for village and church. By 1948 they claimed permanent residence. It is said that time and isolation rubbed hard on the men...the two eventually living alone on opposite ends of the village. Cornelius returned to the City of Unalaska where he passed in 1964. Illness eventually forced George to relocate to Unalaska as well. He passed in Anchorage, 1965, and was buried on Unalaska. In the early 1980s John Moller visited Kashega aboard the fishing boat *Shellfish*. Finding the church collapsed, he recovered the cupola. "You should have seen," he wrote, "the *Shellfish* coming into Unalaska Bay with this big cross (the cupola) on the bow." Today Kashega Village is evidenced only by a scatter of weathered boards in beach grass.



George Borenin at the chapel at Kashega (post internment), Banks photo: uaa-hmc-0068-series 16-f7-10 Bank. The cupola, recovered and returned to Unalaska by John Moller, is visible in center background.

Block 13

We're enjoying our new home [in Anchorage] immensely and you can never imagine how much fun it is to have a [place] of your own that you raised "from a pup." There is a lot of finishing touches, but the house looks swell.

—Lt. Bert Perrin, 30 December, 1940: Deployed in Aleutian Theater, Adak Island; European Theater: Battle of the Bulge, Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps



Block 13, Army Housing Association,
Anchorage Alaska, 18 September 1940.
Photograph courtesy M&M San Angelo,
principal investigators.

- ① Captain Joe E. Golden family house
- ② Lt. Bert Perrin family House
- ③ Captain Robert C. Ratliff family house,
Battalion Executive Officer/Commander
Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion;
Battle of Attu, Defense of Engineer Hill,
Japanese Banzai attack, 29 May 1943.
Current home of M&M San Angelo
- ④ Lt. Lynden R. Anderson (Coastal Artillery)
family house. Current home of Francis
Broderick, publication author

I was sitting in my second grade classroom. It was about 11am... My teacher told me to get my wraps... I was scared to death I was going to be punished for something... I was told to leave everything... When I got out in the hall, Mom was there... She took me out to the car and the rest of the family was in it. We drove down to the train station and boarded the train [to the port of Seward]. Dad [Capt. J.E. Golden] saw us off... My mother and grandmother only had time to pack a few suitcases... Months later several [moving] cartons were delivered to Peoria, Illinois... [Inside one] was a waffle still in the iron, meat in a fry pan, and the breakfast dishes unwashed. The [three] dogs stayed behind... Most of the toys and books that belonged to us kids disappeared.

—Joanne Golden, age 7, Evacuation from Anchorage, Block 13, 10 February 1942



After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the territory of Alaska was declared a war zone. Beginning February 1942, all U.S. military dependents would be evacuated—first wives with children, then pregnant women, then “able-bodied” adults. For many of the servicemen of Block 13—men of General Simon Bolivar Buckner’s 4th Infantry, the 32nd Engineers, and 81st Artillery—Attu and Kiska would be their next deployment. March 1942, Captain Joe E. Golden would become assistant chief of staff, intelligence, for the Alaska Defense Command, serving as observer with the Aleutian Task Force. As was true for many other Aleutian veterans, this would only be the beginning of his personal war. Next would come Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, then training for the invasion of Japan. Photograph: looking north at Block 13 from what is now Cordova Street, ca. 1940. Courtesy Jeannette Golden.



Photograph courtesy Joanne Golden-McElfresh.

Captain Joe E. Golden, G-2 Intelligence, 4th Infantry Regiment, wife Jeannette, and children (front) Eleanor and Joseph (and standing, back) Joanne. Block 13, E10th Avenue, ca. 1940.

Anchorage 1940 was a military boomtown—off-base housing for newly deployed soldiers from the south nonexistent. If these servicemen wanted to see their families, they had to build their own places and build them fast while summer lasted. A cooperative was created, financed by Anchorage businessman R.H. Stock—the muscle: newly-minted West Point officers and World War I noncom veterans. Together, they formed Army Housing Association. Block 13. The location was nothing but brush, moss, and trees in the sticks east of Anchorage. The men worked evenings and weekends. They surveyed lots, built streets and sewers, poured concrete foundations. They worked in cold and rain, tormented by mosquitoes. The houses were pre-cut, packaged kits—*Modelow* structures. Each man built at his own skill level. One hung his windows upside down until counseled by neighbors. The houses raised, a community was formed. In short order, two babies were born. But the dream of Block 13 lasted only one year until war was declared.

