NICOLAY S. PALCHIKOFF: AN ORAL HISTORY

Interviewed by William Van Benschoten

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CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Nikolay Palchikoff was born to Russian immigrants in Hiroshima, Japan, on June 10, 1924. In Japan, he attended boarding school at the Canadian Academy in Kobe. In 1940, Palchikoff emigrated to the United States under the guardianship of an American family. He attended high school in the Los Angeles area and, in 1942, joined the army, becoming an intelligence officer. After serving throughout the Pacific theater and traveling to Hiroshima weeks after the atom bomb was dropped, he was honorably discharged and returned to California. In the following years Palchikoff would marry, start a family, and graduate from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Palchikoff worked in sales and became increasingly active in politics. In the decades that followed, Palchikoff's experience in Hiroshima would lead him to become a vocal advocate for peace and against nuclear weapons. In 1986, he made his first anti-nuclear peace mission to Japan, bicycling through the country to call attention to his cause. He returned to Japan in 1995 to hike for peace and speak at a memorial commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the dropping of the bomb. In 2001, Palchikoff wrote several articles on his experience in Hiroshima. These pieces appeared in *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

William Van Benschoten, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program; B.A., History, University of California, Riverside, 1990; M.A., History, University of California, Riverside, 1991; C.Phil., History, University of California, Los Angeles, 1995.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

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Persons present during interview: Palchikoff and Van Benschoten.

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Members of Palchikoff's family reviewed portions of the transcript.

Michelle Weis, editorial assistant, prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, interview history, and guide to proper names.

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The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

MAY 24, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: All right. Today I am with—and you can correct me—Nicholay Sergaivich Palchikoff. Did I say that right?

PALCHIKOFF: Correct.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. Good. And today— What is today? May 24th?

PALCHIKOFF: First.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Twenty-first. Okay. May 21st, 2003. I'm in his home. This is tape one, side A.

We should start probably with when you were born and where.

PALCHIKOFF: I was born June 10th, 1924, in Hiroshima, Japan.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Let's start by talking about your parents, your family. Do you remember anything at all about your grandparents?

PALCHIKOFF: No. I was born in Hiroshima. My father [Sergai Alexandrovich Palchikoff] had already left Russia with my mother [Alexandra Mihailovna Valova], so I had no contact with any of my family except my father and mother and sister [Kaleria Sergaivna Drago], who happened to be born just before they came to Japan. She was born in Siberia, Vladivostok.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And did your parents— I mean, they must have talked about your grandparents. Do you have any information about them?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, but that's very— The stress always seemed to be that they were upper class. What my father's father [Alexander Palchikoff] did for a living, and what

my mother's father [Mihael Valov] did for a living, any of those things I never knew. I knew that my grandfather on my father's side supposedly raised racing horses, which I've never been able to document one way or the other. And as people get older, memories seem to always benefit them more and more, you know, like the southern private, who, by the time he's fifty, becomes a southern colonel.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: He promotes himself this time around.

PALCHIKOFF: Right.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. Well, let's talk about your father, then, if you could tell me a little bit about him, where he was born and where he grew up.

PALCHIKOFF: My father was born in Ufa, which is just into Siberia. My family was knighted back in, I believe, 1600, because they fought the Tartars to a standstill. That's what primarily I was taught all the time, about nobility and the importance of— [Telephone rings. Tape recorder turned off.]

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. You were talking about your father. I'd asked about where he was born, and you talked a little bit about that.

PALCHIKOFF: As a child, I remember he always stressed the fact that we were nobility and that we were going back to Russia, and that he was very emphatic about the Czar, and obviously was a monarchist. My mother, who he met in Siberia during the war— As you know, the Red-White War was on trains. He met my mother in Urkust, and she joined the train as a nurse. He married her, and had my sister in Vladivostok.

But my primary memory of my dad is that he seemed to be very strict about his feelings towards the Czar. The reason he went to Japan— As you know, most white

Russians went to Harbin and Manchuria or Shanghai, but he chose to go to Japan because there was an emperor there, which was similar almost, in his mind, to the Czar, and he wanted to live in a country where there was a super being, if you will.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What did he do when he got to Japan?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, my dad was trained as an attorney, and in the Russian army, noble people were in the elite, and elite officers were always in the artillery. My dad went to World War Two as an artillery captain, and when the Russians signed the peace treaty, he fought all the way across Russia to Siberia until he left Japan. When he got to Japan, he had no way of making a living except he knew how to play the violin. So he got into a Japanese theater, and in the old days in Japan, it was all silent movies. When the samurais fought on the screen, they played faster and slower. And that's how he met his first Americans.

My mother was scared to stay home by herself, so she'd take my sister to the theater every night, sit there and watch the damn movies. Some missionaries came to the movie and saw my mom and dad, so they offered him a job as a violin teacher at the Hiroshima Jogakuin, which was, and still is— But it was a woman's college, if you will, and high school, and, of course, what they taught was domestic things like how to cook western food and things like that. It wasn't like a regular university, as UCLA is. And that's how they met, and my father took the job as a violin teacher.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And the missionaries that he met, they were going to play a very important part, weren't they, later on?

PALCHIKOFF: Not in my life so much, but in their life. You know, they were always very close. They lived in Hiroshima, and there were very few Caucasians that

lived there. My father was kind of king of the Russian Caucasians, because whenever any Russians would— And basically there's only three families that ever moved into Hiroshima. They would always come and talk to my dad. They were usually people that were peasants and fought in the wars, privates, so they looked upon my father as the guy that blessed whatever was going on over four or five people.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So it was a fairly small Russian community, then.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Very small.

PALCHIKOFF: Actually, there was one, two, three, four families. Actually, one was not a family; he was a Russian colonel who made a living making bread and pushing a pushcart around the streets in Hiroshima, selling his bread.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Describe, as you got older—you know, five, six, seven, eight—describe the relationship that you began to develop with your father. How would you describe him as a father?

PALCHIKOFF: It was not very close, really. Until I was nine, I was at home. Then I went to Kobe, to the Canadian Academy, and my views changed a great deal from the beliefs of my father. I really don't feel that I loved them—or loved him, anyway—because all he was always trying to prove was the superiority of the Czar's regime over everything else. I began, because I lived in Japan, and went to Kobe and went to school with some missionary kids, where I met people of different cultures, that my thinking was beginning to change. I didn't perceive that at the time as such, but as I look back, I realize now what was happening to me, that here was this man that was

trapped into the history of twenty, ten years ago, and couldn't burst out of the bubble, and there was so much for me to learn.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I was going to ask, too, about how well— And you had to gather this, I'm sure, later on, as you got to know him better and heard stories about him and from him, but how comfortable was he, I guess, in Japanese society?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, in Japan, the Caucasian people in a small city like Hiroshima, because there were so few of us, they looked upon us as something special. And as I read about our president [George W. Bush]'s daughters misbehaving, I wouldn't have thought in a minute, without ever having been lectured to, ever do anything that might embarrass my dad in Japan. I was always on alert, like, you know, I didn't have the normal childhood where you run around and have Halloween and so forth and so on, always making sure that I set a proper example in front of the Japanese people.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Talk a little bit, too, about religion, because I was just looking at the wall over there where you have your father's icons. Talk about the impact of religion, the influence of religion on you.

PALCHIKOFF: Well, my father was very religious. He always— You know, the Greek Orthodox, they fasted on Wednesday and Friday, ate fish. My father would light the lampada, or the candles, and he would pray probably every morning for about an hour. He'd get on his knees and pray, and I was not part of that. Neither was my mother, really.

And as an example of his deep belief—this is a little going ahead—I can remember when I was ten years old and I came back from Kobe, my first time in

school with the American kids and other kids of other nations, that the missionaries offered my dad to go to the United States to teach music in the United States.

My father made his decision on the following basis. He put "yes" on one piece of paper, "no" on the other, and he folded up the pieces of paper, put them in a hat, and he went and prayed for approximately two, three hours, and said, "God will make the decision." And he reached in and, unfortunately, picked out "no."

And at that time, at my young age, intellectually I was ridiculing him. How could an intelligent man, educated as an attorney, supposedly of high class and so forth, take the destiny of his family on two pieces of paper? I didn't think that God was running around moving people's hands, which piece of paper to take. But he was that devout.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Talk a little bit about your mother. What about her background and her education and so on?

PALCHIKOFF: There are two classes of Dvarinin. One is Patonstvini Dvarinin, which is, you pass on your nobility, and the other is just Dvarinin, which is an award to you, which you can't pass on. Her father was of the other, so he couldn't pass on his knighthood or whatever you want to call it. Everybody seems to be a knight when they come from a foreign country, you know. He was supposed to— She never said what he did. As I understand it, they were wealthy, and they went to Paris every summer so her father could gallivant around. He had an illegitimate child, from what I understand.

I really have never got into the relationships with their parents. It was all kind of— The only thing that was important was the stature, that they were of equal noble

standing, and, therefore, theoretically— This is beside the point, but the last time I was in Russia, I went to find where my father went to school, and I was asked to join this group to fight for the land. You know, all the foreign Russians from all over the world start piling into Russia, wanting their land back. They approached me, and I said, "You know, I never lived here, I never fought for this country. Who am I to go out and kick out people that made a home, and say, 'Hey, guys. There's a mistake. This is not yours, it's mine,' when I never lived there, I'm not a citizen of Russia." It was interesting what selfishness would do.

So if I'm getting ahead, you know, kick me.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: No, no. That's fine. Talk a little bit about— What is your mom's name, first of all?

PALCHIKOFF: Alexandra.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And how would you describe her personality, her temperament?

PALCHIKOFF: She was, I suppose because she had to be, very subservient to my dad, but she was much more liberal in her thinking than my father. Like, he didn't want her to cut her hair, wanted her to wear it in a bun, so always, you know, she couldn't have modern hair. Never wore any makeup, because that was not proper. She made friends with the Russian people that lived in Hiroshima, and went to play cards in the evening in the summer, I recall. I would walk her there and go get her, because it wasn't that far, but my father didn't want to socialize with people that were not of his stature. But my mother went anyway, by herself. So she was fairly strong, but, you know, what can you do to complain?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You say that she was less religious than your father. Was there any friction between them on that matter, or did have an agreement?

PALCHIKOFF: No, no. My mother was, I guess, the same as what you'd call a— What do you call Mormons that kind of have swayed away? There's a term they have.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Oh, really? I'm thinking of Catholic. Lapsed. Sort of lapsed Catholic.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. You know, when she would swear, she would cross her mouth and so forth, but she wasn't— It was more of a habit. Where my father, I mean, you know, he was really— He believed God was right there, guiding his every move.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And what was your relationship with her as a young boy and then later?

PALCHIKOFF: I was very fond of her, and I thought that my father was cruel to her in many ways. I would even consider it now, knowing what people consider domestic violence, that my father was involved in that by having these heart attacks. As soon as things didn't go right, he would have a heart attack and go to bed for three, four days, making everybody run around, thinking like he's on his death bed.

Well, you know, if this was true, he must have died fifty times in my lifetime. And I thought that was a very cruel way to treat your family, when you don't talk to anybody for three, four days, and isolate yourself. All you could hear was groans of pain, but after a while you learned that, okay, keep going, you know. That helped me in my life.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: She had four children, right?

PALCHIKOFF: Three.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Three children.

PALCHIKOFF: Right.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Let's talk a little bit about that, and about the siblings that you had. You had, I believe, an older sister, right, who was [unclear].

PALCHIKOFF: She lives in L.A. Unfortunately, my relationship with them was not very close. As it developed— It took time, though. We're going to jump into World War Two, practically, when I talk about my siblings. My sister was normal, and she wanted to wear lipstick and stuff. And I can remember we came home for the summer vacation once and she forgot to take her makeup off, and my father slapped her because she had makeup on.

I only spent three months maximum out of the year with my family, and my sister went to school with me, so we knew each other better. But my little brother [David Palchikoff] I didn't know well at all. He became a casualty of the war. As I told you, my father was crazy about the military, and so when I got him a job in Tokyo after I got him out of Hiroshima, all of a sudden the GIs made a little American uniform for my brother, and they'd come pick him up and ride him around in the jeep. I told my dad, "You know, this is not good." And he thought it was a sign of friendship, and these army guys were great. I said, "Dad, he's probably getting whores for them." You know, he spoke Japanese. "Probably selling cigarettes for them." I mean, no adult group of people are going to befriend a little—what was he then—twelve or thirteen years old, and run him around. I said, "You know, this is crazy."

Obviously, because of his military and honor, military honor, he didn't believe me, and he turned out to be a very, I would say, not, I suppose, bad, but he joined the army after I brought him to America, and the army asked him to leave, either that or get court-martialed because of his debts he accumulated. He lied to me. I loaned him money. He stole money from my mother. She gave him money to pay for the gravesite, and all of a sudden she gets a call, and says, "We're going to take the gravestone off because you haven't paid for it." And I had to go salvage it, and so forth. And he turned out to be a very bad person.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And he was born in 1933, right?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What was his name?

PALCHIKOFF: David.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: We should probably get on the record, too, that eventually both your mother and father come to the U.S. When, approximately, do they do that? That was a little bit after—

PALCHIKOFF: It was just after I graduated from UCLA, I think, because I had to put up a $1,000 bond for each one of them before they could come to America. I brought my sister over first, and I brought my mother and father and my kid brother next. My father was not very happy here for the first period of time, and then I got him a job at the Monterey Language School teaching Russian, because I was in the army reserves and I knew some people. So he had a job, and they were fairly happy up in Monterey.

This sounds insane, but my father would call me and say, "Oh, I just got a call from General so-and-so in Germany, saying what a great guy David is and what a

great interpreter." You know, if you just think about it, what general is going to stay up in the middle of the night to call somebody in the United States to say their sergeant's son is doing a good job? I mean, to see that as an honor instead of, "My god, what lengths will this kid go to, to lie?"

His faith in the military service, and the fact that his son was doing so well, it's like when he first saw him it was like the first American soldier he ever saw in his life. And the first question he asked me was if I was an officer.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: It's a rank, right? It was extremely—

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, you know, here he is, looking around in his wrecked home in Hiroshima. He doesn't know where I've been for the last four years. A guy walks into your house, says, "Dad!"

And he says, "Hey, are you an officer?"

I said, "Jesus Christ. Give me a break."

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So military values, then, and sort of the military ethos, was very, very important for your—

PALCHIKOFF: Oh, absolutely. And he passed it on to my brother in a certain way. Not in the lies and so forth, but when he died, my brother went through all the stuff of taking medals that I'm sure he bought at some junk dealers, and pinning them onto my father, and on and on. And, you know, the Legion of Honor. My kid brother got a Legion of Honor? I mean, the guy was asked to leave the service. But the mentality, the way he was raised, to contaminate the whole— I wasn't going to go, but my mother begged me to go to the funeral, and I went to see this. It was the last straw.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So your parents come over, then, about what, ’48, ’49, approximately? You said, I think—

PALCHIKOFF: Something like that.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And your sister was first to come over. She’s still alive. Your parents, I assume, are dead, then.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And how about your younger brother?

PALCHIKOFF: He died from cancer.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. Just a few more questions, and then we’ll move on to your time in Japan. In reading some of the information that you gave me, I was wondering, do you know what your family did between 1917 and 1921 in Russia, before they came to the United States?

PALCHIKOFF: Fought.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: They fought.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. See, he joined the Admiral [Alexander] Kolchak’s army, and they went back and forth. He would be turning over in his grave if he knew that the Americans financed them, because he thought America was run by Jews, and, you know, on and on and on. They just sat in a train, and the train would go this way for a while, then they would lose. Well, you saw— You know, the distances were terrific, and they’re fighting these battles off the trains.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Railroad tracks, yes. Did your father talk very much about his experiences in the war?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, about the fact that I was named after his brother, who was killed by the communists, and tortured, and, of course, you know, what you believe, I don't know, but that they put a pipe up against his stomach and put a rat in the pipe and started a fire, so the only way the rat could get out was to eat his way through his stomach, and all these grotesque inhuman stories that would come up. And he himself took pride in the fact that whenever they would shoot any communists they'd catch, that he would go and give them the grace, you know, and shoot them in the head with his pistol, like that was a great—

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Act of kindness.

Okay. Some of these questions we've already gotten to. What are some of your earliest memories, I guess, of growing up in Japan?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, it was all military. I lived on a street that went to the railroad where the war with Manchuria had started. I would see the soldiers marching off to the railroad station to get on the train. And then, of course, came the China War [Sino-Japanese War], so it was almost constant troops going by the house. And then, of course, then came the troops back, and in Japanese military tradition, if you were a sergeant, a sergeant brought your remains back in a box, in a white box strapped to his chest. And then I would see them coming the other way, with their little white boxes.

Played Japanese soldier heroes, like there was one that became famous. Three Japanese soldiers that carried a— I don't know what they used to call them before World War Two. Like a bomb in a long tube, and they ran with it and blew up the barbed wire so the Japanese soldiers could attack through the barbed wire. They were

the heroes of the time, and they had statues built. We would play games, and my Japanese friends, you know, carrying the broom and charging, and so forth and so on.

My games— Because a lot of the friends I had were children of the military, because of my father's exposure to the Japanese military. Because after he got a job as a violin teacher, they opened a yoningaku, which is a preparatory school like West Point, a military preparatory school in Hiroshima. And in Japan, all the officers had to be bilingual, and he taught Russian there. Actually, that's what saved him during the war. But he took great pride that when you go in the gates, there's an imperial seal on the first building, and you always stop and bow to the seal, and then you walk in, and when you leave, you turn around and bow to the seal again. He continued his whatever you call that, reverence or whatever, to a military power.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: As a small boy, how would you describe yourself, growing up? There's obviously this sort of military environment, partly.

PALCHIKOFF: Basically, not having been able to ever compare other childhoods, at the time, I seemed to be happy, you know, and entertained myself a lot, because— You know, I played with my Japanese friends, but I would say the majority of the time I spent by myself. I played games like being a conductor on a train, and being a taxi driver, sitting at my mother's sewing machine, you know, on the treadle, and driving, and all sorts of games that I dreamt up.

Occasionally would go on a picnic. My father liked to fish, and I'd go with him to fish. Fishing wasn't like in America. You know, you just stood on the bank of any river in Hiroshima, with a bamboo stick. I can't remember any fish that we ever caught, but I guess he did.

In the summertime, in the evening, he'd go rowing, because the rivers were a great deal of the life in Hiroshima. They had restaurants that were built on rivers. People would rent rowboats and scull boats and sampans, and in the evening when it was a little cooler on the river, because Hiroshima got very hot, people would search out the river. Most American kids, missionary kids, all went up into the mountains. But, of course, financially I couldn't do that, so I went back to Hiroshima to spend the summer with my family. It was very humid, very hot.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What was the relationship between these missionary families and sort of the larger Japanese culture, and then the sort of smaller community of Russian immigrants? It sounds like an interesting situation.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. Well, you know, I was really not a fan of missionaries. Like, I lived with the missionaries from when I was nine till I came to America during the rest of the year, and I never could figure out what they got paid for. They had this beautiful home, three-story home, and they had two maids. And aside from teaching religion in one of the middle schools once a week or something, I can't remember the guy doing anything. I guess he talked some people into raising angora rabbits, and cutting their fur and making neckties. I don't know how many people got involved in that, but, you know, there are movies taken of his success of starting a little industry in Japan.

These people, of course, all became— They were Presbyterian missionaries. But overall, I could not see any impact between the Japanese people and the religious effort. And, you know, we lived about—we've got pictures of it—about, considered in America, one block away from a Methodist church that was built, which was one of

the structures that lived through the Hiroshima bombing, so that I could identify where the house was, and so forth.

Nagasaki had the first Christian church, and it was always interesting to me how we that trusted God would attack the two cities where Christianity—quote, unquote—"blossomed." But, you know.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Let's talk a little bit about your schooling. Did you go to a public or a private school?

PALCHIKOFF: No, I went to Canadian Academy, which was a school, I believe, run by missionaries. It was an English-type school, and we learned Latin and French. It was an education far ahead of the American system. And I did very well. In fact, one of the reasons they brought me to America was on a kind of a scholarship, the missionaries. That was a very interesting period in my life, where in Japan I was looked upon because of my abilities as a student, and all of a sudden you come to America and you become an apple polisher. The transition was difficult, but the educational systems were so different.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Describe—You'd go to school at Kobe, where the Canadian Academy is.

PALCHIKOFF: Right.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What, I guess, topics— What subjects were you interested in? Did you play sports?

PALCHIKOFF: When I was in eighth grade, I believe I had fourteen subjects. I had modern history, ancient history, Latin, French, English. I mentioned modern history,

ancient history, right? And you had biology, mathematics. Let's see. And if you did well, you were exempt from the final exams, and the exams covered the whole year.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Was there anything that you really shined in? Was there any topic that you enjoyed quite a bit?

PALCHIKOFF: It wasn't enjoyment so much as accomplishment. It's like, you know, I got all A's, so I never had to take final exams. I don't know if that was because I didn't want to take final exams and have to study so hard, or, you know. I seemed to have enjoyed British history quite a bit. American history was okay, but everything they taught me there was destroyed when I landed in America. You know, the land of the free and so forth? And in Japan, all the people of color were diplomats, representing a country or something. And when I looked over the side of the boat in San Francisco and I could hardly understand these black people that were talking to each other, I could see this was not a land of the free. I was so disappointed that why would anybody teach me an untruth? What's wrong with saying, "Yeah, we're going through the process"? In those days, they were supposed to be less intelligent than we were, and all these myths, you know, when I came to America. It was quite a shock.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Did you come upon any important teachers, influential teachers, that were pointing you in a direction?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. The one I remember most was at Hamilton High School, and she was my chemistry teacher. One day I was kind of goofing around, and she wanted me to stay. She took me aside, and said, "You know, you have leadership qualities, and you can lead people to do bad things." [Cries] Excuse me.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: That's okay. Let me pause it.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

PALCHIKOFF: And she said, "The choice is yours," and, you know, that left an impact on me. But, basically, she's the only teacher that I really felt, I guess, cared about me, you know? The rest were— You know, it was so simple to get grades in America, I never put forth an effort, but this was a lesson that wasn't an educational lesson. So I appreciated that a lot.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. And how do you feel that's affected you?

PALCHIKOFF: Huh?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: How do you feel that's affected you as the years progressed?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. Well, I always remembered that, and I tried always to select being a good leader rather than goofing around. I came to America at sixteen, and earned my own way and owed nothing to anybody. It was a stable influence, because living by yourself as a high school kid, and the job I had, of course, was very menial. I didn't have any high school life, because I worked eight hours a day. But it left a tremendous impact.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Before we get you to the United States, because that's going to be fascinating to talk about that transition, and also your impression of the United States when you come here, I just had another question, though, about Japanese culture, and being a part of that. At several points in your memoir, you talk about discrimination, you know, about episodes of discrimination. I was wondering, was there much? Did you feel many, or did you feel different?

PALCHIKOFF: No, I felt different. Like I said, I had to behave when I was home in Hiroshima, and the discrimination was that they expected me to be better than them

and I had to live up to their expectation. It wasn't that they were mean to me, that I couldn't go into a theater or I couldn't go into a restaurant where I wanted to. Not that; it was the reverse. As an example of the kind of people the Japanese were, my brother lost his wallet. About an hour later, this old lady—you know, there were a lot of old ladies that were hunched over, walking with canes—walked up to our front door and returned his wallet. Well, you know, they were very loyal, very honest, trustworthy, obviously contrary to what we believe in history.

An example of their bushido, I guess you'd call it, was the fact that when they bombed Pearl Harbor, they bombed the navy ships and they killed nine hundred sailors who were in uniform. Never dropped one bomb on the city of Honolulu; never injured one civilian. And our excuse for dropping the bomb in Hiroshima was, "Look what they did in Pearl Harbor."

Everybody knew the war was coming. I mean, you know, knew a year ahead of time. I left a year ahead of time when all the missionary wives and navy officers' wives were leaving, because war was imminent. That was a year before the war. And to say that there was something that happened that they did that was sneaky, you know, it certainly wasn't equal to Granada, talking about attacking countries, or Iraq. No declaration of war, nothing. So, you know, I have different feelings about that.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. I'm going to flip this over.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

MAY 24, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: This is side B of tape one.

I wanted to ask one more question about your parents. You talked already about how there was the expectation, I think, with your parents that you would sort of behave yourself, act a certain way in public, and not sort of besmirch the family name. And were there other expectations that you felt, expectations about—

PALCHIKOFF: I didn't feel it as an expectation. It was just something I felt as a person, that I should not embarrass my parents. I was shocked that somebody's president's daughter would go in and get drunk in public, you know, like I just couldn't even imagine that they wouldn't have the feeling of either loyalty to their father or to the office. To ridicule it in such a way, it was just something that was— You knew better. I mean, we never had a lecture on it, you know.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. You come to the United States in 1940 as part of the scholarship, then, that you spoke about.

PALCHIKOFF: Kind of. A bunch of missionaries got together and said, "We're going to take you to America."

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. Where do you live, I guess, those first couple of months in Los Angeles?

PALCHIKOFF: Okay. What happened was that one of the people, one of the missionaries' sons was a very, very close friend of mine, so I came over with his mother and him. He was a Hollywood nut, so he had to live somewhere— The

address was close to Hollywood, so we moved into the Fairfax area, and maybe that's the prejudice you're talking about that I experienced.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right, right. I got confused. But you're right. It was a mostly Jewish community then.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. I went to Fairfax High for almost a semester, and it was quite clear that one group of people was dominant over another.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What were your first impressions of American culture in Los Angeles?

PALCHIKOFF: I suppose the interesting interpretation of freedom, like high school kids going to school knowing you're not supposed to smoke and it's not allowed, going to class with cigarettes in their pocket, to say, "Hey, you know, I'm a smoker, guys." This feeling of accomplishment by being not part of the group, I guess that we call individuality. It wasn't an intellectual individuality. It was like writing dirty words on your Levis. Individuality. It didn't take much talent, really. For some reason, there was this desire for recognition of some sort. I really wasn't involved in high school, because, as I say, I worked. But all these kids going to football games, and cars, you know, it was just absolutely overwhelming.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: How good was your English, I guess, before you came over?

PALCHIKOFF: It was fine, because I learned English when I was nine years old at the Canadian Academy.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. So you had no problem that way. And I would imagine, then— What was your knowledge of U.S. culture, then, before coming over?

PALCHIKOFF: Not very much. There really isn't a culture here. I mean, it's a bunch of individuals doing whatever they want to do, and where there's no central theme of what is an American. It's really void. I suppose coming from a country where discipline is very important, and people behaved in a certain way, it was a little unusual.

Actually, all my friends were younger nurses at the hospital. I lived in the hospital, in the laundry, and I didn't have anything to do with girls at the high school or anything.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: This is one of your first jobs, then, at the hospital?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. Well, my first job, the missionaries were going to provide for me, and I went to school at University High. And you know that Methodist church on Wilshire Boulevard?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: I lived on Holmby Avenue. They provided me an apartment, and then they got me a job cleaning the church. The church and I really didn't mix too well. My guardian [Fredrick Blanchard], who I had to have, legally, to come to this country, was the chief of staff at the Culver City Hospital, so he got me a job as a janitor at the Culver City Hospital, and I quit Uni High and moved over to Hamilton High so I could walk to work from Culver City.

I, first of all, cleaned hallways, and then did dishes, and then they taught me how to do some simple bloodwork, so at night I would cover for the lab. Then they taught me how to do simple X-rays, you know, like a broken arm. You don't have to be a scientist of any kind to take a picture of an arm. And then I would set up

surgeries and emergency surgeries, and that's where I got my love for medicine, which I couldn't pursue because I didn't have any funds. And I'm glad I didn't, after seeing where medicine has gone in this country. It's something I'm sure I wouldn't want to be involved in today.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So you're going to high school, and then you're also working in the evening at the hospital, right? How about L.A.? I thought it'd be good to ask a question about Los Angeles. I mean, how was it to live in L.A. at this time? You talked about the Red Line, for instance, yesterday.

PALCHIKOFF: When I went to the Fairfax area, there was another guy that lived in the court, a couple of kids, and so my first sinful thing I did was went to the [Ziegfeld] Follies down on Main Street, and I'm sure much to the disappointment of all the missionaries if they knew that. That was about my introduction to L.A., but I didn't—I moved out soon thereafter, so aside from a football game that a nurse took me to at the [Los Angeles] Coliseum—I think SC [University of Southern California] was playing Notre Dame—I really didn't have the time to go to L.A. Like, in the summer, I went to summer school so I could get out of high school faster. And I worked seven days a week.

So I really didn't get into L.A., you know, and see all the beautiful parts of L.A. till after I got back from the service, and then I began to understand the beauty of L.A., and then I began to understand that, yes, we really have a culture, but, unfortunately, it's a culture of hate and exploitation and do anything for a buck. I mean, if you were to take an average— I mean, I know lots of Americans, including all my kids [Jan Louis, Kim Eileen, Kai Clarke, Jay Fredrick Palchikoff], that are

exact opposites of what I just said. But as a total, if you were to say, you know— Then I got involved in politics, and I got to know, unfortunately, how politics work.

But L.A. just became— You know, Culver City was part of L.A., as far as I was concerned. I didn't see it as a different area. It certainly was like the outskirts of L.A. at the time. But like the Red Line and so forth, after I got drafted, I used the Red Line to go see my girlfriend. Otherwise I would have never ridden the Red.

A school friend of mine whose father was something to do with a bank, he was a friend of mine in Japan at the Canadian Academy, and I went to Pasadena on the freeway one Sunday, which was a treat. It wasn't all congested, and it was so beautiful driving down the freeway with the trees and so forth, which is a far cry from today.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right, yes. You're lucky if you get on it.

PALCHIKOFF: It was like a Sunday drive. They had a convertible with the top down. I went into Pasadena. So that was part of L.A. And, you know, L.A.'s got a lot of memories for me; my wife, my first wife [Dawn Clark], and my kids. I was then more successful, so I had season tickets to the [Los Angeles] Dodger games. I'd go with my kids occasionally, and they'd all want to see the World Series. It was just a wonderful time and wonderful memories.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: While you're going to high school and working, and just before you enter the service, are you keeping in touch with your family? Are they visiting?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh, god, no. Absolutely not. I would occasionally get a letter from them. But, of course, after the war started, I never had any communication.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: In December 1941, describe when you heard about Pearl Harbor and what you were doing.

PALCHIKOFF: Well, actually I was scrubbing the hallway in the hospital, and a nurse came running to me and told me that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. The emotions I felt were, I guess, some of anger, and concern for my parents and my family, of course. And then it wasn't long after that that I got a communication from somebody, through the Red Cross, that my dad was in a concentration camp.

I tried to enlist, and, of course, I couldn't, because I wasn't a citizen, in spite of the fact they were looking for Japanese interpreters. In fact, when I got to be eighteen, I tried to have my draft board draft me, and a lady said that she would never draft me because she couldn't trust me because I was a Jap. I'm probably being a little redundant. And so I had— The boys' vice principal in those days— You know, they had the boys' vice principal and the girls' vice principal.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I didn't know that.

PALCHIKOFF: And the educational system was much fuller, I think, than it is now. So he helped me find a draft board that would draft me, and I asked them to draft me and they did.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Why did you enlist?

PALCHIKOFF: Why didn't I enlist?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: No. Why did you? Why did you want to get into the war, in other words?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh. Well, first of all, I'm a young kid, and that American flag is going back and forth in my eyes, and you're beginning to listen to the propaganda. It

was really interesting, because here I was, my best friends, everybody I knew were Japanese, and all of a sudden I'm slowly learning to hate them. And then you put on top of that that your father's supposed to be in a concentration camp, and you believe the worst. I guess it was the thing everybody else was doing. It wasn't any, actually, sense of patriotism, I guess; it was more a fundamentally personal thing I did. I would never have done that with the knowledge I have of my government today.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: That's what I was going to ask you. What would your decision be today?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, I would have not gone, because I knew what was the truth, which was that we forced Japan into the war, and then we called them whatever we called them and used excuses to annihilate them. Their conduct in China and in Manchuria wasn't all that much better than the conduct of Americans and Germans and French as they took China apart, you know, with the extraterritorial rights that they had. As far as I'm concerned, the moral code in the army and in the service during a war is that you don't treat your enemy any different than you do your own soldiers.

Under the Japanese bushido or whatever they want to call it, they treat American prisoners the same way they treated their own soldiers. I mean, you know, there was no such thing— Bataan [Death] March was nothing compared to what Japan thinks as disciplinary action. I mean, if a Japanese soldier dropped a rifle that has an imperial crest on it, you know, that was a major crime, and he was put into these cages where he couldn't stand, sit, or lie down for days. When I used to go horseback riding

with the Kempai Tai in Japan, I would see these guys, and their crime would be that they dropped the imperial seal.

And so when we used the same techniques in Vietnam— Remember that L.A. police officer had these tiger cages?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: For some reason, we seem to learn the worst instead of saying, "Gee, this was wrong. We shouldn't do that."

[Tape recorder turned off.]

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. We're back on. We were talking about why you enlisted. I know that when I read your memoir, there was a part where you said that you felt at that time that—quote—"The U.S. was a step above the conduct of the majority of the nations of the world." And I wanted to ask, you had been in the United States for about a year. Where did that feeling come from?

PALCHIKOFF: Propaganda.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Propaganda.

PALCHIKOFF: That we were better. You know, the first thing you do is cartoons. All the Japanese faces and their heads were made like a rat, with great big teeth, and they were terrible people. And, yes, the rape of Nanking was a terrible thing to do, but it wasn't any worse than when [Douglas] MacArthur made the 11th Airborne march all the way to Hokkaido because they raped somebody. General Yamashta had orders out that you can't do that sort of thing. It wasn't even allowed in his court-martial before we shot them, you know, when I read the Yamashta papers.

Power is always right, unfortunately. It's just like if you're a small guy with an idea that is contrary to what the government wants to hear, you're drowned out. You don't have the equal facilities in a free country to get your message out. No television company's going to take you, because they might lose advertising from some other company. So you really don't have a voice. But when you're young, I believed. Just like when I got out of the service— I joined the service right away so we wouldn't have another atom bombing. I believed. I didn't know that at the time [Joseph] Stalin had proposed to the UN [United Nations] that the atom bomb should be in the control of the United Nations, and we said, "We're the only moral nation in the world that can have this power."

And so Stalin says, "Okay. Well, we're going to have to build one to defend ourselves against these moral people."

And we wouldn't have to go through all of what we're going through had we stopped and said, "Yes, you know, this is a big responsibility. It'd be better if all of us had a decision-making voice in this."

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. Before we get you into the service, I have just a few more questions, loose ends. One of them was an encounter that you had with navy intelligence. This was before you are actually drafted. Could you maybe describe that?

PALCHIKOFF: It was very interesting. I was at the Culver City Hospital, and my boss, Mr. Hoppy, came up and said, "The navy intelligence is coming, and they want to take you down to Little Tokyo and see what's going on down there." And, of course, then I was probably seventeen. You get an inflated value of yourself. You

know, here's the navy intelligence, and I don't know what the hell I was supposed to do.