A Letter Long Overdue

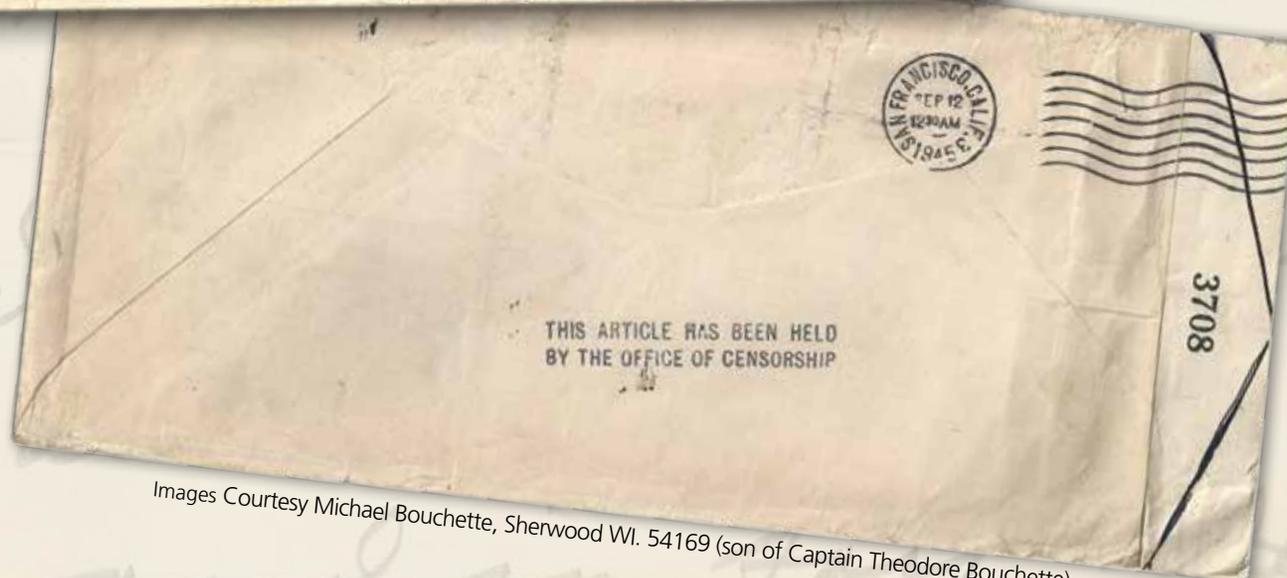


Front/back of envelope addressed to Mrs. Eleanor Bouchette, the letter inside written 9 June 1942 by Captain Theodore Bouchette, stationed Dutch Harbor, and postmarked the following day, 10 June 1942.

A second postmark dates to 12 September 1945, three years later. Destination: San Francisco, California.

A third mark dates to 14 September 1945. Destination: Berlin, Wisconsin.

Handwritten notes on the envelope front directs delivery to Tacoma, Washington from Berlin, then redirects delivery from Tacoma to Seattle, Washington—the final "home" of the letter.



Images Courtesy Michael Bouchette, Sherwood WI. 54169 (son of Captain Theodore Bouchette).

"...we have known for over 3 weeks that the [Japanese] were coming [to Dutch Harbor]. We knew the strength of each task force, when they left Japan and the day they were to arrive. They certainly didn't catch us napping and in fact, they acted like a bunch of school kids who had their candy taken away from them."*

—Captain Theodore Bouchette, 2nd Battalion of the 37th Infantry Regiment, Dutch Harbor, 9 June, 1942

*Unknown to the Japanese, cryptanalysts under the command of Captain Joseph Rochefort, Hawaii, had partially broken the Imperial Navy's JN-25 code, and by early spring 1942 provided U.S. forces the Japanese Navy's order of battle for the pending Battle of Midway and the simultaneous attack of Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. The fact that Captain Bouchette knew of the outcome of the Battle of Midway, a mere three days after it occurred, is hard evidence that the Aleutians were not a sidelight, but an integral part of the U.S. defense of the Pacific Theater.



Photograph courtesy Michael Bouchette.

Captain Theodore Bouchette.