We went into town and we walked around, and I think probably what was happening, they were questioning me and seeing where my loyalties were, because I can't imagine what they thought I could do for them. You know, they said, "Well, listen to the conversations." When three Caucasians walk into a Japanese restaurant, I mean, you know, one kid and two guys, you can see their guns slapped onto their body, what is anybody going to say? If they asked me to go by myself, and I sat down and had some sushi somewhere, and I spoke the language, and on and on and on, that'd be different.

It's like when I questioned prisoners of war, I did it with kindness. I wanted them to know I care about them, and I was of the same culture they were, and I was very successful at it. They said they were going to come back and get me to help them and all that. Never heard from them again, so I think they were just feeling me out.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What was your connection to the Japanese American community, the Japanese community in Los Angeles, if any?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, I didn't know too many, because I was at work most of the time, and the only people I'd run into would be a patient occasionally. And, of course, when the war started, you know, everybody had to be off the streets. I was probably the only true Japanese living in L.A., because I was born there, and, of course, because I didn't look Japanese, they had no curfew on me. But all the other people had a curfew.

It always seemed interesting that, you know, again reinforcing that how you look, racism. No question about it, whether you're a policeman or not, he looked at me and I stopped and stuttered.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You said that in 1940 people in Japan, missionaries were leaving with their wives and friends. They were leaving, and they knew that the war was imminent.

PALCHIKOFF: Everybody knew the war was coming.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. When you come to the United States just before Pearl Harbor, was there the same feeling there?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh, not in America.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Not in America.

PALCHIKOFF: No. We went to Hickham Field when we got off at Hawaii, and all the little red, yellow, and blue planes were lined up and down the strip. Absolutely not. See, then, if the people knew— It's like now, that we were demanding, or some people were demanding that we have weapons inspection. There would be people, because a lot of businessmen in Japan and so forth demanded, "Let's negotiate."

I mean, why were we fighting Japan? What was the reason we attacked Japan, or Japan attacked us? It was over oil. The Japanese was a manufacturing nation, and they needed oil, and they were coming to the end of it. All the buses had been long time converted to charcoal burners. And the big argument then in Japan was that [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt was supposed to go to Japan to take care of these problems, and— What was his name? Not Yamashta. Kanoi. Tojo gave Kanoi so many months. He said, "You know, we just have so much oil left." And he says,

"We'll probably lose the war, but we've got to do something, so we're going to use that oil to attack the United States and see if we can't get oil and build the hemisphere where we can survive economically." That was the issue, and everybody knew what the issue was.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: A question about your self-identity. You're born of Russian émigrés, Russian parents. You're born in Japan, and you spend a really important part of your life there. And then you come to the United States and you find yourself, you know, at the beginning of the war at least, going to serve in the U.S. military. How were you defining yourself?

PALCHIKOFF: I was an intellectual prostitute. The people that I learned to love, living there, became my enemy all of a sudden, and the hate that was developed against the Russian communists by my father became my best friends.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Very confusing, I think.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. And then after the war was over, then the reverse. And you're saying, "Who has the right to manipulate my mind like this?" But then you have get a certain amount of maturity instead of going with the flow, and it was so much easier to be against the Japanese as to stand on a street corner and say, "Hey, guys, this is wrong." I'd have been shot.

Now, at my age, I don't care. You know, I go to the Nevada test site, and I'll be kicked and peed upon and whatever else people do. It's okay, because I believe in what I'm doing. But before, it was a lot easier to join the group. And you see it as a phenomenon right now. Who's speaking out against Iraq? They are no weapons of

mass destruction. The government out-and-out lied to us, and everybody's just sitting here doing nothing. And these are adults. I was only a kid.

PALCHIKOFF: So if you were to compare, let's say, the government's role in getting the U.S. into the war, as you see it, and then the government's role today, do you feel that there's any difference? Have we become more enlightened or not, in these things? It doesn't seem so. It seems like the government—

PALCHIKOFF: I would say we're much more sophisticated, and better at lying to our citizens than we used to be. You know, like with Roosevelt's situation, he was told by I forgot which secretary, who hated Japan, and he misinterpreted on purpose the telegram that came to Roosevelt, which made it impossible for Roosevelt to go to Japan. So Roosevelt, as a human being, never had the chance, because of other people protecting their ideals, similar to now, only with communications and Internet and so forth, you would think the President of the United States today had better information, more of it at his fingertips, so he should be able to make better decisions, but unfortunately not.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: There's the argument that some have made, that FDR knew about Pearl Harbor beforehand, and that there was this attempt by the U.S. government to cause this war, sort of drag their coat, as it were.

PALCHIKOFF: Well, you know, I was telling you about the book by [David M.] Kennedy [*Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*], and it pointed out that if it wasn't for World War Two we would have been a bankrupt nation, because by 1946 we were much worse off than when Roosevelt took over from [Herbert C.] Hoover. And if it wasn't for the war, and selling all these arms

to all these countries, we would have gone bankrupt, because we had nothing. I mean, we were really in tough straits, much worse than in '32 and '33. And I believe that.

I believe right now that we're in Iraq for oil. I mean, you know, to me, it's as plain as my nose on my face. And I think that those days, the same thing happened. Japan was expanding, their manufacturing capabilities were expanding, their goods were being sold for cheaper. It was a definite threat to American business, no question about that.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. One final question. You mentioned that when you came here, you wanted to become a doctor, when you first came here. Why?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, not the moment I came here, but with my exposure in the hospital.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Oh, I see. Okay.

PALCHIKOFF: Working in the emergency room, learning how to take X-rays, and so forth. Aside from my regular duties of scrubbing the floor, the doctors kind of took to me, because I took to them, and if there was an emergency at midnight, I would be there. If there was an emergency at three in the morning, I'd be there to see what was happening, because I lived right there.

And my interest in medicine grew. In fact, when I applied at USC for medical school, I had thirty-two letters of recommendation from doctors on the staff. The guy that interviewed me, Dr. Hoyt, he said, "Well, what happens if your wife gets pregnant?" You know, I had the GI Bill that would cover a certain portion of it. And I said, "Well, what happens when your wife gets pregnant? You've got to provide for your family."

She was a school nurse, and she was earning money and I wasn't. And so I was just going to go to school while she was a school nurse. And so the ridiculous question. "So we can't have an empty seat in the sophomore class if you quit." How do you argue with that? And I didn't want to spend the rest of my life trying to satisfy my obsession. If I wasn't going to be a doctor, you know, I got my degree in psychology and got my graduate work. Unfortunately, I didn't finish— I write my thesis, but I went to SC at night and got all my credits. And then I went to work for IBM [International Business Machines], and then a surgical supply house. But that was my incentive.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. Let's talk a little bit about your service when you finally do become enlisted, because you tried, and they wouldn't have it for a while. But when you do get in— You cover your military training and where you go in the Pacific, and the action that you see in the memoir, I think, quite a bit, but I was wondering if you could maybe abstract that briefly, and talk about maybe the highlights, as you see them now, the highlights of your duty in the Pacific.

PALCHIKOFF: The highlights were the stupidity of the army. Here a guy could speak Japanese and Russian, and they wanted to make me a Signal Corps repairman. So they sent me up here to Camp Kohler, by Sacramento, and then the army came up with a plan called the ASTP program, Army Service Training Program, where they took the people with the high IQs, and were going to send them to the university for future officer material.

And so I was shipped off to Utah, which was the center, and then they decided to ship me to West Virginia, at the University of West Virginia. Obviously I didn't

want to be there. I wanted to be getting closer to home, and yet I didn't want people to think I was totally stupid, and so I went on the program of trying to get perfect zeros on my exams, you know, true and false, which is usually what the army did, and so forth. And I tried all these— Answer improperly.

The colonel that ran the program at University of West Virginia called me in and chewed my ass out, and said, "The opportunity you're having— What do you think your parents will think of you doing this? I know what you're doing."

And I said, "Colonel, ever since I've been here, I've asked to be put back in the service, into combat. It shouldn't be any news to you, and I certainly am not going to change."

And so nothing happened at that immediate time. One night I was drinking beer with my physics teacher, and she was a nice person. I got to know her. And she said, "Nick, you know, what you're doing is a waste of time."

I said, "Why?"

She said, "The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and so forth has been here checking on you, and you're just here being held incognito till they clear you so you can do whatever work they want you to do."

And, surely, a month or two later, I got my orders to go to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, back into the Signal Corps, to be trained as a teletype operator. And I'm saying, "My god, don't they ever get the message?"

And the highlight was, we were on a march, and all of a sudden they stopped the whole battalion. And I said, "They're looking for me." A jeep stopped in front of

every platoon, and he'd move to the next platoon. By the time he got to my platoon, he said, "Palchikoff?"

I said, "Here."

He said, "Come here." And he put me in the jeep, and we went right to the Medical Corps. I got all my shots, and they put me into this compound, which was behind barbed wire and so forth, and we were supposedly the only— God, I forgot the term. We were to accumulate information, but we were the only ones that were mobile. MacArthur had twenty-two such units, and we were the only mobile unit. My job was to question Japanese or listen to the radio, and/or, whatever, to get information.

We had guys that were— We were forty-two people in our outfit, actually. Half of them, of course, were people that were forced to join by getting the opportunity to either get court-martialed or join this outfit. The others were technicians, like experts in Japanese code that could read Japanese code, and I was the only interpreter. Other people were experts in radio. Radio and Radar Countermeasures was our name. And putting up antennas to try to pick up different Japanese battalions or divisions.

That was probably my high point. After that I was loaned out to the navy and to the [Navy] SEALs, wherever they needed somebody. It all looks, sounds so much like playing games now. You know, like they shipped me out with— In combat, nobody cares about papers or anything else. A lieutenant heard from a navy captain that they're going on this mission. God, they wish they could have someone that could speak Japanese. "Oh, we'll loan you Nick," you know. And I'd whip over, and

they'd go out and they'd put up these great big reflectors so the Japanese would think we were a battleship. You said, "Jesus. This is like child's play," you know. Yes, I had some interesting times.

What I was going to mention last night to you was that I was in Jolo for fifty-one days, with the guerillas there. I went there in a Filipino [unclear] so the Japanese couldn't find me, you know, and all that crap, and all this clandestine stuff. And even then these people were fighting for freedom. I met the Sultan of the Sulu Seas, who was ninety-two years old, who fought General [Jack] Pershing for freedom, because they didn't want to be Catholics. They didn't want to speak Tagalog. And not come as big news, and we can wipe them all out by saying they're terrorists.

And, you know, you say here's people that have been fighting all this time for their freedom, and supposedly who believe in freedom. And I was there. I lived with them, for Christ's sake, and I knew what they were. Nobody asked me.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: It sounds sort of like Ho Chi Minh designee, sort of an indigenous leader who was fighting for freedom.

PALCHIKOFF: I actually have a sword that he gave me, that my son has. Not Jay, but Kai has it. And you could tell the Mohammadans from the Filipinos; they carried a barong, which was a blade that looked like a leaf, and the Mohammadans from Borneo carried a kris, which was wavy like this, you know, traditional. And they had cultures that went way back, a lot longer than ours.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You go to a lot of different places. You go to Brisbane, Numea, and—

PALCHIKOFF: Numea, yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Numea and Caledonia. I'm sure I'm mangling this. Leyte.

PALCHIKOFF: Leyte.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: In the Philippines?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Yes.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And I just throw some of these names out just—

PALCHIKOFF: Numea, we landed there. It was quite a trip. We left San Francisco. It took us thirty-two days, because we didn't have any convoys, and we zigzagged all the way to Numea. We stayed there just long enough to unload and practice a little bit, and then we were shipped to Brisbane, which was MacArthur's headquarters. And every day I'd go in there, and they'd say, "Nothing happening today." I'd go lay out in the sun, and I had an Australian girlfriend. I was getting sergeant's pay, so sixty bucks a month, and I was putting thirty in the bank. I mean, I was living like a king. The Australians really resented us being there, because we were spoiling their women, they claimed.

And then all of a sudden one day I walked in, and they said, "You're leaving tonight."

I said, "Okay."

And so we went to Leyte, where the battle was raging, and from there we went to Mindinao. No, Mindoro. Excuse me. I want to make sure. They both start with— Three of them all start with an *m*. I went from Leyte— We went to Manduki [phonetic]. No, Mindoro.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I believe it was Mindoro, too, in the memoir.

PALCHIKOFF: And there the Japanese hit one of our tankers, and it was all burning and it lit up the sky. It was obvious. For three days and three nights, MacArthur made the convoy go past all the islands, and so we'd draw the Japanese kamikazes. We had ninety attacks in three days and three nights.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: That's amazing.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. One of them, after we landed, hit a tanker. It was burning, so we could see the whole beachhead. But by then, basically Japan had really nothing to fight with, you know, because if they had anything, they could have come down and just bombed everything right up because it was light as day. On the day— I didn't want to die locked up in a hole somewhere. You know what they do is they put you in and they lock all the compartments, so if a torpedo hits one part, the water won't flow in the whole ship and sink it. And I said, "Not for me."

And so I volunteered, because they always asked for volunteers, on the deck for loading ammunition. I was sitting on the back of the LST [landing ship tank] on a 40-millimeter with this Polish guy I met, who was a gunner, and the guy that was the traverse guy went down for lunch and I was sitting in his seat. They just gave us the all-clear, and we look up, and here comes a Betty [i.e., a Japanese bomber] out of the sun. And so, you know, I tried, and we got off about three shots, I guess, and it hit the ship directly behind us. You could see the plane burning, with the tail sticking out. And all of a sudden there was this horrible explosion, and there was a hole in the water. That's it. That must have been one of the ammunition ships or whatever. And all the troops on there had never been in combat yet.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: That's amazing.

PALCHIKOFF: And you sit there, and say, "God, what a failure," you know. And what they used to do is they'd come in out of the horizon, so everybody was incapacitated at shooting, because in a convoy, there are ships everywhere. And then it'd come up, skip over the first ship, drop a torpedo, and then crash into the next one. And it was so hard to get the guys off the machine guns. Once they start shooting, they go crazy. You know, they can't stop. In fact, once, one of our own planes was going, and everybody started shooting. Everybody's screaming, "Stop firing! It's one of ours!" No way.

And in the ship they had these grates made, so as you're following the plane, so you wouldn't wipe out your own bridge, the machine gun would stop, and you'd have to raise it to go to the next level so you wouldn't kill people on your own ship. But that's how nutty— You know, everybody's so scared.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I can imagine. It must be chaotic.

PALCHIKOFF: It's just like a wall of lead. Nobody knows what they're shooting at. I don't even know if half the people even aim. It's like, "I'm protecting myself. If I can just get enough bullets up there, we're going to survive." It's frightening.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What was the most dangerous mission or part in the war? Is that it, those three days?

PALCHIKOFF: No, you don't think of it in those terms. When I was working with the guerillas— It isn't dangerous now, but all of a sudden I see a Japanese helmet coming out of the tall grass, and I'm saying, "Well, I'm going to hold fire to at least recognize." And it's a little Filipino kid that's wearing a Japanese helmet that he

picked up somewhere. And had you responded without knowing what you're shooting at, I would have blasted a sixteen-year-old kid.

Fear really isn't part of it when you're a young kid, really. You know, you feel like you're more of a Rambo. I never dug a foxhole in my life. Always seemed to me a worthless effort. If it was time to go, goodbye. But I guess you never look at it because there's so much of it around every corner, you know. It could have been a Filipino nut that was against the Americans, which had happened. Like in Iraq, you know. You don't take time to think of that, really. You think more of, "What's going to happen tomorrow?"

Like when I was with them in Jolo, we worked usually in the nighttime, in the dark, and wake up in the daytime and you see the village women fanning you to keep you cool so you could sleep. And they'd make these fried comodies, which are fried bananas, and they'd bring them to you. That's what your mind gets full of, really.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

May 24, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: This is tape two, side A.

I was asking about your combat, and what you wanted to sort of stress what you felt was important about the combat. You made some interesting observations. I was wondering if you could repeat them.

PALCHIKOFF: My combat, aside from in the convoy or when we attacked with PT boats when I was loaned out to the PT boats, was basically doing things in clandestine. So nobody really anticipated you being there if you were clever. I've been within fifty feet of a Japanese camp, watching them line up to eat. But since they didn't know I was there, I was in no danger. And if you're clever enough, there's no way you're going to make any noise or anything to let them know you're there, or get up and start shooting. Because when we went on these missions, they gave me fifty rounds of ammunition and said, "Stay the hell out of trouble." And you stayed out of trouble.

You felt like you were an elite person. People would land and say, "Oh, my god, you're already here," you know, like you're— And you start believing it, and you feel like you're a Rambo. I'm sure people that were in the infantry, in combat, when you're being shot at, like when I see pictures of Vietnam, you know, that's combat, real combat. What I did was, I was usually called off as soon as combat started. My job was done.

It's perception and what you believe. It's like when we were going on a landing. I went on a couple of landings, and you see guys that are so nervous that

they're loading and unloading their gun, or wiping it and cleaning it. And you say to yourself, "Why waste the effort? Save your energy so you can run up the beach faster."

But it does get people. There's no question about it. Some people just cannot handle it, and I really think they're the true heroes. They're the real human being that says, "Jesus. This is ridiculous. I shouldn't be doing this." Compared to some other guy that can hardly wait to kill somebody. So who's the hero? It's all mixed up. It's just a smorgasbord of emotions. Probably 90 percent of the emotions have no validity; they're self-made.

You know, when I think about it, playing Rambo, I had a knife with brass knuckles tucked in my boot so I could get it to the last ditch, and grenades strapped to my suspenders, and had a tommy gun, and a .45. By the time I got to Hiroshima and I was going to Hiroshima, I went without any arms. I said, "How the hell am I going to kill enough people to survive?" It's better to be killed in the beginning and save all those lives that I'd be trying to shoot, because there's no way I could have gotten out of there. Then you start thinking differently.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. That, I thought, was a fascinating part of your account that I read was that, you would think, you're the first American to go to Hiroshima after the bomb was dropped, and you would think, first of all, why do that? I mean, we know the reasons why you did, but, you know, the danger involved. And yet you go completely unarmed, and you go there, and you have no problems whatsoever.

PALCHIKOFF: Well, I figured that I knew the Japanese people well enough to know that they would respect the fact that I was going to go look for my parents [Sergai

Alexandrovich and Alexandra Mihailovna Valova Palchikoff], and that I was willing to share with them, and I didn't put myself in the elite first-class cabin, and I was willing to crawl through the windows with them to get a ride to the next town. I knew they'd admire that in me rather than hate me for it.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: We'll get to that, too, because I want to give an account of that trip to Hiroshima, which is the subject, of course, of that article. And when I was doing research on this interview, that article popped up in many, many places all over the Internet. You should be very proud. I guess the article has really made quite an impact.

PALCHIKOFF: Which one? The one in the [*New York*] *Times* or the one in *Newsweek*?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: The one in *Newsweek*. Well, also the one in the *Times*, but the *Newsweek* one definitely—

PALCHIKOFF: [Kim would] call me and say, "Nicky, I want to write an article about you." And I would think, you know, she's written this fucking article so many times. They'd send me the check and I would send it to her for her livelihood. So I didn't have the interest.

It was like, she's the one that heard about oral histories, and she got in touch with a girl here. She called me and I talked to her. As far as I was concerned, that was the end of it. In fact, I said, "Who the hell wants to talk to me in the Nevada Oral History when I've done nothing in Nevada? I've been here two years. Who's going to waste their money?"

The stories are all true, but I did not write them. I just want you to know that I'm not a literary giant. But it's been written so many times in Japanese newspapers and I get copies of it. It's like rubber-stamping it.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You mentioned briefly about your interrogation of prisoners, and how you approached them as almost like a friend. You were trying to get information from them. If you would, was that a style that you developed on your own? Was that something that was taught to you? I mean, how did that evolve?

PALCHIKOFF: No. In the army they teach you to be stern. They teach you all these techniques. Like the first day you interview them, you offer them a cigarette. And the next day, you throw the cigarettes on the table and he reaches for it, and you jump up and yell at him and say, "Who the hell do you think you are?" And the thing that's important about interrogating, they think, is to keep somebody off balance all the time so they don't know what's going to happen to them next.

I chose to believe that they had emotions like me, and they had concerns about their loved ones and family, and so I would start out by asking them if they had any pictures of their family or kids. Because they were all trained that once you get captured, you don't say anything to anybody because they're going to kill you anyway. So knowing that in advance, I would say, "Hey, guys, you know, I am not here because I want to be here, and the sooner we can help each other to get the war over so you can get back to your loved ones and I can go home to my loved ones. Let's see if we can figure this out together."

And they would show me their pictures of their family, and then I would talk about going to my favorite restaurants in Hiroshima and having sushi, and how nice

it'd be for us to have that now. Then we'd play cards. It seems a little juvenile, but we played Old Black Maid, and then I would say, "You know, is there any information you can give me so we can end this war, so that we don't have to kill anymore each other?" And I said, "You know, it's not a disgrace you're here." In Japan, if you're a prisoner of war, it's a disgrace. And I said, "I know you would have given your life if you could have, but circumstances were that either you didn't have enough bullets or whatever. You're here. So let's see if we can work it out."

And, you know, it worked. And then in the evening, because all my interrogations were usually on a vessel, because it was beachhead and so forth, I would say, "Okay. Let's go to bed." I would sleep on my top bunk, and I would see that he slept on the bunk below me, and I would have my tommy gun laying on the bunk directly below me. And basically he really didn't have an even chance to get to it, because I'm above, he's below. But he could see that I trusted him to this point that no way, just no way that person would have ever taken advantage of that. And that just kept building confidence.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You say it worked.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. I mean, people are people. You'd get an occasional nut that will strap a bomb around, but these are people that are at their last resort, and they have no other way of fighting. They have nothing left. This guy's a prisoner. He's already over. You know, it's a totally different psychology. Now, if he and I were across the street—he was over here, and I was here—and we were enemies, this relationship could never exist. But because I was his conqueror, and I respected him and his culture, and understood it, it put me in a different position. It's like the Niseis.

They had to prove to the Americans they were really Americans, so they'd slap people around, and yell and scream, and so forth. And a Japanese being interrogated by another Japanese, to him, is another Japanese, and he was a traitor for having moved to America and becoming an American. It was totally different. That's why they selected me to go on these missions, because either the Filipino guerillas would kill the Japanese, because they'd think it was a Japanese in an American uniform, and they'd get killed, or the Filipinos wouldn't have any confidence that he's Japanese.

So it was really an opportunity to serve in a way that nobody else could have, and it goes to your head, I think. I remember one time we were between—quote, unquote—"missions," and the captain or the SEAL of our outfit put up a list for KP [kitchen patrol] duty, and my name got on there. So I went in his tent and I said, "You know, that's devastating. When I do that kind of manual work, I'll forget all my Japanese." And, surely, they took me off the roster. [laughs] But, you know, you get to think you're—

VAN BENSCHOTEN: A big guy.

PALCHIKOFF: And it kind of builds up. Like when I going to Hamilton High School, all the teachers were concerned how was I handling this, because my family was in a concentration camp. And I'm sure that they allowed me to do things other people wouldn't. But that's why Miss Rogers I put separately, because nothing like that mattered. It was one on one. You know, if I didn't turn in the homework, I said, "Oh, god. I just couldn't do the work last night. I was so upset."

"Oh, turn it in next week, Nick," you know, type of thing. And it was so easy to exploit that, and you learn quickly.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You said another part of your job, part of it was interrogation, another part was sort of listening in on Japanese communications. What was said in these communications?

PALCHIKOFF: An example. Don't know if it's true, but we were radio and radar countermeasures, we had direction finders, which we carried up the mountains, Tawi-Tawi, because there was no other way they could have gotten up there, and just listening. I picked up a conversation, sounded like on an aircraft carrier, guys getting planes ready to take off, and we put on the direction finder, got the location, and immediately hand-cranked our generator and sent the message to the air force. They took a triangulation, and they pinpointed where the aircraft carrier was, and they went and bombed it, so they said. You know, whether they really did and whether this message really happened, you never know. But you choose to believe, because you want to be a hero, that that was that effective, but that's what they said happened. But that's what you do, is triangulate.

And what we were trying to do is locate the Japanese early-warning net, so when the B-29s would come, they wouldn't get the warning to the Japanese air force, so we could bomb those spots out so the B-29s could fly in at will. Who knows whether you were effective, weren't effective. Picked up a Japanese code book in one of their dugouts, and you pick up what you think—you can't read everything—what you think is important. And I suppose that helped a great deal to find the location, because the Japanese really were not intelligence-conscious. They're just really not. That was supposed to locate a lot of the nets and their codes and all that.

But, you know, you could hear maybe somebody said it to somebody, and somebody said it to you, and maybe they used it for toilet paper. But you choose to believe that you accomplished something big, you know. We were decorated for it, but it wasn't for a specific thing; it was for the whole mission. Even medals are so cheap. If you know the captain and he's your real good friend, and you cut your finger jumping into a dugout, getting away from some bombs or something, you get a Purple Heart. And if you get killed, you don't get a Purple Heart unless you're wounded first.

You read that book [Dana Priest's *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military*] I mentioned to you last night, right?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Which one?

PALCHIKOFF: By—

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Shear [phonetic]?

PALCHIKOFF: Huh?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Was it Shear?

PALCHIKOFF: No, no, no, no. About that woman that wrote that book about—

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Oh, Dana Priest.

PALCHIKOFF: Dana Priest, yes. Did you ?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I did.

PALCHIKOFF: Well, you see, now you understand why General [Thomas] Franks is not going to go to become the chairman of the [Joint] Chiefs of Staff, because you lose all power. And when you're a—what does she call them—CINC [Commander in Chief], you have all the power, and the commanding generals of the Marine Corps

have nothing to do except administrative work. And here was chairman of the biggest CINC, and he's going to take a job as the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff? Never.

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have digressed.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: No, no, that's fine. I had a question about medals. You mentioned medals. You were decorated several times. Do you keep those medals? Do you have medals?

PALCHIKOFF: Once. Well, you get a decoration for a landing, you get a decoration for being in the Pacific theater. You know, there are all these guys that have decorations from here to here. They're not all for bravery, you know. Good-conduct medal, and this and that, and then you get your expert rifleman, then all this shit. I got the lowest decoration you can have, which is a Bronze Star for a total mission. I heard about it as I was leaving Japan for the United States, and it wasn't like the President of the United States gave it to me. I got a piece of paper saying, "You did a good job. You got this medal." Okay. Do I have it? No, I don't. I have nothing that reminds me of the army. I may have the document itself.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Is that by choice or is that by accident?

PALCHIKOFF: No, no, no, no. What memories are they, really? When you stop and think, I helped kill people. In fact, when I talk to the Japanese people in Hiroshima that I have a film of, that I'm trying to make a movie called *War or Peace: It's Your Choice*, I ask them for forgiveness for whatever part I had in bringing the bomb there. I feel nothing but remorse. I feel that— Not shame. I was doing duty as I saw it then, but the total waste of time, energy, money, human lives, and we accomplished absolutely nothing, because had we conceded to Japan what Japan wanted back in '40,

being able to manufacture and sell, like their cars and so forth, we wouldn't have to have a war.

And I see President [George W.] Bush going there and bowing at the funeral to the emperor. So what exactly did we accomplish? The same companies that were in power in Japan are in power today. What is the accomplishment? We didn't give them any democracy. The Japanese women still walk *x* number of paces behind their husbands. They act like in America, you know, that they're equal, but I can tell you, when they go back to Japan, they go back to their culture. I mean, there are some kids that dress in western clothes and play guitar. That's an accomplishment? I don't know. But it's a national goal.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: When you leave the army at the end of the war, and at the time that this is happening in, say, '45, how would you compare the Nick Palchikoff who comes out of the war with the Nick Palchikoff who went into the war? How was he different?

PALCHIKOFF: Probably giving himself a lot more credit and import, much more important person than I used to be, which was all fallacious, but I think that's the feeling I had. I came back as a hero. I went to a hospital where my guardian was the chief of staff, and the nurses all knew me, and I was treated, "Welcome home, hero." And you accepted it, but when you stop and think about it, I was a hero of what? What did I do? How would the war change if Nick Palchikoff never existed? Not one iota. We would have kept slaughtering each other. Maybe in that particular sphere where I was able to communicate, maybe one or two prisoners of war would get killed.

But other than that, I didn't build the atom bomb. I couldn't prevent it, or see the slaughter of my city. How could you be proud of that? But at the time, I believed that we did the right thing, before I read history, and that Japan had offered to give up six months before, through Russia. The only thing to negotiate was whether the emperor would be treated as a war criminal. I forgot which admiral it was that bragged he wanted to ride down the streets of Tokyo on the emperor's white horse, and he should be treated like a war criminal. Well, by the time we signed the peace treaty, he wasn't treated as a war criminal. During that six-month period, forgetting the Japanese that were killed by the bomb and the soldiers, how many American soldiers died for the ego of this one goddamn admiral?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: During the war, did you develop close friendships with any people, people that maybe you still see?

PALCHIKOFF: One. One guy [Dorsey, unclear]. Totally disappointed after the war was over.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Oh, really. Why?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, he joined the sheriff's department. He was down in the [San Fernando] Valley. He raised cattle. You know, part of our bad things we did was, when we didn't have any money and we were going overseas and all that, he and I rolled some drunk sailors to get their money so we could go out and have fun.

After he became a sheriff, he takes great pride in the fact that he went through his son's belongings, and he found a joint, and he asked his son to help him to do something that night. The son said, "Sure, Dad," so they got in the truck and he took him to the sheriff's department and turned him in. To me, that was as low as you can

get as a human being. To me, I would have died to protect my son. So he had a joint. So what? Especially knowing what I did.

That was the end of our friendship, but it was a very close friendship. Like when we were attacked on the LSTs and so forth, the first concern was, "Hey, Dorsey, are you okay?" or, "Nick, are you okay?" You know, type of relationship. And, god, that just blew my mind. It just absolutely— Whew, I can't even believe it now.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: We're almost done with these questions, at least on the war service. When you're fighting and going about these various missions, how aware are you of the war generally, of the war in the European theater as well? Were you getting information, in other words, from the home front?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. We were getting nothing but victories, you know. Keeps everybody going. We were even better than we thought we were, because all the materiel, supposedly, and everything was going to go to Europe to finish the war in Europe, and we were supposedly struggling with leftover stuff. General [Douglas] MacArthur was considered quite a hero. Of course, he was quite an egotist. And Japanese people would come out every day at lunch to the Daiichi Building to see him come out for lunch, and he would go through this routine. He had his black Cadillac, and he'd come down the steps and salute to all the Japanese, you know, like he was the emperor of Japan. And then he would drive off. People would gather an hour later to see him get out of the car and go up the steps. He began to think he was much more important than what he was, you know, and [Harry S] Truman really put him in his place.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You said that you were the only mobile unit that he had. Did you ever meet MacArthur at any point?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. I didn't meet him and say, "Hi, General. My name is Nick Palchikoff." Going up and down the steps in the Daiichi Building, in fact, I thought he was going to chew my ass out because I didn't have my hat on, and because I was bigger and better than anybody else, I wore a white scarf. And the Eisenhower jacket I had cut like high cutaways, you know, when it came up and went in the back like this. Surely I thought he was going to stop me and chew me out for my uniform. But I said, "Good afternoon, General," and he says, "Good afternoon, Sergeant," and that was it. I saw him on several occasions, like walking down the hall, but not like, "Hi, Doug. What's happening today?" [mutual laughter]

VAN BENSCHOTEN: "How was lunch?"

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. "You going to invite me for lunch today?"

VAN BENSCHOTEN: It's interesting, because when you mention the clothes and the scarf that you wore, I know from reading the memoir, too, that you were always, it seems, a nonconformist when it came to clothing. This is one of your quirks, I guess.

PALCHIKOFF: Quirk, or recognition that I can get away with it. In fact, we were billeted at the Finance Building across from the palace. The Daiichi Building was directly in front, and the Finance Building was on the side. I got to be friends with Japanese people very quickly, and this guy was in charge of the motor pool. I gave him a blanket for his family, and so every evening I could use a Japanese official car from the motor pool, with a Japanese sticker, you know, that it was okay to be used. It was an official government car and so forth. So, you know, I was enjoying life.

It's interesting. I should probably not mention the names, but did I mention a guy by the name of Colonel Pequilla?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: No, not yet.

PALCHIKOFF: Turn the mike off.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

VAN BENSCHOTEN: All right. We're almost done, then, with the war, I guess, part of this. I was interested, though, in— I know recently there's a spate of books—and you probably know them, too—written by Tom [Thomas] Brokaw and other people, talking about the Greatest Generation, and sort of this new fascination, I guess, with the generation that fought World War Two. I know that Studs Terkel has called this the "good war," and from what you've said so far, I have a feeling that you have a very different point of view on this. Have you read any of this literature, and what do you think of that?

PALCHIKOFF: No. My personal interpretation, and what the overall big picture meant to the government and to the business that runs this country, is totally different. In fact, that's why I belong to the Peace Movement, because we are totally different. And, to me, if people lead, leaders will follow. In America we've forgotten that, and people don't want to lead anymore. And what I'm trying to do is awake the people. I don't want them to think like I do, but raise enough interest so that they will find their own truth rather than accepting these blips on TV.

You know, here we are, you've got all these intelligence reports and airplane flying and drones flying, taking pictures. We know everything that's happening in Iraq. We go tell the people, "Yes, we know where it is."

Then [Donald] Rumsfeld says, “Well, till somebody tells us, we don’t know where it is.”

Then you say, “Jesus. Where are we going?”

And the people don’t care. They absolutely don’t care. So I’m trying to awake them by the little bit I can do. You know, a big audience is in Japan, Russia, Australia, New Zealand. American people don’t want peace. They don’t care about peace. They don’t want to even hear about it.

I talked in front of a Catholic group, and I like to be truthful with people, you know. So I start out in saying, “I want you to know my perspective comes from a person that’s an atheist, and somebody that looks at war differently, and so forth. I may hurt some of your feelings.”

And so I’m about ready to leave. I talked to them for, oh, god, probably a couple of hours, about the fact that all of us are taught not to kill, and so forth and so on. And the guy says, “You’re more of a Christian than I am.”

I said, “No, I’m not a Christian. I think that Jesus was probably a very good teacher. I think Mohammad was a good teacher. I think Buddha was a good teacher. I think they all had things to say, and the most important thing they said, all of them, was, ‘Do not kill.’” And I said, “I think they’re all great teachers. I just don’t think any of them are God. Jesus said many, many things that I believe, but I don’t think he’s God, that he runs my life or anything. I’m responsible for what I say and do.”

And he was kind of shocked with that. I said, “There’s nothing to be shocked.” I said, “A good teacher is a good teacher.” I said, “I don’t know if what he said was really the way it was. It’s written in the Bible.”

We in this country think all we have to do is go to church once in a while and wave a little flag. Real patriotism is how you live your life and affect people around you. You know, it's okay to have a banner on your car for the [Los Angeles] Lakers, but it's not okay to wave a banner because somebody's getting killed. There's nothing logical about that.