Nearly six months to the day after Pearl Harbor and a mere 5 days after the Japanese aerial attack of Dutch Harbor... with the United States still reeling from Japanese military gains in East Asia... Lieutenant Theodore (Ted) Bouchette set pencil to paper and wrote his wife, Eleanor. In uncanny prescience, he described the coming course of the war in the Pacific.

"I believe the battle of Midway [June 4-7] is the turning point of the war and from now on Japan is on the defensive and we are on the offensive. The Jap[anese] only had about 15 [10 fleet carriers] aircraft carriers and so far they have lost about [4]. They can never replace any battleships they are losing, for the duration of this war. So every time you hear of the sinking of one their ships, you can be assured they are just one step nearer being defeated and this means I am just one step nearer coming home..."

This letter, posted 10 June 1942 at Dutch Harbor, "unexamined" and uncut by the censor's razor, until 1945. It then ricocheted between addresses in the lower forty-eight, until it was finally delivered to Seattle in 1945—a year after Bouchette had been decommissioned. Together, Ted and his wife Eleanor opened and read this letter from another time and distant place. Their son, Michael, who supplied the above information about his father, was born in December of 1945, four years after the attack at Pearl Harbor.

U.S. Navy Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless dive bombers begin their descent against Japanese carriers, Midway, 4 June 1942.