Now, if my country, instead of stooping to the lowest common denominator of human conduct in the way we conduct ourselves, would start a new moral value, and go to the UN [United Nations] at the time this was happening, and said, "Okay. We're going to give Iraq a chance. A year. Go find this stuff." That's what we should be doing. We should be setting a new moral standard of human conduct, not stooping to the lowest conduct of human behavior in history, attacking another country, bombing them, killing them. You know, that just isn't acceptable for me anymore.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Let's get to one of the critical moments, I think, in your life, which was visiting Hiroshima. I know that after the Japanese surrender, you go into Japan—Yokohama—and then you're to—

PALCHIKOFF: Before the surrender.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Before the surrender. And your job—and correct me if I'm wrong—is to sort of seek out or find out if there are paramilitary units.

PALCHIKOFF: No. My job was to seek out that there would be a safe place for our troops to land, and Japan was keeping its part of the deal of having certain areas cleared out of Japanese people and so forth, for American troops to land, and that it was safe for General MacArthur to come there for the surrender ceremony. That was the first part of the mission.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Well, go ahead and take it from there, then, so that we can get to—

PALCHIKOFF: No, that's fine. I'm fine. You want me to tell you about it?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Yes.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh. Well, we came through a ship called the SS *General Pershing*, and whatever number of people that they had selected to go to Japan in advance were the cadre, and I was one of them. We went to Yokohama. We landed at Yokosuka Bay and went to Yokohama, and went and checked all the areas. I knew that not only would they be clear of every debris, but they would be swept clean, which they were. All the areas had this metal pipe here, wood piled here, pile over here, and the square would be immaculately swept. The only person to be anywhere near the area was the Japanese police officer, and he was allowed to carry his little sword. In Japan, all the police officers carried a little sword. That was their sign of authority. And, truly, that's what happened.

And so I was desperately anxious to have a Japanese meal. The streetcar went through this particular zone, but no Japanese could get on or off, because it was the zone that was selected as one of the areas for landing. So as a streetcar was going by— And if you live in Japan, you know how to run and jump on a streetcar. You know, that's not a big issue. And so I got into the middle of the streetcar, pushed my way into the center, and ducked so the MPs [Military Police] wouldn't see me.

And so all the Japanese, of course, started marveling, and said, "No wonder we lost the war. Look at this guy." You know, I am, compared to them, pretty tall, and at that time I was in pretty good physical shape. And so I got out of the compound area

into the Japanese-held area. I wanted to have Japanese food, and a guy told me the name of this little town. So I got into the electric car, and when I got off of there, there's nothing but Japanese soldiers. And this was one of the deactivation centers for Japanese military, and, of course, they were all disarmed, but they had their uniforms. And not one of them—they didn't know whether I spoke Japanese or not—said anything derogatory to me. Not one.

And when I went to the restaurant, I should have known better. All the restaurants in Japan, during the war all they served was rice with peas. That was the patriotic thing to do. That wasn't what I was really looking for, but I had my rice and peas, and went back.

Ultimately, nine days later, I guess, the 24th Division landed in Tokyo, into these areas that were cleared, and we knew that the Japanese had kept part of the bargain. The SS *Missouri* docked next to the *General Pershing*, and so I saw the surrender. Actually, MacArthur stood below me, about twenty feet. The Japanese dignitaries came, and the whole thing. I saw the whole thing. Jay [Fredrick Palchikoff] had read that, and he said, "My god, I saw a film about MacArthur. I wouldn't have believed that you were standing above him."

But I was very fortunate, or unfortunate, in seeing the event. There was no question who was the boss. It must have been very humiliating. MacArthur played his role very well. Then the troops started pouring in. When I went to Hiroshima, there were no soldiers past Tokyo, really. No American soldiers.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And that was why? Because of the fear that they didn't know quite how their soldiers were going to be received?

PALCHIKOFF: You know, they were landing, getting their trucks. You know how we are with all these guns and trucks and semis, and being unloaded, and on and on and on, like you saw in Iraq. My god, how long did we watch the unloading of all that shit? So I was probably the first American soldier all those people between Tokyo and Hiroshima ever saw.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I was going to ask you, when you're taking a train from, at one point, Osaka to Hiroshima, you talk with Japanese. And you said—and I quote—"They readily talked about what happened and what would happen in the future." End of quote. And I was just wondering, what did they say?

PALCHIKOFF: What did I say?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You said—quote—"They readily talked about what happened and what would happen in the future." And I was wondering, you know, what did they say? What was the general mood, and what were some of the things that were spoken, if you can remember?

PALCHIKOFF: The only thing I can remember is what they anticipated would happen to them under our control, and they had an awful lot of fear. And just like the Iraqi people, you know, nobody likes to be occupied, and their whole life was flipped over.

I don't know if I wrote about this guy I met in this restaurant in Tokyo. Did I mention where I went every night to drink?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Yes.

PALCHIKOFF: And I ran into this police officer who was going to shoot himself. He was actually the commandant of the police department, and he still had the pistol

with the shell jammed in his pistol. So he wasn't successful. Well, I guess you get pretty chicken. You know, you want to clear it out and try again.

The Japanese people are very polite, but I can tell you, not any of them forgot what we had done in Hiroshima, and one of the concerns the older generation had was Japan was losing its manufacturing edge. They think it's because they won the war commercially, that they built better cars, we owe them money, and that was a big incentive for them to get their country going again. And now that they've accomplished it, that incentive isn't there, and therefore they're slacking off, is a concern of a lot of the people.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: The ills of success, really.

PALCHIKOFF: Hmm?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: The ills of success, or the problems with success.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. I mean, you know, these people are so loyal. I told you about this Russian guy that came when I was there, when we rode in Japan, Gail and I.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: No, I don't think you did.

PALCHIKOFF: At the Russian Embassy they told me about the guy that was in charge of manufacturing automobiles from Russia came to see the efficiency of Japanese production, and on and on. He came back to the embassy, says, "We can never perform like this. Our people aren't slaves." And these guys would stay after hours to check on their welding, or work that they did for the day, so there would be nothing imperfect. And then they'd have to take the boss out to dinner, and go home at midnight, miles out of Tokyo.

They're the only people I know that can sleep on a strap on a streetcar. They can go home, wake their baby up in the middle of the night to play with them, because it was the only time they got to see their child. They have two weeks' vacation. They only take one week. The other week they go back to work without pay, because that's a patriotic thing to do. Who's going to do that?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: We're near the end of the tape here.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

May 24, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: This is tape two, side B.

We were talking about your presiding at the surrender ceremonies, [Douglas] MacArthur. I guess what I wanted to ask was, what happens immediately after that ceremony? How do you find yourself in Hiroshima eventually?

PALCHIKOFF: The troops move in. MacArthur's headquarter moves in. So now it's September the second, I believe, was when they signed the surrender. You can look that up, historically.

I met Colonel Pequilla and I was assigned to him, and he worked out of the Daiichi Building. He told me I was going to go to Korea with him, and I said that I wasn't going to go anywhere unless they gave me a chance to look for my parents. And they said— Well, they had no choice, because I wouldn't— I just wouldn't do it.

And so I started, first of all, looking around close by, thinking maybe my parents moved to a resort town or something. I went to a couple of resort towns, and of course they weren't there. That was before I wanted to go to Hiroshima. So I finally decided, well, I'd go to Hiroshima and pay my last respects, because there was no way I could travel all over Japan looking for them.

So that's when I decided to go to Hiroshima. There's only one train going to Osaka from Tokyo, so I got on the train and got to Osaka, and I slept on the bench. I really didn't think about safety or anything. I figured if— There was no question in my mind I was going to get there. And so actually a Japanese woman came up to me,

and she was smoking a cigarette. And in those days, any Japanese woman smoking a cigarette was a prostitute. So she sat down and started talking to me. I said that I just wanted to go to sleep till the next train going to Hiroshima, and I wanted her to wake me up when it came in.

It was about six o'clock the next morning that the train going to Hiroshima came by. Well, it was actually going through Hiroshima as far as it could go before the bridges were blown up. So I crawled in, and because I didn't have time to get warm clothes, I traded my samurai sword I had to a guy in the air force for his air force jacket, to stay warm. And I thought later how stupid it was to go to Hiroshima with an Air Corps patch on my arm.

But anyway, I filled my pockets full of cigarettes. At that time I did smoke a little bit. I figured that would always make friends. Got in the train, and I started talking to people. Of course, I hadn't brought anything—water, food, anything—so at these stations they have these bento people, and they run alongside the train with a box, and they sell you different lunches that they have prepared. So, of course, they're very meager lunches, but, you know, I leaned out the window with the rest of the Japanese and bought myself a little lunch.

Every time I wanted to smoke, I'd take the rest of the pack and pass it to the people in the train. They would bow and thank me and so forth, and I would try to make them feel as though they didn't owe me anything; it was just something that was a custom that I was accustomed to. I spoke to many people. They understood that the emperor said the war was over. The war was over, the future was uncertain. They certainly didn't understand Hiroshima.

And as we got closer and closer to Hiroshima, there is a naval base called the Kurii Naval Base before Hiroshima. Admiral [William F.] Halsey pulls up the navy, and you could see that all the Japanese ships were rusting, turned over, and he shelled Kurii for three days and three nights. And I thought, "My god. Hiroshima couldn't possibly be worse than this." Everything was shelled out. And I was wrong.

Got off the train, and I used to go between Kobe and Hiroshima on the train all the time, back and forth to school. The station was still there. I walked out, and you could see Eugene Bay on the other side. And here's a city of, what was it, 100-and-some thousand people, completely devastated, nothing there.

One exception was, all of a sudden I heard a guy yelling, "Cochin! Cochin!" And that was my nickname, because my name is Nicholay, and the Japanese took the "ko" and they nicknamed me Cochin. And so I turned around. I couldn't believe it. It was my former shoemaker. And being a shoemaker, obviously he was of the Ita family. And the Japanese people are very prejudiced. Anybody that had anything to do with animals— If you want to insult a Japanese, you go like that to them [gestures]. He deals with four-legged animals. Because under the samurai tradition that a Buddhist couldn't kill an animal or eat meat or anything, so all the butchers, shoemakers, anybody that had anything to do with meat was part of the Ita family. The Yamamoto family, which was the pure family, doesn't marry anybody from the Ita family.

Anyway, we hugged. Then he insisted I go to his house, which was past the railroad station, which is the area where my parents more or less survived; not exactly the same place. He had one bottle of beer, and he insisted that I drink his beer with

him. We had this bottle of beer together, and he told me about his son, was a pilot, and he was killed.

And anyway, after I talked to him for a while and thanked him, I started my walk to my house, because I asked him if he had seen my parents, and he said no. As I crossed the first bridge, you know, you see people, half kind of cartoons of burnt bodies in cement. You know, peace workers do that. And to actually see that on the concrete bridges has an impact all its own.

And there was, of course, nothing alive, no plants. I always say this; I don't know why. No birds chirping. In Japan, there are these cascades, you know, and they make all this noise all day long. They're up in the trees, and we used to try to catch them. Nothing. Dead silence.

And I approached my house. I remember the streets I used to ride my bike, and my house used to be across— I have a map, actually, of where my house was, a Japanese antique map that shows our house. You know, I knew what I would see. There was nothing there, of course, except part of my wrought-iron bed I used to sleep in, that I used to play conductor on, you know. So I knew I was at the right place. There was a fish pond in our yard, and being below the surface, that remained.

And so I paid my last respects, and I was on my way back, and a guy on a motorcycle was coming down the road, and so I flagged him down, and he was from the Esihisheibun, a newspaper, and he had a sidecar. I didn't want to walk around town. I just wanted to get out of there, so I asked him to take me to the railroad station. He said he couldn't do that; he was too busy.

And I said, “You know, you’re going to be a lot busier.” I said, “I’m here from MacArthur’s headquarters.” And I said, “If you don’t take me, you’re going to be a hell of lot more busy.”

And so he said okay. I jumped in his sidecar, and on the way into the station there was a—You know, you go— Rivers everywhere. And the Parasuchins, who was the other Russian family that lived there, I asked him to go by there just to see. And I see this guy digging in the rubble, and it was him, and he and his wife survived by jumping in the river when everything was burning. He was looking for insurance papers in the rubble.

And I said, “How’s my family?”

He said, “The police came and got us all, and they’re up on the mountain called Taishaku, where they put all of us.” For what reason, you know, some commander gave the reason, whether it was to save them or whatever. He said, “But your father’s in town today, looking for insurance papers. He came into town with me.”

So I said, “Fine.” I said, “Get on the motorcycle,” and I jumped behind the driver. By then the driver was getting into it, you know. So I asked him to take us by direction where Parasuchin knew where my father was, and he took us there. I met my dad, and then the guy on the motorcycle took us back to the railroad station so we could take a train towards the mountain or village where they were placed. The bridges were blown, so the train had to stop and we had to forge the river, and then another train at the other end picked us up.

Anyway, we got to Taishaku and my said, "I'd better call Mom, because she'll die of a heart attack if you just walk in the house." So he called and told her. [Cries]

Anyway, it was a climb up the hill about twelve miles, I guess, and the colonel that used to sell the bread came down the hill to meet me. [Cries] Anyway, we walked into the house, and they told me their experiences. They were shocked that I was there, of course, and not only that I was there, but that I was the first American soldier. They had never seen one, you know.

And so they prepared dinner for me, and I stayed overnight. I had to go back, because I promised the colonel I'd come back as soon as I could. I went to the police station and told them I wanted them to deliver my parents to Tokyo, that my mom had a colostomy. She had been sick and had a colostomy, and that I wanted her to not make the trip all in one day. And I wanted them to stay, and obviously I didn't want them harmed. And I said I know that some people had been harmed, and I certainly knew that it wasn't them, and I wanted them to deliver them safely to Tokyo, which they did. And by then I'd found a house for them to stay, and got my dad a job being in charge of an Officers' Club.

And then I went off to Korea, and by the time I was on my way back to Hiroshima, at every station the word had gotten out that I was there. And at every station, as the train pulled out, there would be these dignitaries, city officials, in their frock coats and top hats. I, of course, extended the courtesy by standing on the platform and bowing to him, and they bowed to me. By the time I got to Tokyo, you know, it was like I might as well have stood out there like I was on a campaign of some sort. [laughs]

Anyway, I got my parents a job, a place to live, and this is where the trouble really began with my brother [David Palchikoff] and sister [Kaleria Sergaivna Drago], because my mother, especially, treated me like I was their savior. Here they didn't know what's going to happen, and all of a sudden in one day they have a nice home and my dad has a job. They have income. And, you know, they're attributing it all to me, and so I'm the big shit, and my kid brother really is a nothing, neither is my sister, you know.

But anyway, I tried to stay away from the house so this worship wouldn't continue to grow, and I tried to prove to them I was just another guy. In fact, I don't remember if it was my sister or my brother that saw me on the street with a couple of Japanese girls that I knew, and in the old days that would have been an insult. You know, my father told me about some prostitute that approached him when he was on horseback in Russia, and how he hit her with his whip to get her out of the way. And then here I am. But my brother told my mother, and they said, "Oh, isn't he beautiful?" You know, just living a normal life. And no matter what I did, I was God.

Anyway, I went off to Korea with Colonel Pequilla, and all of a sudden I get a message from Colonel Pequilla. He says, "Goddamn it, would you please write your parents or tell them something? They're driving headquarters crazy."

They think that I've been kidnapped by Russians, because, you know, the parallel? That I've been kidnapped by the Russians and that I'm no longer around. And they still had this fear that— As though the Soviet Union was still looking for my father because he was such a great man.

And anyway, I went back to Japan afterwards. I think I told you the story about the Japanese restaurant that I used to go to every night.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. You had helped its owner.

PALCHIKOFF: The family wanted me to get married, and I wanted to go back to school. I had extra points because of the declaration. They took numbers, and so I was able to go back in January.

Anyway, then came the rest of the story about them coming to America and so forth. But as far as events go, going to Hiroshima, unless you experience the emotion, there's nothing to say. You walk into a town that you used to ride your bicycle, all your friends are there, everything you ever knew that brought you happiness, everything is gone. I mean, it is gone. And people can't understand that. When this girl in the *New York Times* wanted to write my book, when 9/11 happened, she sent me an e-mail right away and said, "Now I know how must have felt going into Hiroshima."

I said, "Woman, you haven't got the slightest idea. If you were watching, and all of a sudden, when the planes hit the Twin Towers, New York disappeared. There were no firemen, there were no police officers, there was nothing. Now, if you can imagine that and feel the emotion of that, then you'll understand."

But 3,000 people, that's nothing. It's absolutely nothing in contrast to what happened. The loss of one life is really something, but don't compare the loss of 3,000 with 100,000. And we were the "moral nation." These guys are bums. How do you justify the two incidents? You can't. And not only that, but before the Japanese guy could meet to surrender, we'd drop one on Nagasaki. I mean, at least give the

people time to stop and think, and say, “Gee, we better surrender before they blow all our cities up.”

And the biggest crime was, they didn’t tell the Japanese people of the dangers, so all the people from surrounding areas went to Hiroshima to help, and they all got nuclear illnesses. At least we could have told them, “Don’t go there, folks. You’re going to die.”

You know, they claim that my prostate cancer comes from the fact I was exposed. Trying to prove it to the government, of course, is another issue. But people don’t realize there are hospitals in Hiroshima full of these people, still.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Do you believe, then— Because there’s an argument, too, that’s made that if they had perhaps blown up an atoll, let’s say, a Pacific atoll, and said, “That’s the A-bomb,” you know, and did that first, before, do you think that would have been a better way to go on that?

PALCHIKOFF: No. It would have been better to negotiate six months before, saved all the American soldiers. Forget the Japanese; they’re all bums, they’re all rats. But how about the Americans that were killed during that period of time? I mean, that’s devastating. Human beings are human beings. People jumping off cliffs, committing suicide because of fear, it’s all understandable. But not to have pressed for peace at the time it was available. And obviously, for whatever reason, we were there to test the bomb.