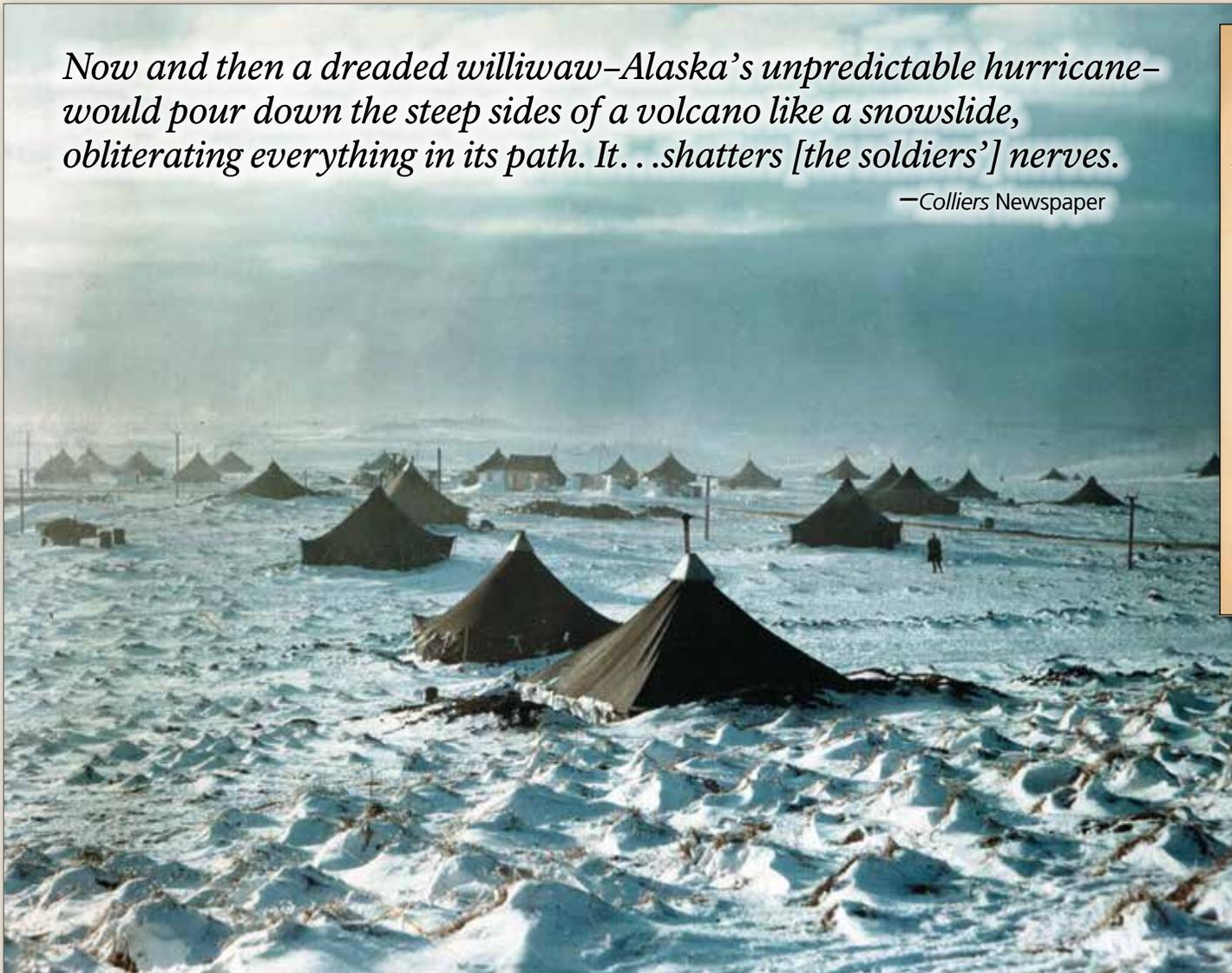
The Tent Towns



"Williwaw" by Edward John Hughes.
Courtesy Canadian War Museum

Now and then a dreaded williwaw—Alaska’s unpredictable hurricane—would pour down the steep sides of a volcano like a snowslide, obliterating everything in its path. It...shatters [the soldiers’] nerves.

—Colliers Newspaper

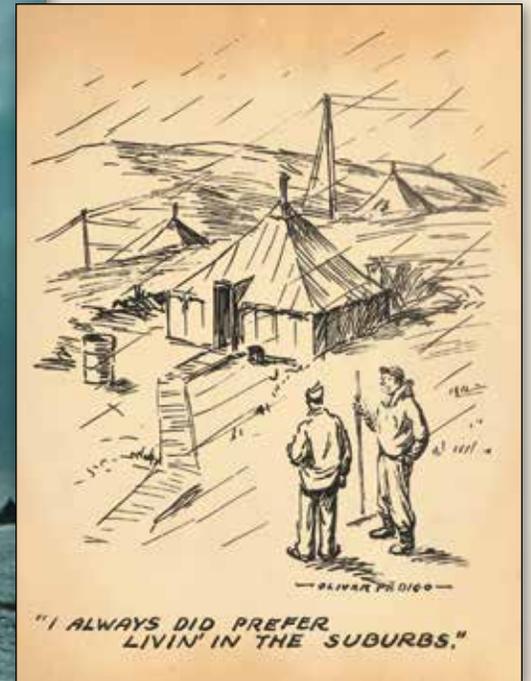


Aleutian tent town. Courtesy Eleventh Air Force Office of History.

When it grew dark, the soldiers lit candles for lack of lanterns and fed their little pot-bellied stoves—seven pounds ration of coal a day for each tent—just enough to warm the insides a little at night, and again in the morning. When the coal ran out, the soldiers tried and failed to burn the peat-like tundra.

They burned their summer clothes for a few moments of respite from the cold because the coal pile was guarded by armed men. And the wind beat against the side of their tents. It would grab them and shake them in its fist. The soldiers had dug revetments, scrapped up the tundra, dug down through the crockery-like schist

and coarse brown clay for protection. They had pitched their tents in defiles, along hillsides but there was no hiding from the wind. It beat down the tent towns, the soldiers huddled inside, close to the candles for warmth and light, their feet insulated in boxes of shredded paper, waiting for the long night to end.



Cartoon from the *Adakian*. Artist: Oliver Pettigo. Editor: Dashiell Hammett.

TENT, FIRE-RESISTANT, PYRAMIDAL, M-1934, O-D (olive drab)

PURPOSE: The main purpose of this tent is for the quartering of personnel. The maximum capacity is eight men... It takes four men approximately 30 minutes to erect this tent. Because of its distinctive shape, it is easily observed from the air; for this reason more than usual care should be given to camouflage it properly. This tent is a limited standard item of issue and will eventually be replaced by the squad tent: M-1942.