There was a book called— A strategy [Harry S.] Truman used after he whispered in his ear that the bomb was successful, and his whole attitude in dealing with Stalin changed. Like, “Now, baby, I’ve got you. I can blow you up.” As though

that should ever be part of any negotiations anywhere in the world, that "If you don't do this, I'm going to kill you," as a way of accomplishing anything.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. Let's turn to the home front. Walk us through your transition from being a soldier, then, to coming home again.

PALCHIKOFF: Okay. I came back, and my guardian [Fredrick Blanchard] picked me up at Fort MacArthur. He wanted me to go to school, and he'd built a room on his house for me to stay, and I went to stay with him. I'd never had a driver's license or anything, so I was waiting to go to UCLA to get started for the new semester. So the next thing I did was go out and buy a car, because I never had a car in my life.

And then when I went to the hospital, I had an appendix attack, and my guardian thought, "We'll take the appendix out before we start the university."

And so I went to the same hospital where I'd worked, and I was supposed to have surgery the next morning, I guess. All the nurses came in to wish me luck and all this, and this pretty little nurse [Dawn Clark] came in, who was the girl I married, and I'd been doped up by then, pretty well, I guess. And so she came to wish me luck, and I grabbed her and kissed her.

And anyway, from there our relationship grew. My guardian was not very happy with that, because he thought that I should be concentrating on going to school. And so one day when I came home—you know, I'd go out and come home maybe two, three o'clock in the morning—he was up, and he told me he didn't want me to do that. So the next morning I packed everything in my car and left, and got a job at the Sunset Pharmacy, where I used to have sodas to drink. At night after work, I'd go over there. It was a block away from the hospital. And the guy that owned it still

knew me, of course. So I told him I needed a job and he says, "Start tomorrow." And I worked there at Sunset drugstore while going to UCLA.

Then we got married on the radio, because I didn't have any money, a program called *Bride and Groom*.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Did you just show up one day and say—

PALCHIKOFF: Huh?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Did you just show up one day and say, "We're newly married"?

PALCHIKOFF: No. You know, they'd advertise. We weren't newly married. You get married on the program, and they give you a honeymoon and all this shit.

So we got married, and I started UCLA. I forgot. Why did I leave Sunset drugstore? I guess the hours didn't match. So my father-in-law was a policeman in his earlier life, and he knew the guy that was the police chief at MGM [Metro Goldwyn Mayer]. And so he got me a job there, from which I was fired almost immediately, because I was supposed to guard Leo the Lion [i.e., Metro Goldwyn Mayer mascot] out in some boondocks. I was going to school and studying, and I couldn't see why I should stay up all night watching the lion. So somebody was inspecting, and saw me sleeping. So that wasn't acceptable conduct.

And then I got a job at UCLA, in their nursery, mixing two shovels of shit and then two shovels of something else for this guy that ran a flower garden or botany or something. He saw me mixing the stuff, and he didn't think I was loving it enough that I didn't get exactly a shovelful, and so I got canned from that job.

Then I got a job at the Brentwood Glass and Mirror Company, and they were advertising for someone to help. They needed a helper. So I went over there, and it was owned by two Jewish guys. The one guy didn't want to hire me because I wasn't Jewish. The other guy said, "What the hell do you care? He's strong. He looks like he wants to work."

So they ultimately hired me, and I worked there till the other partner— I guess two years, when the other partner had a heart attack, so basically it was just Ben and I that ran the business, and I'd come in between classes to help him out. So when I graduated, Ben said he didn't want to insult me, but he wanted me to know that I could have half of the business if I wanted to come to work with him. That was very nice, of course, but, you know, I had bigger dreams.

And so I got a job at IBM [International Business Machines]. I wanted to be a salesperson, but I wasn't much into wearing blue suits and having a haircut the way they wanted to, and a white shirt, and all that. I went to see the manager. I said, "I want to be a salesman. I don't want to work down in the service bureau."

The guy told me I wasn't sales material. So the guy [John "Nappy" Napier] across the street was the president of the Western Surgical [Supply] Company, who used to call at the Culver City Hospital when I was a janitor, and we got to know each other, you know, ordering this and that. Slowly I got into knowing what we needed and so forth. And so when I was working in the service bureau, which was all glass, so people could see all the multipliers and 405 machines cranking away, he'd come by, and every time he'd see me, he'd make faces at me.

Oh, look at the quail.

One day he says, “You know, if you ever want to come to work for me, you always got a job.” And so when the guy upstairs told me that I was not the salesman type, I went across the street at lunch, and the guy hired me. I was supposed to be a wrapper so I’d learn the merchandise and so forth. And I was a wrapper for, I don’t know, five, six months, and the Korean War came. I was still a member of the reserves, and I walked into Napier and I said, “Nappy, you know we talked about me being a salesman.”

He said, “Oh, I can’t afford to make you a salesman. You’re going to go out to the Korean War.”

I said, “That has nothing to do with our agreement.”

So he said, “Okay.” So he gave me a territory, and fortunately my outfit went to the Korean War, but I think it was three days before, I was transferred to another outfit as a commanding officer. So they left, and our outfit remained.

Anyway, I got to be their best salesman. I talked to a group of doctors once about building a hospital. You know all that, right? You don’t want to hear that, right? Okay. Shut me off.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Does it play a part, though, in what you later do with the hospitals, or not?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, because when I went in the hospital business, I didn’t have any money, and so I went to my company and I said, “You know, I’ll buy everything we need for the hospital, and I want you to give me the commission so I can buy into the hospital,” which they did. And then I told them I didn’t want to have any payments for a year on the equipment I bought, which they said okay. And so basically—

VAN BENSCHOTEN: They gave you a running start on that.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, a big running start.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Let's talk, if you would—and we'll finish up here when we get near the end, or close to it—about your children [Jan Louise, Kim Eileen, Kai Clarke, and Jay Palchikoff], because while this is all happening, right, you're having—

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. We're married, and we decide that we're not going to have any children till we can afford to have them. So with the GI Bill and so forth, we build a home in Playa del Rey. While our house is being built and so forth, we're living with my in-laws.

The house is finished, so we decide, "Okay, now is the time," and we had our first daughter [Jan Louise Palchikoff]. We wanted to have our family, have other kids, so almost a year, a little over a year later, my other daughter [Kim Eileen Palchikoff] was born. And within a period of five years, I had four kids, Jay being the last one, and I had two girls. I remember that I was at the hospital when my guardian saw me in the window, because in those days, you know, you didn't go into the delivery room and so forth. I wanted another son, so he leaned out the window and went like this [gestures], so I thought, "Great. I have a son."

And then the next day they said that they thought Jay had emphysema, and they didn't know if he would survive. As it turned out, that's the disease that [John F.] Kennedy's little boy died from. And Jay survived. That was a traumatic part. Actually, a nurse had told my guardian about this medication that they should try on my son, and whether, number one, diagnostically, he had emphysema, and, number

two, if that medication helped. In those days, diagnostic procedures and so forth were so out of step with what science knows today.

But anyway, that was my one big trauma in having kids. And the other was, one day we can't find my other son. And we look and we look and we look, can't find him, so we call the police. And it turns out, I had put an addition on the house, and there were two couches at the end of the addition, and our bedroom door was in here. He fell asleep on one of the couches in among the diapers, so we couldn't find him. We thought he got out and walked out into the street or something, and we spent about three or four very traumatic hours.

But other than that, I've been very fortunate with my children. They're my best friends. They're all well educated, good thinkers. I couldn't have left a better heritage than those four kids. [Cries] And they're all successful and they all have—You know, I have nine grandkids. After, for whatever reason, we got divorced and so forth, I ran into Gail [Karon Palchikoff], and she had two kids [Keith Eric and Kim Lynette Palchikoff]. When they turned eighteen, for a birthday present they changed their name to my name. So I'm proud of that.

All my kids are good athletes. My boys are large, they never had a fight, because I always taught them that it takes more courage to walk away from a fight and be called chicken than it is to get in a fight, and that the only time you get in a fight is when somebody you love is threatened to be killed. I said, then you don't screw around. You go for the jugular and you kill, but you don't fight. And you kill only because that person is going to kill somebody that you love. I can't even remember the two of them having an altercation, ever.

You know, they all did really well. They were all honor students at UCLA. My oldest daughter was elected as the senior to be the most successful. And, you know, they were just great kids.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: How would you describe yourself as a father to them?

PALCHIKOFF: I wish I was better. I think they were mostly self-made. I was so busy being a millionaire. I wish I spent more time. I guess I had some influence on them, but they were all self-made, really. They were just beautiful human beings.

I hope I set some kind of an example, but I wasn't— During their growing period, I'd be at the hospital late at night and so forth, and, really, my wife probably was very influential in their life. I did the traditional things, went to all their baseball games, and on and on and on, and, you know, have a chance to have one-on-one talks, and I would try to tell them my feelings and that they shouldn't be ashamed. You know, like we were talking after lunch. But like anything in life, you can always have been better.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You mentioned the woman who you eventually married, and the mother of your children. Her name is Dawn. What was her last name?

PALCHIKOFF: Clark.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Could you maybe say a little bit about her?

PALCHIKOFF: She's a wonderful woman. We're still friends. I think when we separated, and it's very hard to be intellectually honest, I don't know whether I start— After I sold the hospitals, the administrator of my hospital in San Diego called me up and he wanted to— He had always worked for me. He was in the service, and then he'd always worked for me. Wanted to know if we could do something together.

So I said, “Well, look around San Diego,” and he found this hardware store. And so I bought it, and then I started going to San Diego. I don’t know if I bought it to go to San Diego because there were already things I thought maybe it’d be more fun to be single, or whether I really did that because I thought it was a good investment. And my wife at that time, she decided that she wanted to go back to school, which I thought was great, to get her master’s degree in family counseling. I guess her professor had convinced her that people should be free, so she came home one time when I was home for the weekend and said, “Well, Nicky, I want you to be a free man.”

I said, “Well, you know, are you sure you can handle that, that I have other relationships and so forth? I want you to think about it.”

So then she came back the next day and said no, she couldn’t handle that. I said, “Okay.”

So about six months later she came back and said, “I want you to be a free man.” I don’t know whether during a lecture series or whatever, who knows, she was convinced that would make her a better person, or see life in perspective as possible. She said, “I really want you to be a free man.”

And then, too, I thought, well, maybe she wanted to be a free woman, so I said, “Okay.”

I had a girlfriend in San Diego who had a little daughter. She was on welfare, actually. So I raised that girl till she was ten, and it came as a shock to my wife when she worked as a volunteer for heroin addicts, handing out— What is the stuff you give to heroin addicts so they can come off of it?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I'm not sure.

PALCHIKOFF: Not quinine. Anyway, I'll think of it shortly.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: She was helping these people kick the habit, though?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, kick the habit. They have to come to the clinic to get this pill, and they have to watch them drink it. She called up and said that she had crabs, that she thought she probably got it off the toilet seat. She wanted me to check with my friends if I had any to see if I had gotten them, you know.

So I called back in ten minutes, and I said, "No. My girlfriend hasn't got it and I haven't got it."

And that shocked her that I had such a relationship that I would be able to contact her in ten minutes, and she didn't realize I was living with this girl.

And so both of the parties said it was okay. I'd go home for my weekends to see my wife and kids, and then I would go back to San Diego during the week. And then finally I decided it really wasn't fair to both women. It's all in my book, isn't it? Yes. And that's when I, after we separated and so forth, went to get a divorce and met Gail. Gail wasn't into all these "fun" relationships, which was fine with me.

To me, Gail is a perfect woman. We lived together for— She said seven years?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: And our relation kept growing. In fact, the day we got a divorce, my wife called and said that she was going to divorce court, but she—

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

May 24, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: This is tape three, side A.

You were talking about the agreement, and your wife [Dawn Clark] had called.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, and she said that she didn't think it was fair that she gets everything and I didn't keep anything. So I explained to her that after having lived with me for thirty years, she was entitled to everything. [laughs] Our relationship, I guess you would say, is friendly, but we don't seek each other out. You know, when we see each other, we're courteous to each other and so forth. So I don't know if the term really is friendly or tolerance or, you know—

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Respectful, deferential.

PALCHIKOFF: Or respectful. Yes. Obviously I'd like everybody to believe what a grand guy I am and how kind I am and all that, but I don't believe that that is true, because if it was, I'd be seeking her company out, right? But occasionally run into each other at family functions.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. Well, I think we've covered a lot of ground today, so I think maybe this would be a good place to stop, and maybe we'll pick up again tomorrow.

PALCHIKOFF: Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

MAY 25, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Today is May 25, 2003. I'm with Nicholay Palchikoff. This is tape four, side A.

PALCHIKOFF: Yesterday's date was wrong that I gave you, then, huh?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right, yes. I realized that when I got the receipt from dinner, but I didn't have the right date either. My watch doesn't have the right date, so that's fine.

Anyway, today I thought we would talk about, again, this ideological evolution that you go through, from being, again, after the war, very pro-military and patriotic, and then this sort of realization about the government, information and media and disinformation, in many ways, and sort of the sea change that you undergo ideologically.

I thought we would start— I thought that the first critical moment is Hiroshima, and you talked about that, but I wanted to ask you if you could talk about your reluctance over the years to talk about your memories of Hiroshima and what happened there. Why was that?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, it was so traumatic, and the visions come right back. I can't step away from it. [Cries] And so to eliminate the discomfort and horror, I just didn't talk about it, because it was easier. You know, when you think of the moment that all of a sudden you're all alone in the world, and you realize there's nothing except ruin, and I had the feeling that I was the only guy left alive in the world. I'm not a

gregarious guy, and that frightened me more than I've ever been frightened before, to think that you had no more loved ones, you couldn't touch anybody, there's no use of knowing a language, you didn't know where you were going to get the next piece of food, or water.

I mean, here you are in the middle of this desolation, and no solution to it that you can visibly see. I mean, what is there you could do? You can't start growing food, because it wouldn't grow. What is contaminated? What isn't? And even if the government didn't tell me about the contamination and so forth and so on, you could see, visibly, the force that in one second destroyed these buildings that I used to think were indestructible, and bridges and— Well, everything, you know. All ground level, except for some of these buildings that were still popping up. Anything above ground level, it was like somebody took a knife and just cut everything off, and then crunched it in a machine. So you see a little hunk of concrete and you say, "Wow, that survived." Otherwise, you know, you could pick up dust.

It was very hurtful. And the phase you mentioned about being patriotic, it wasn't so much being patriotic, it was that I was convinced that what my government told me was true, that if we want to prevent another incident like this, we have to be stronger than Russia, because they're the evil people; they're going to blow us up if we don't blow them up. And so rather than patriotism, it was survival. It was a necessity, and to teach the kids faith in government so they could understand that our survival was based on what the government said.

And I think when I look back, as I point out, it was not patriotism so much, you know. I came a long way from saying the Pledge of Allegiance in the morning with the kids and so forth, because I felt that the government was all powerful.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And reliable.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. Reliable, and that they were telling me and doing things for the benefit of the citizen, that they were really interested in me as a human being. And ultimate realization that I was nothing except to be manipulated to continue this government. So the change was not from patriotism, it was from survival, and it all ties in with shelter and so forth. My duty to survive to fight this horrible enemy so this won't happen again, which was the most horrible thing I'd ever seen.

So that's why I said that the back half of my life, from a lesson standpoint for people, it was much more important than when I was born and all that sort of thing which I mentioned to you right from the beginning.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: It was like the scales began to fall from your eyes after the war, and the cold war, the Korean War.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. But I didn't want to discuss it, because how do you tell people horror? You can't understand it, but you'll see some of it on the film [*War or Peace: It's Your Choice*] if you have time, to see human beings that are just walking around, not knowing where they're going, just looking— Waiting to die. There's so much pain. The instant the bomb was dropped, we did it at the worst possible time for people. The school kids were out tearing down houses in concentric circles, because there would be would be [unclear] with burned-out cities at a time. You know, every city was worse than Hiroshima, really.

And they were out in the streets, all the kids, right in the heart of the town, right where the bomb was dropped, practically. The husbands were at work, so nobody knew where anybody was. Women were looking for their kids. Kid without parents didn't know where to go. It was a horror. I mean, can you imagine the population? Nobody knows what's happening, or where their loved one is, and no one to ask, and basically no one to ask because there's too few people left.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Did you tell anyone, then, at all, when you saw, what you had seen?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. You know, in a very surface-like thing. It was not what was really inside of me. People would make a comment, "The damn Japs deserved it. Look what happened at Pearl Harbor." And I couldn't keep quiet. But other than that, to go out on a mission of trying to tell as many people as I knew so that we would take action, in spite of the pain involved, that I saw it was more important for me to pass the message on.

And, of course, this is tremendous if anybody ever picks up the book to read it, you know, because, number one, it gives validity, and, number two, it isn't something somebody is just saying for attention-getting or whatever, you know, that this is the meat and potatoes of what is going to happen to us, because if we develop more bombs, you know, the world isn't going to sit and wait for us to keep developing bombs. They're going to respond, and they're going to do it in a clandestine way or become our friends temporarily in business so we'll allow them to do it, like we let Israel build their two hundred bombs and we knew about it.

We'll hand it out like goodies. You know, "If you do this for us, yeah, we'll kind of keep our eyes closed. You can build your bomb." And pretty soon there would be so many bombs, and some idiot is going to trigger one. Unfortunately we were the idiots that triggered it twice, and so I have no confidence that we won't trigger it again.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And, now, too, there's the fear of a dirty bomb.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. I mean, this thing can go on and on to ad infinitum to destroy ourselves. And people kind of laugh at you, but people don't understand. Here we're concerned that there's a fire in Siberia and the smoke is coming to northern Nevada. I mean, be my guest. Drop a bomb anywhere in the world. We're involved.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: When you went back, if I read it correctly and I heard what I heard yesterday, there were no other Caucasians, were no American soldiers other than you when you visit Hiroshima. Is that correct?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. It's correct. I think there was one Australian correspondent that was there before me, but he was representing a newspaper from Australia.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And when you returned to Yokohama, were you debriefed at all by people there?