—*Tents and Tent Pitching, FM 20-15, 1945* (abridged)

On Island X

*Quonset Home...the last word in modern design...
no corners for cobwebs...no wasted space...*

On Island X

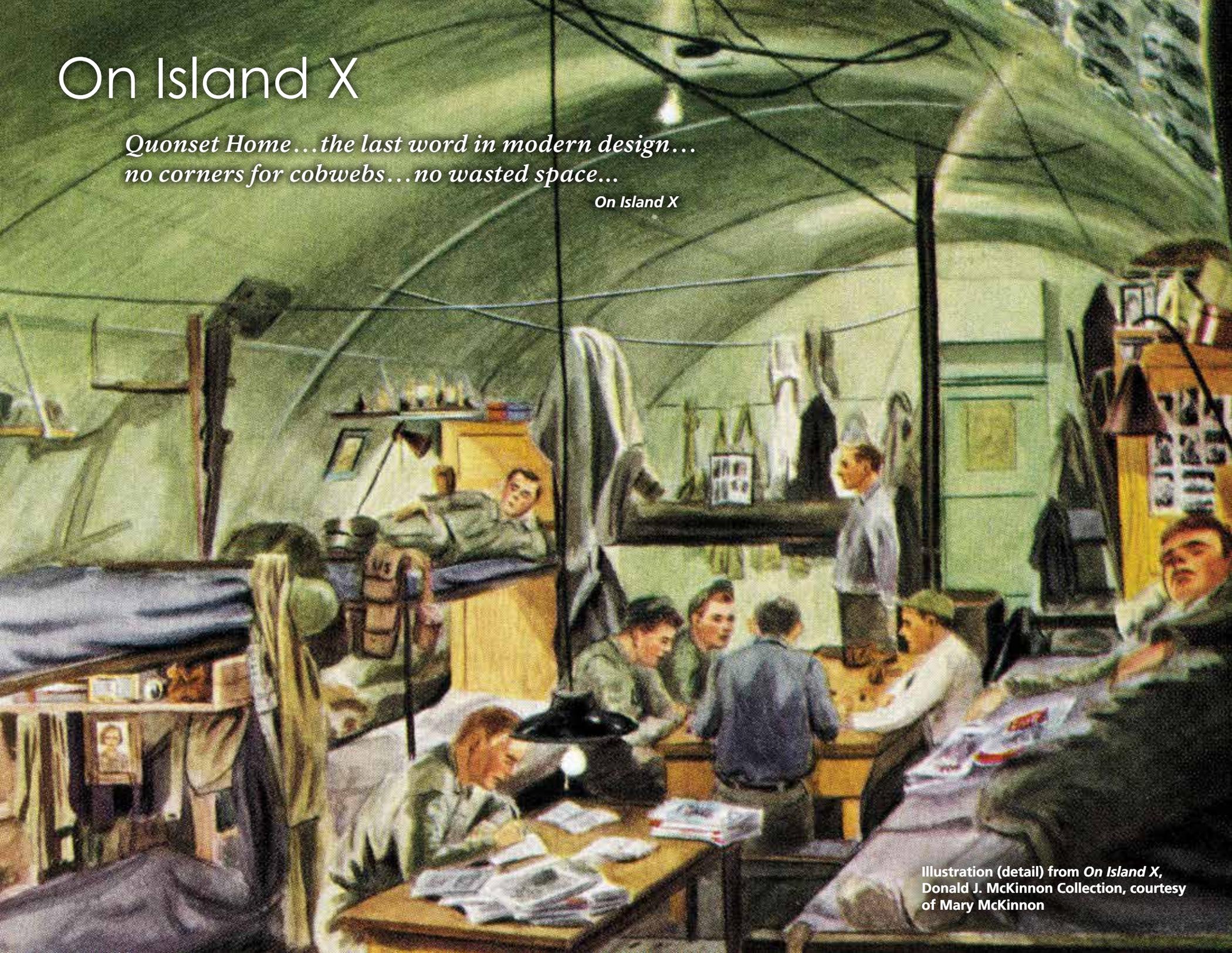


Illustration (detail) from *On Island X*,
Donald J. McKinnon Collection, courtesy
of Mary McKinnon

“Our record of accomplishments is proof that the union of our four units into one turned into a success. The Seabees who preceded us had, through necessity, rushed installations into use. Their work was adequate for the moment, but it was our job to give those installations the strength and permanence that they would need for the long pull. It meant that we had to put in long, hard hours in the mud and rain and williwaws. We did it, and we griped about it, but we also came to feel a pride in being part of an organization that took over a monotonous, uninspiring part of war and saw it through.”*

—On Island X

*Combined in early 1944: NCB 1018 and Construction Battalion Maintenance Units 547, 556 and 576.



Detail: “Williwaw.” Illustration from *On Island X*, Donald J. McKinnon Collection, courtesy of Mary McKinnon.



Donald J. McKinnon Collection, courtesy of Mary McKinnon.

Donald J. McKinnon, Chief Petty Officer, served with the 138th Naval Construction Battalion (NCB) on Attu. His *On Island X*** copy, capturing the Seabees experience of working and living on Attu, served as inspiration and material for this WWII Aleutian highlight.

As the U.S. and its allies reclaimed the Aleutian Islands, Army engineers and Navy Seabees began constructing airfields on Attu and nearby Shemya to support the strategic bombing raids on the Japanese homeland (Kuril Islands) that began in July 1943. Several Seabee units developed the Attu Naval Air Station into a major base accommodating sea and land planes, submarines and ships, associated support buildings for storage and maintenance, as well as mess halls, theaters, gyms, and housing for 7,650 Navy personnel. The 138th NCB was in charge of maintenance and construction of a more permanent installation from early 1944 – April 1945.

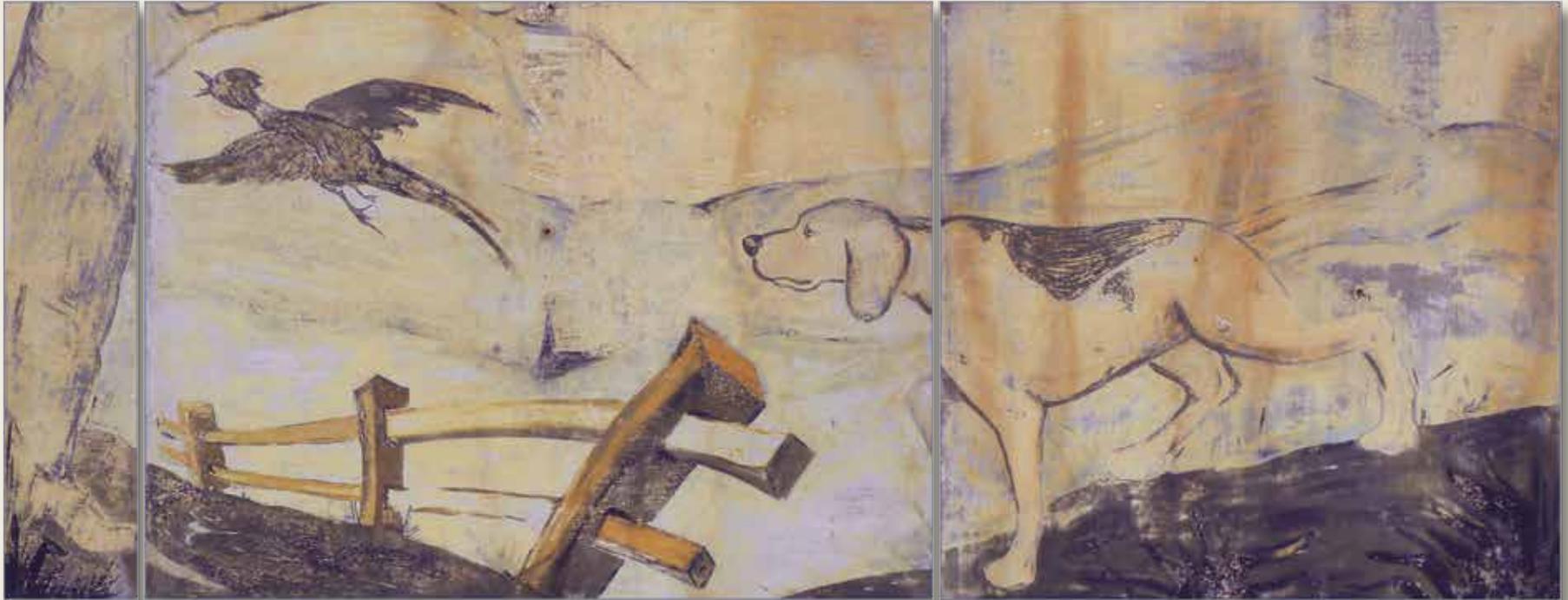
**Whether or not “Island X” was part of an official Navy code name for Attu, the 138th referred to it as “our” Island X.

Special thanks to Janet Clemens, National Park Service Historian, Alaska Office for researching and writing this highlight.

For more information see: *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II* (Chapter 23) at https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/Building_Bases/; and *The Thousand-Mile War* by Brian Garfield, University of Alaska Press, 1995.