PALCHIKOFF: Tokyo. I went back to Tokyo. No. This was such a time of turmoil. Nobody knew what the other person was doing. You know, we were playing it by ear. I mean, a perfect example is Afghanistan. I mean, we haven't done a damn thing there. We haven't put a government in, nothing. Over there we had a strong [Douglas] MacArthur, we had thousands of troops, and we did exactly what we

wanted. People don't know that it was illegal in Japan to even talk about the atomic bombing. They couldn't teach it in school, by edict from the United States government.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I didn't know that.

PALCHIKOFF: To tell you how isolated things are after complete destruction, nobody even knew that there were Caucasians that lived in Hiroshima till my sister [Kaleria Sergaivna Drago]'s interview was released under the freedom of press about fifteen years later or whatever. The paper in Hiroshima picked it up, and so they did an article on the Palchikoff family for seven days prior to Hiroshima Day, which Hiroshima is celebrated. Not celebrated, but, you know, remembered.

Actually what happened was, I got a phone call in Auburn, California, in the middle of the night. I have a lot of crazy friends, you know. And this guy says, "Is this Nick Palchikoff?"

I said, "Yes."

He says, "Well, this is Japan."

And I'm saying, "All right." I said, "Who's kidding who? You woke me up. I'm going to hang up."

The guy said, "Oh, please don't. We're looking for six months for you." And they're trying to trace down the Palchikoffs. Well, my sister had married and changed her name, and for some reason I don't know, they didn't get any of my kids [Jan Louise, Kim Eileen, Kai Clarke, and Jay Fredrick Palchikoff]. And so they asked me to write what I did in my life after I left Hiroshima. And I have copies of all those articles. And that's when the newspaper got involved and they did this big fiasco in

Japan on our family, and then they said I should come back, and I told them I didn't want to come back. I said I wasn't ever going to come back. And they said, well, they thought it would be good.

So I promised I'd go back the next year because, you know, time was so tight, and then Gail and I decided, well, that we shouldn't just go. We should do something, and so we came up with the idea of the bicycle trip for peace. We started at the *Fifth Lucky Dragon*, is the interpretation of the name of the ship where they had the first peacetime casualty from atomic bombing from Bikini. Their boat was covered with white dust, and the captain of the ship died. The ship was in complete disarray, and the Japanese Peace Movement, they brought it to Tokyo. They built a building to put it in, enshrine it. And I met the guy's wife.

From there, things just kept rolling. The Japanese people that helped us was the Gensuikyo, who was basically a communist group in Japan. I don't know how many. I think I wrote about how people would come to see my dad to interpret Lenin, and they would disappear. I don't know how many. Thirty, forty, fifty thousand communists in Japan were slaughtered.

And so the first thing they did when I got there is tell me that "We're a communist organization."

And I said, "Well, so what?" I said, "If the communists don't believe in peace, we've got trouble in this world." But they were concerned about my safety coming home, and they had planned, through all their members, for me to have a place to stop on our bicycle trip.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What I'd like to do, too, is I'd like to do it in chronological order, and we'll get to that fairly soon.

PALCHIKOFF: Okay.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: But if you could, just back up, and we left yesterday, when we stopped, you had mentioned living in Playa del Rey, your job at Western Surgical Supply. We brought it up to your divorce. What I wanted to do is to backtrack just a little, before the trip to Japan, and talk about a few matters, a few incidents that came up in the memoir. One of them was the building of Sputnik. Not the building of Sputnik, but Sputnik and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and what those two events spurred you to do. You built a fallout shelter, and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that.

PALCHIKOFF: Actually, the shelter was built immediately after Sputnik, but my mind about what was happening and the information I was getting in the reserve training program and so forth and so on, I started doubting. It's like it seemed to me that a person like [Fidel A.] Castro, who can land in Cuba rowing a boat, and declare war on a tyrant, and be able to get the population to respond to support him when he had nothing, no money, no guns, or anything, was a fantastic accomplishment of the person. And to be taught continually that, no, communism is bad, and he's bad, and on and on, when I knew something about [Fulgencio] Batista, and the gambling that was going on, and so forth and so on, and that how could this person be so bad who was against these things that I considered not good for society?

And so I started doubting, why do we do this? Why does somebody like [John F.] Kennedy, who was more or less, I guess you'd say, one of our more brilliant

presidents, get obsessed with wanting to kill Castro in a clandestine way? As though we were ashamed to say, "This is bad. We're going to fight it. We'll isolate you as a nation," put the navy around there, no import/export. And the country would die. But then, of course, our business was making money off Cuba, and so it started disenchanting me and making me think.

And then when the Sputnik scare came, here I was assured that as long as we were strong, that no other country could build this, technically. I mean, we were so far advanced, and that I was totally protected by my government. And, you know, I'd go outside and see that goddamn thing going around, and I'm saying, "Gee, you know, maybe they're going to drop something the next time around."

So, if in that hiatus of partially believing the government, and seeing, visually, what was happening—you know, it flew right over Orange County almost every night—I decided, "Well, I guess I've got to take care of myself and my family." And at that time there were little companies that were coming out, building little shelters in your yard for five or six thousand dollars, you know. I looked at them and I said, "Jeez, how does anybody survive in there?" There's no bathroom facilities, nothing. Because having seen Hiroshima and the devastation, I knew that that thing wasn't going to be around.

And so I decided, "Well, okay, then I'm going to do something, as long as I'm going to do it and do it to the best of my ability to make sure that we survive." And then I started collecting information on the thickness of the walls and how much they could hold, and on and on and on, and ultimately built what I considered the ultimate

shelter that I felt that we could survive. And then you heard how stupid that was later, as I look back, on having done it.

Actually, it turned out where Jay used to practice his drums so I wouldn't have to hear them, because once you close the door, you know, you couldn't hear anything or anything else.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Could you maybe describe that fallout shelter a little bit?

PALCHIKOFF: Pardon?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Could you describe it a little bit?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh, yes. The way I built it was that, first of all, I was convinced that everything ground level would be gone. I wasn't convinced; experience. And so everything went below. I dug out my garage completely, just had the walls standing. And I had a staircase built in the shelter that went around ninety degrees, because radiation won't bend. And then I had custom-made doors that were poured into the concrete. The steel was poured into the concrete for reinforcement, and they locked like autoclave doors. You know what autoclave doors look like?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: You know, they have all these little things. And then at the bottom of the steps was another door exactly the same. So if it penetrated the first door, it would have to make a turn, the radiation would make a turn, and then it would have to blow out that door. And these doors were all metal and thick, and the doorframes all had rebars welded to the doorframes, which were made out of steel. They were poured into the concrete so the doorframe wouldn't give. And then you went around a corner and you went into the main shelter.

Before they poured the concrete, I had a deep-freeze put in there, and a refrigerator, assuming that the deep-freeze would hold the food for a period of time. And then, of course, I decided, well, to rely on canned foods, food that we could heat, and so I had a couple of butane stoves, you know, those camping stoves, and plenty of fuel to keep them going.

Underneath I had bought some old navy bunks, war surplus, that would go up against the wall so we'd have living room, and at night we could drop the bunks and all of us had a place to sleep. Like you see in the navy on the sides of a destroyer, you know, how they'd— And at the other end of the shelter I buried a safe that I bought for all our important papers. I don't know what the hell I was going to prove with my important papers.

And next to it was another steel door that was bolted, and a pipe that I had welded, a drainage pipe, that went all the way up to the street and was totally covered. It was filled with sand, because they calculated that with so much sand that radiation couldn't get through. And that way, because I was afraid the garage would collapse so we couldn't use our regular entrance, so that way I would have this in-and-out escape hatch, if you will.

Then I had an 800-gallon water tank installed, because I knew water was important and I didn't want to have stale water. So the water in my house circulated through this tank. So the moment there was a call to arms or whatever you want to call it, all I'd do is shut off two valves and I would trap 800 gallons of fresh water that was available for our use.

And then the air circulation system was made out of four-inch galvanized pipe, and there was an in-and-out in two locations. The pipes would come through the concrete, and then they were bent ninety degrees so that any dust particles that were of any weight or anything could not come back in, because the grinder we had to pull the air in, you know, obviously couldn't suck up dust.

And, of course, they're located in a place where there were no bushes or anything, and we kept it clear, because if there was a bush right close to the entrance to the pipe and some dust got on that, obviously it could be sucked in. So there was a two-foot distance between the inlet and where the pipe came in, so that it would have to suck something up two feet, and obviously I didn't have enough air pressure to do that so I felt that I had clean air.

I had caps on the bottom, so before the bomb was dropped, I could cap down in the shelter and trap the clean air temporarily, and then I could run my antenna conduit to my radio to see what was happening for communication. And after the all-clear came, then I could undo the caps, and then be able to use the air circulation system that when we calculated it out, I doubled the capacity, because, you know, I didn't know if anybody would have the strength to turn it at the speed you are and so forth. I thought it was safer to have double the capacity.

Electricity, no provisions for electricity, because, obviously, number one, gasoline, and then the fumes of having to go out and to get to the gasoline in the tanks and on and on I thought was going a little too much, not that already this wasn't way out of proportion. And so after they poured the lid on, then I had my garage that I to come up the driveway, and the roof part was my floor in the garage. And then nobody

from the outside would even suspect or know that there was anything underneath. And the whole measurement of it was, as I recall, twenty feet wide and forty feet long.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Big.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, it was a very sizeable thing. It was livable, you know, that you could live comfortably for two weeks. But being in one of these concrete things with four people sitting with their knees in each other's mouths, you know, and I don't think psychologically anybody could even survive that, wondering what's going on in the world, and sitting there hour after hour without being able to even move.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: If you would, too, talk about the septic tank.

PALCHIKOFF: The septic tank I had dug first. After they dug out the garage, then they dug out the septic tank. I had it made so that it looked like a toilet seat, so that we could use it as a bathroom. I had vents so the odor would go out, and I don't know why I had another pipe put in so it could be pumped out, as though after everything was destroyed, I'd call a sewer company and they'd come pump out the septic tank. But anyway, obviously I had to have it made so the odor coming up would be minimized.

And so in case of a death, I had talked to my kids about having to dismember a loved one and throw it down this tube that was also like that bathroom septic tank. I asked the kids, and they don't seem to remember that part of it. I guess memory serves us well that we don't want to remember things of this horror, of thinking of destroying somebody that you love, and cutting their head off and dumping it into a septic tank. Obviously it's even too horrible to think about it. But it goes to show you how fear and survival can destroy logical thinking, it can destroy your humanity, it can

destroy everything you know that is decent, and that the important thing in the world then becomes "I survived" instead of "Our society survived."

And so by this time I'd resigned my commission.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Resigned your commission, then, after or before the fallout shelter is built?

PALCHIKOFF: It was about the same time. You know, I don't remember, because I was not looked upon by the medical profession that I was being very patriotic by resigning, and by that time I didn't care what anybody else thought. It was time to begin to think what I think is best for the people, and my family, for the future. I guess it was almost an isolation of ideas, and that I as an individual could do something that I didn't have to have approval from my government about how I thought and what I thought the conclusion should be, and not be afraid to take them on, except that when it came time to take them on, I didn't have the courage.

There was a story about the electoral college. I thought very seriously about voting for [Barry M.] Goldwater, and then I thought, "Well, what would this accomplish?"

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Let's hold off the story for just one more moment. I had a question about, were other people also building fallout shelters in your neighborhood that you knew of?

PALCHIKOFF: No.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: No?

PALCHIKOFF: No. They were more intelligent than I.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Do you know if the shelter still exists?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, 13722 Judy Anne Lane, in Santa Ana, California. I really, really wanted to buy a new camera and do a film on just the emotion of that. I think that's very educational, that in our struggle for survival, do we have the courage to kill our loved ones, basically. And running out of poop.

And then also you have to find out, well, how are you going to distribute this information? It'd be just like, I wouldn't have ever written that book if the girl from New York hadn't said, "Well, I want to write a book." You know, I never would have sat down and gone through all of this, but I'm glad I did. I'm grateful to her for getting me excited. It took me one whole month, every day. I had it checked out. Got to cover this.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: How did your neighbors respond to the building of your fallout shelter?

PALCHIKOFF: Some thought it was funny. Some thought it was ludicrous. But none of them ever said anything like, "God, if anything happens, I hope you can help me," or anything like that. I think it was beyond American thinking at the time for survival, other than you hear the government say, "We have these subway stations you can hide in. This is called a fallout shelter," and on and on. I think most people continued to think, "The government would take care of me."

VAN BENSCHOTEN: When you began, I guess, to have these doubts, hesitations about the government and how reliable and trustworthy the information coming out of the government was, were there people that you were speaking with that—

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. Oh yes. There was a guy that worked for Hughes [Aircraft] who was an engineer who would fly to Washington to present their new weaponry and

so forth, and I talked to him. I had some liberal friends that thought what I was doing was worthwhile, but the majority of people, because I was in the hospital business, they were doctors and so forth, number one, didn't like my viewpoint, and their philosophy was strictly, you know, "We're Americans. We're tougher. We're stronger. Let's go get 'em, and move on."

VAN BENSCHOTEN: "We've got nothing to fear."

PALCHIKOFF: Yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: All right. Let's move on to your involvement in the Lyndon [B.] Johnson election.

PALCHIKOFF: I felt that since the army wasn't doing too much, and probably a lot of ego, I decided that I should get involved in politics as a duty, as an American. I had some money to rub together, and at that time, of course, I didn't realize the only thing political organizations look for are money. And so I joined the Democratic Party, and at that time in California it was split between Jess [Jesse M.] Unruh and Governor [Edmund G. "Pat"] Brown, and the faction I was supporting was the one for Jess Unruh. I guess the only reason that I supported Unruh over Brown—I didn't know anything about either one of them, really—was the people I originally met, who wanted me to get more active in the Democratic Party, were very wealthy Jewish people in L.A. that represented the movie industry.

They knew how to blow up my ego, you know. "Gee, in Orange County we need a good Democrat," and on and on. Ego plays a big role in everything, you know. It's like [Daniel] Ellsberg. You talk to people, and "I can't tell you this. This is secret." You know, it gives you a stature above you. "I know something you can't

know, and I can't tell you, but I have the knowledge and the power over you with this information."

And the same thing like, you know, you're the young guy from Orange County, and the campaign for Johnson was successful, and I collected a lot of money for the thing, and so they appointed to be an elector, I guess like, "Good for you." And when we went to the inauguration I flew in Jess Unruh's personal plane, or one that he had gotten for people to go to Washington. I actually ended up admiring Mr. Unruh very, very much. I thought he did a great deal for the Democratic Party, or for his beliefs.

It was kind of an eye-opener, you know, when they had a dinner for Johnson, and I had bought a table and had some of the senators and congressmen as my guests. President Johnson walked up to the table and, "Nick, thank you. I hear the great things you're doing for the party," and on and on.

And you're sitting there, "God, the president knows me," and, of course, he doesn't. He has a lackey behind him, telling him, "Okay. This is Nick's table, and that's that bald-headed idiot." Because when we went to the inauguration, he didn't know me from Adam. The only time you saw Johnson was on the stage with all the team men lined up across. He wasn't my president anymore. He has my money, he's elected. What does he need me for?

I got to know [David] Strauss. Every day I'd call in the money I got and so forth, so they would say what money to spend on ads and on and on. And so when [James E.] Carter was going to run against [Ronald W.] Reagan, I had an idea that

Carter should bring into proper perspective what they were doing in Vietnam and so forth. I don't know what the approach I had that I thought was revolutionary.

But anyway, I called Strauss' office, and by that time I wasn't donating money to the Democratic Party, because I'd sold my hospitals and didn't have a kind of fun money. I said, "I want to talk to Mr. Strauss," identified myself, and I said I was a member of the President's Club and I worked with him in the Johnson campaign, and on and on and on. And I guess they looked at the contribution list or something, because this little girl comes up and says, "Oh, Mr. Strauss told me to take a message and tell me what your thoughts are."

I put the phone down, and that was the last time I had anything to do with any political movement except on an individual basis, like I traveled all over Nevada for [William J.] Clinton in my truck, talking about the nuclear waste they want to put into Nevada. I traveled all over California for Jess Unruh.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: But it was more face to face?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. That campaign I called a family affair, that I took time off from work, and got my camper, and went from little town to little town, talking about relevant issues, but it was nothing to do with basically a party affiliation. I believe that the Democratic Party probably in some small way represents my feelings more than the Republican Party, but generally speaking, they're both exactly the same. They get the money from the same place, and all they're trying to do is get reelected and get as much money as possible to guarantee a reelection. It's a system that's destined to die.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your experience as an elector. What was that like?

PALCHIKOFF: I always wanted to teach my kids everything I knew, so I took them all with me. We had to be in Sacramento, I believe it was ten o'clock in the morning, and, you know, I had met Governor Brown on several occasions and we kidded about the abortion issue and so forth. I wanted my kids to meet the governor, and see the rotunda where they met, and all that stuff. I took them up there and introduced them to the governor, who was very gracious.

And all of a sudden we go to a table, and we're signing the minutes of the electoral college, and the electoral college isn't supposed to meet till two o'clock in the afternoon. And they have everybody at that time— [W. Byron] Rumford was supposed to be a big cheese because of the Rumford Act, you know, for the housing. And he's supposed to make a— I guess he was— What do you call it when you make the motion? Or what do you call that person?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: A nominating person?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. Well, he was supposed to make the motion about this and that, and so-and-so is going to second it. And I'm reading this and I'm saying, "Jesus Christ. How do they know that? We haven't even met yet. Nobody asked me how I was going to vote." And I stood there and told the kids, I said, "This ridiculous. This is insulting. Why do they even waste the government money bringing me to Sacramento? What function am I really performing?"