A Look Homeward

The Murals of Fort Glenn



"Bird dog and Pheasant," triptych mural. Object stored at State of Alaska Office of History & Archaeology, Anchorage, Alaska. NPS Photograph by Historian Janet Clemens, 29 May 2015. Of the known extant Fort Glenn murals, this is the most painterly, suggesting the hand of a trained cartoonist. Note degradation of colors compared to photograph taken in 1991 at Fort Glenn below.



"Bird dog and Pheasant," mural in situ, Quonset hut, Jackson Road, Fort Glenn. Figure outlines and shadows were first lain in with charcoal which was then coated with fixative to prevent smearing. Pigments were poster paints, a thick medium that was diluted with water to attain the desired density and opacity.* Image courtesy National Park Service, 1991. All names given to murals by NPS staff; original titles, if any, are unknown.

*Personal communication between author and his mother, Mary C. Broderick, an illustrator in 1943.

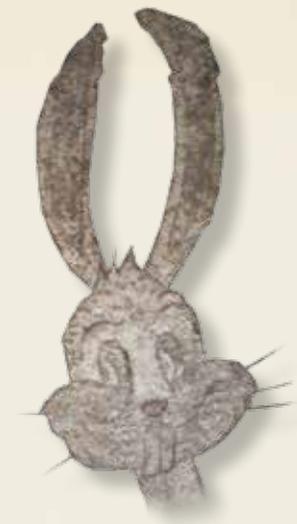
The survey noted that one structure (Quonset hut) contained two 1943 paintings...by Private Carl Ennes. It is recommended that they be removed from Umnak and placed in a museum."

—National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form; Erwin N. Thompson, Historian, Western Regional Office, NPS, San Francisco, 4 June 1986



"On Point," Umnak mural depicting hunter in baggy, "balloon" pants and Elmer "Fudd" hat. The bird dog is a "big going" English Pointer, front leg raised, frozen on "point." The Fudd hat carries the name of the Warner Bros. cartoon character Elmer Fudd, the archenemy of Bugs Bunny—"that wascally wabbit" in "Elmer speak." Fudd's role is the hapless rabbit hunter never harming the hare. NPS photograph by Historian Janet Clemens, 29 May 2015.

"What's Up Umnak?" Quonset hut monochromatic painting depicting Bugs Bunny as he first appeared in *A Wild Hare* (1940). Bug's popularity soared during WWII with servicemen seeing his sarcastic, free-wheeling character emblematic of the American spirit. Bugs and other cartoon characters battled the Axis powers in celluloid. Hermann Göring and Bugs squared off in *Herr meets Hare* and Bugs bested the Japanese in *Nips the Nips* (pulled from distribution by Warner Bros. because of racial stereotyping).



Photograph courtesy NPS, circa 1991.

In 1994, Quonset huts still stood scattered along Jackson Road, Umnak Island. These were once home to infantry, quartermaster, signal corps, and coast artillery battalions. Some structures retained their wooden arctic entries and intact window panes; others were evidenced only by their rusted steel ribs "steeped in layers of subarctic tundra and grass." In one hut, two murals were found attributed to Private Carl Ennes, 1943. Other paintings were found in neighboring structures. The murals were executed on multiple masonite[®] panels, the panoramas framed and joints hidden by vertical lathe. The murals were located on the curved walls of the Quonsets above the purlin. The pieces suggest the work of multiple hands, with technique ranging from naive to Disneyesque—a cowboy on horseback, others branding cattle... and a cowgirl (in pinup-fashion) populate one scene... the landscape desert gold with soft, blue mountains in the background. Another mural is evocative of the Pacific Northwest with snow-covered mountains, spruce and ponderosa pines... a lake with tipi and canoe. The image is blue-cold and silent with no sign of humans. Among the known murals, there is not one that portrays the Aleutians. The artists in their melancholy rendered scenes from the place they had left behind. It may have been a howling white-out beyond the Quonset, but inside it was the color of home.

[®]Masonite has long been used as a backerboard for paintings. There was a ready supply of the pressed wood fiber material on Umnak as it lined the interior walls of Quonsets.

A Watercolor War

...[the Aleutians] were somber, gloomy, fogbound, depressing...the sun rarely shone...

—Ogden Minton Pleissner



"Aleutian Morning, B-24s and P38s," watercolor by Ogden Pleissner.
Courtesy U.S. Army Art Collection

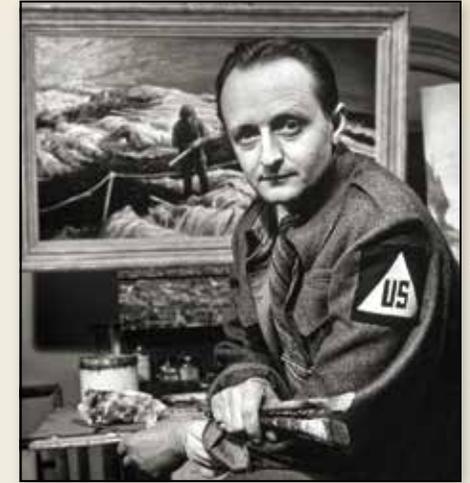


"Clearing Weather on Adak," watercolor by Ogden Pleissner. Courtesy U.S. Army Art Collection

A friend of mine asked me why I didn't paint watercolors. I said I don't know how, and he said all you have to do is keep your board a little slanted so when you wash the color onto the paper it runs downhill. That was my only lesson...

I would go out to do these watercolors [in the Aleutians] and it was so damn wet nothing would dry... I used to run into one of the [Quonset] huts where there was a fire and dry [the painting] and go out again.

—Ogden Pleissner



Ogden Pleissner, Captain U.S. Army Air Force (USAAF). Photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt, 1945.

Courtesy U.S. Army Art Collection.

Pleissner was an exacting oil painter by training, a painter of Western landscapes with their big, open vistas. But in the summer of 1943, he found himself as USAAF artist in the Aleutians, working under stormy, claustrophobic skies. Pleissner was forced to adopt the alien, fluid medium of watercolors because oils would not dry in the incessant wet. The experience was a dark time for Pleissner, and it would forever change his life and his artistic vision.

"He was unhappy [in the Aleutians] not only physically and mentally, but he felt that something had gone wrong with his work. Something, indeed, had changed, but nothing had "gone wrong." On the contrary, the very depression he experienced was the one thing that transformed him from a painter of great technical skill to an artist of moods. The fog, the gloom, the absence of sunlight, all had gotten into his work and had, somehow, wrought a change in feeling and outlook. The accustomed accuracy, the minute observations had, to a marked degree, given way to a sort of intuitional apprehension, more fundamental than mere surface appearances."

—R.G. McIntyre

Not forgotten...

Some said the fight for the Aleutians was a “vest pocket” affair, but for those who gave their lives, history will never record a bigger battle.



Verso of photograph reads: "With the playing of taps, a soldier is laid to rest atop a hill in Boot Hill Cemetery. Full military funerals are given soldiers who have died out here. There are seven soldiers buried here, mainly pilots. Umnak Island, Fort Glenn. 1942." Image courtesy National Archives.



U.S. war dead, "Little Falls Cemetery," Attu Island.

On Attu, 549 American dead. They are undressed, their personal effects collected, tagged and sent to a quartermaster depot in Kansas City to await next of kin. Swaddled in blankets, bodies are lowered into collective graves, eight to an excavation—the cruel expediency of war. Tractors scrape at the muck while chaplains sing *Rock of Ages*. General Simon Bolivar Buckner and Governor Ernest Gruening place wreaths. Buglers play *Taps*. And on the grave markers—the crosses and Stars of David—a single dog tag is nailed.

In 1946, American remains on Attu are removed and reburied at Fort Richardson near Anchorage, Alaska, or in other locations as designated by relatives. Since then, the ground on Attu known as "Little Falls Cemetery" has been reclaimed by the tundra. No visible sign of the plot remains today.

Other U.S. servicemen, Navy men and pilots, received no burial rites. The Bering Sea is their grave.

Rock of Ages

*While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.*



Photograph courtesy Archgraphics.

U.S. dogtags. Object courtesy Museum of the Aleutians.

Buried "Spider" today in this dreary, uncivilized little island [Umnak]. The funeral was impressive but superficial. The wind howling over the tundra was the funeral march and the sting of the rain helped bring tears. He lay in a plain pine box coffin and the Chaplain raised his voice over the howl of the elements... We all saluted our comrade... and that was the last chapter in the life of Lieutenant Carl Middleton.

—54th Fighter Squadron Historian recording the first death among P-38 pilots in the Aleutian Theater