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So it was completely orchestrated before?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes. And then all you can do is either vote Democratic or be shunned, I guess, forever in the state. And I was so mad, I was going to vote for Goldwater, which I don't know what that even legally would do to the college. And then I thought, "Well." That's when I chickened out. You know, "I have other friends that are there, and this is the procedure. This is the way they do it. There's nothing I can do," which was wrong. There was something I could have done. I could have gotten up and said, "I object. I think this is an insult on my intelligence," and so forth and so on, but I didn't.

And I felt that I had let an opportunity go by where there was something I could have done. But, you know, at least I taught four young people how ridiculous this whole thing was. When you heard about [George W.] Bush getting elected, and you stop and think, "Electoral college. Who the hell are we?" And I go back to my experience, you know. And they're all committed to vote a certain way, and it's a joke.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

May 25, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: This is tape four, side B now.

You just told a story, a very interesting one, I thought, about what freedom means, both in the Soviet Union and in America. If you could tell that again, please.

PALCHIKOFF: Well, when I was in Japan I met some people from the Russian Peace Movement. In fact, the gentlemen still communicates with me, and he is now working in the Duma. We argued late into the night who was a freer human being; me, as an American citizen, or he, as a Soviet citizen. During the argument, he brought forth his concepts, which were that he could go in and criticize his boss and not get fired, and that he wouldn't lose his health insurance, and that he wouldn't lose an income, therefore lose everything that he was making payments to the bank for, like a car and your home and so forth and so on, and that nobody could take away his son's right for an education as long as he got good grades.

In fact, at that time in the Soviet Union, if you qualified to go to the university, they paid the university student a stipend for his apartment and books so he wouldn't have to work and he could dedicate his whole time for the benefit of the nation, getting an education, which I thought was pretty great.

He gave me the example that these things could be held against me in my society, and that in his society nobody could take away his health insurance or his home; admittedly, the home not being the same as we have here, being more or less

like two-bedroom apartments and so forth, but a place to live, not to be homeless. And, again, that his son would have a decent university education if he got his grades.

And at the end of the evening, the conclusion was that you can't be a free man unless you're economically free. And with his examples he gave, and the only examples I could come up with, there was no question in my mind that he was a much freer human being than I was. Even if I was a boss, to continue to get credit from somebody or whatever still meant I had to be in the mainstream. I couldn't go in the bank and say, "I believe all the banks should be blown out. Loan me a hundred thousand dollars." But anyway, I always remember that.

And as I see homeless people, I see people that believe something and can't express their belief. Especially in our educational system, it frightens me that people with all this knowledge, with experience and education cannot really teach our kids the truth, and without the truth we have nothing.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Let's return to your political activity. Between, let's say, the time when you become interested in Lyndon Johnson, you work toward his reelection, and the time when you drop out of, it seems to me, at least the political party system with [James E.] Carter, and the [Ronald W.] Reagan reelection of 1980, were you still involved, then, in—

PALCHIKOFF: No, I wasn't. As soon as you quit contributing— To be a member of the President's Club, as I recall, I contributed $10,000 a year. After I sold my businesses, and my kids were going to college and so forth, I didn't have that kind of money. And once you don't contribute, people really are not interested. They don't even remember your name. They don't care if you personally elected the last

president with whatever act that you took. The next president doesn't care. All he wants to know is how much money are you going to give him.

I mean, it's like you hear on TV every day. You know, [Richard A.] Gephardt is fighting so-and-so, and they're fighting who's going to get the money so he can run for president. How ludicrous that we're selecting a president by his ability to go raise money. And the example is of Johnson coming and thanking me, and I'm looking up and saying, "Here's the most powerful human being in the world. What the hell is he doing wasting his time, coming over here and pretending that he knows me, and I made a personal contribution that was so meaningful?" I mean, what is the charade?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So when you sold off your hospitals, then, your main source of income, then, was the hardware store in San Diego?

PALCHIKOFF: No. I didn't work for ten years, I guess. I retired till I started thinking that, well, I'd better do something.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And where did you live when you retired?

PALCHIKOFF: When I retired? I lived there on Judy Anne Lane. All my sons. I obviously would have been a lot smarter if I made some smart investments, and on and on, but easy come, easy go. The kids did what they wanted to do.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: All right. Another critical moment, I think, might have been, for instance, your daughter's activism at UCLA when they were going through. Your oldest daughter [Jan Louise Palchikoff] at first, and then also your other daughter [Kim Eileen Palchikoff] becomes active as well, politically, on campus. Maybe if you could tell us a little bit about that.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. As I was talking to you about the fact there are two factions in the Democratic Party, one was for the war in Vietnam and the other was against the war in Vietnam, and the faction I was supporting and believing in was the war in Vietnam, because I've always believed my government was telling the truth. Even if I was having doubts, I hadn't come to a point where I just totally said, "Okay. Screw it, and I've got to change the way I live."

And so during this time my daughter said, "You know, Dad, you really should come to our teach-in. We have professors that have information, and all you'll get to do is to listen to them if you want. If you don't want to, you can walk out."

And they were busy running around, getting bread that Safeway [Inc.] was throwing away, and peanut butter and jam. They were making sandwiches so people could have something to eat. This was at Kerckhoff Hall, I believe, that belongs to the students.

Anyway, I went, and it was first time I heard about the tiger cages, and I thought, "Communist propaganda." They talked about other issues of how unfair it was what we were doing, what were doing there in the first place, and so forth. And as I spent the evening there, walking around and listening, it seemed to me that all these people couldn't be lying about the same thing at the same time in a concerted effort. And I was impressed, the dedication of the kids. This happened when [Richard M.] Nixon went into Cambodia.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So, '71.

PALCHIKOFF: You know, they were running around the campus, hiding, calling other universities' police, chasing them, trying to find out where they were making the calls, and on and on.

And finally the thing that turned my point around was, I was watching TV. I believe I'd left the campus, and they were talking about the fact that the kids have been told to evacuate Kerckhoff Hall, and that if they didn't, the SWAT [Special Weapons and Tactics] team was going to come in at four o'clock and forcibly remove them.

I'm seeing kids with their arms locked across the front of Kerckhoff Hall, and my daughter's there, and the time is clicking. [Cries] And now it's about ten minutes to four, and I'm thinking, "You know, for what?" And all of a sudden they come out, and the students find out that Kerckhoff Hall is not state property, but the property of the students, that it was built out of ACLU funds, or whatever the funds are. And so the SWAT team couldn't go in, and they won that battle.

And so afterwards I asked her, I said, "You know, why would you want to die, whether you got to stay in that goddamn building or not?"

And she said, "Somewhere in life you have to make a stand in what you believe."

And that was very critical to her, and I thought, "God, how much more moral is this person than me or anybody else I know, that says, 'This is a principle, and I'm going to give up my life for that principle.'" And there are very few people like that in the world. And that obviously was the final kick in the ass to push me over to the other side.

My other daughter [Kim Eileen Palchikoff] was involved more with the UCLA administration about women's rights and sports, where Jan had also started this women's— I forgot the name. Western Conference Women's something, to get the first woman coach at UCLA under Title IX. And when she left, everybody thought, well, that was the end of it and it'd be forgotten, and my daughter picked up what my first daughter had started, and they were able to get their share of the money for their athletic program, and so forth and so on, politically. But she never had the— Not that she wouldn't have confronted it on the same basis, but the opportunity was not there. But I'm confident that had the opportunity been there, she would have been next to her sister.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You said that that was the event that pushed you over eventually.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So, take us through. What were some of the first things that you did in your activist era?

PALCHIKOFF: First of all, I thought that the only thing I could do was do it on an individual basis, and so I did whatever I could whenever the opportunity came up, which wasn't very much. And then with this thing with Japan, when I went to Japan, all of a sudden I realized that here were all these hibakushas that were able to organize Japan, and go out one signature at a time and get Japan to support a non-nuclear policy, and most of the Japanese, half of the nation, had signed this petition against the nuclear weapons.

In fact, it still rages on. You know, I'm sure the American government wishes the Japanese would build a nuclear weapon against Korea. They ultimately may, but certainly they're going to have to do it after a big fight. And all of a sudden I realized, well, gee, the thing I need to do is to start identifying these groups, and instead of ramrodding around the world one at a time, that I need to go out and get groups.

And so when I started getting signatures after coming back from Japan, I got together the Shoshone Indians. They were the first nation that, as a nation, they signed the petition supporting Japan. I went on their actions at the Nevada test site, where we would go on the property and get arrested, and the government would arrest you and make life as miserable as possible, thinking you wouldn't come back. They would tell you that you have to go to court on such and such a day, and so forth and so on, but they never took us to court because they knew our position was right, which was that this land belonged to the Shoshone Indians under an agreement with the United States of America as a government, and we had gotten permission from the Indian chief to go on their property. And if they wanted to test this in court, that that's what we were trying to do.

They wanted to think that by— You know, they first handcuff you, and they would sit you in the bus, turn off the air-conditioner, and drag you out, let's see, how many miles—I don't know—to Tonopah, and let you off without transportation or anything else, and dump you. We couldn't hire the bus back because it was part of their contract not to turn on the air-conditioning and take us back. We had it fairly well organized where people would follow the bus so they'd know where they dumped us off, and then they would go back and forth to our campsite and pick us up.

Then, of course, it got to a point where not by reputation, but my express belief, like in New Zealand, I was there when Reagan made the stupid comment that there were more sheep in New Zealand than people, and so who cares what they do.

That's when the New Zealand government said to the American government, "You can't come into our ports unless you declare that you don't have any nuclear weapons."

And we said, "Well, we don't tell anybody."

So the government, instead of backing down, says, "Okay. You don't come in."

And so we kicked them out of the ANZAC [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] treaty, as I recall, and here were these brave ANZACs that fought in New Guinea, laid down their lives for the same things we believed, and the fact they expressed their freedom of saying, "We don't want your atom bombs in our harbor," that we punish them for having a democracy, for having the free expression of saying what they want in their country, and we had the audacity to punish them for exercising the right.

And, of course, I had an opinion on it, and it got in the papers in New Zealand. I, in Wellington, went to the— I guess it was called a congress, I don't know. They just put the two houses together. And the prime minister was [David] Langey. I communicated with him on several occasions. I have the letters. It was refreshing to see how a prime minister of a nation would have the courage, and I thanked him for that, to stand up for bullying tactics, that I thought that was magnificent that somebody would have that kind of courage.

And in every country, there is a movement of sorts. All you had to do was find it. I just thought maybe what I said and did, and my experience, would just give him more energy to continue what they were doing, because, you know, it's very hard to keep something going in your mind without seeing any results.

Canada, same thing. I got to talk to the— I forgot the name of the outfit, but they invited me to come up and speak.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Was this True North?

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, I would guess that was it, yes. And I met— What was that Japanese guy? Nabuchi, a professor in Canada. Anyway, you know, you had these people and you had these ideas that were so apropos and so simple. Why couldn't we just follow some of these ideas? His idea was that we've gotten to be like cattle. You read about it. Didn't I write it?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: Okay. So I won't mention it. But the truth is so simple. Why do we try to reject it, manipulate it? And the only reason I can think of is because we want to make more money and have more power. I can't think of any other reason.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You mentioned several events, and for the purposes, I guess, of just understanding the context in which they occur, I was trying to set them in some sort of chronological order. I think the True North and your connection with Canada you mentioned, I think, in the memoir as the Canadian couple who wanted you to come and speak.

PALCHIKOFF: That I met camping?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. Exactly. And that led to, it seemed me, you were—

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. They were going to this, and they wanted to know, because I had on camper some sticker about peace, and they came by and stopped and talked to me. They wanted to know if I would come up and talk with them and go to this conference with them, and I said, "Sure," and that's how I got it.

But basically every little bit, as little as you think you're doing, can grow. You know, it's like planting a seed. All you have to do is water it occasionally and a plant grows, only it doesn't seem to grow fast enough. That's because we as people don't have any power anymore. Nobody listens to us. To hear Mr. [George W.] Bush say, "Well, I'm not going to pay attention to those people that are rabble-rousing in the street," and I'm looking at the TV and think, "Doesn't this man understand that it is our country, us rabble-rousers, and the ones that aren't rabble-rousing, we're the ones that are going to make the decision, not you?"

You can't just say to half of the population, "I'm not going to pay attention to you" if you're the president and you really believe in the presidency of the United States. And who are these people with this kind of mentality that ever get elected to be president? Again, money. Our whole system is based on how much money I can raise. Obviously if I put up a hundred thousand dollars, I want to protect my investment. I don't want you to vote against something.

It was very interesting. We elected an assemblyman—I don't know if I said it in the memoirs or not—from Orange County, he was a Democrat. His name was Ken [Kenneth] Corey. After his election, something came up in the Assembly to do with hospitals, so he called me up to see my feelings on it. I presume he thought that he was representing me.

I said, “Ken,” I said, “why are you calling me?” I said, “If I didn’t think you could solve these problems, I wouldn’t have supported you. You don’t owe me anything. I mean, you know, why don’t you call somebody else? But don’t ever call me again, asking me how to vote on an issue to see what’s best for Nick. That isn’t why I elected you. I elected you because I thought you were different.” Or helped elect you, I should say. [laughs]

But the whole electoral process is rotten. You know, there’s no way. It’s like when I had the hospitals, I would hire an employee and put it into somebody’s office. And having whatever number of employees I had, nobody was going to check up. The telephone bills would come to me directly. I’d give them my credit cards and they would put their gas bills on my credit card, or lunches or dinners or entertainment. These weren’t really even considered contributions. The bigger the company, the more money they had, the more things they’d give, like somebody flying on his plane. And nobody really knows how much money really goes into the campaign.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I want to talk a little bit about the trip that you make to Europe. I was wondering, do you remember approximately when that trip took place? I have a hunch it was during the Reagan administration, and there was a lot of anti-nuclear demonstrations in Europe.

PALCHIKOFF: I don’t remember. The most thing I remember is how much we were disliked in Germany, the young people in Germany, that how arrogant when they had these joint anti-Russian practices. You know, the German army and American army, how arrogant the American army was towards them. And because they got so much more money than the Germans, you know, these guys that were running around in

Porsches, and acting like they just had no knowledge of how to act in a foreign country.

When I was in Frankfurt, I was disgusted, seeing American soldiers walking up and down the street where there were houses of ill repute, and throwing empty beer bottles on the street. And I thought, "God, at least why don't you take the uniform off? Why aren't you in front of some beautiful museum, historical museum, in Germany?" You know, there was so much of it, but you never saw somebody in an American uniform in any of those places.

And in Germany I did not run into any or find any—quote, unquote—"peace groups," but I learned a great deal about the war. I never had heard of the White Rose Movement, and I don't know of many people in this country that have. Guys that got killed and professors that got killed because they were against [Adolf] Hitler, that was called the White Rose Movement. We were so much into propaganda, we were sitting, having breakfast, and this lady came over to talk to us. She was from New York. She was a Jewish lady. She taught dancing in New York. She came over because, you know, Gail's kind of slender and looks athletic, and so she came over to talk to her because she was a dancer.

I said, "What are you doing in Germany?"

She says, "Oh, I've been here for six months."

I said, "What do you mean?"

She says, "Well, they have a program in some of these villages where I came from that invited us back, and paid for all our expenses for six months so we would know that they weren't for the Holocaust and so forth."

And I'm saying, god, I never heard that from my government. All I heard was Germany had the Holocaust, and everything was so orchestrated, and so much law and order and so forth. I never saw a German police officer in uniform. Never.

I said, "Well, instead of telling us how anti-Semitic Germany was, why didn't we tell them about these programs, to say these are human beings making contact with other human beings that they think were wrong, and were willing to put up their money, and so forth. I mean, why didn't we hear about it? I thought that was big news. I thought it was great.

But they really didn't have a choice. Their army was built, and they worked for the U.S. Army to fight the Russians, period. I met guys from East Germany, traveling in West Germany on their motorcycles, and they told about the fact that the west part of Berlin, how much money the U.S. government was spending to try to make it glitzier than the eastern part of Berlin. And when we went to eastern Berlin, it was obvious that it was a beautiful part of Berlin. It's where all the parks and the lakes were, and that's where the Embassy Row was where all the beautiful embassies were built. The Berlin Cathedral was over there, and the oldest synagogue was over there in East Berlin. The university was over in East Berlin. And it was obvious, ultimately, you know, the Western Germans would have to take it over, because they had all this land, because it was agricultural and West Berlin wasn't.

And the second time we went to Germany, the people were very upset in Eastern Germany, because West Germany had promised them so much if they would only join Germany. And they did, and instead of giving them money and building factories in East Berlin, they closed them all down. It was cheaper to get labor in

Hungary, that they started building all their factories in Hungary. And so the East Germans were there, but not their old factories that were outmoded or anything else, but no way to make a living.

That hasn't got too much to do with peace, but ultimately it's going to have a lot to do with peace, you know.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. You also take a trip to—and I think this was after the European trip—to Australia and Polynesia. You mentioned that already, parts of it. It was my understanding, in reading, that you went and sort of begin informally, were meeting people and meeting groups, and talking about peace, talking about your beliefs, more or less. Was that more or less what—

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. And the fact that the French were going to test the bomb in Tahiti area. Actually I refer to that when I was in Japan again. There was a French contingency that came over on Hiroshima Day to say that there are French people that are against this. But, yes, it's— People, they would say, "Well, if it was so safe, why don't you drop it in Paris?"

And they'd say, "Oh, no, it's safe."

So they'd have some politician get in the water after the bomb was dropped or something, and they'd say, "Well, if it's so safe, do it in France. Don't do it over here."

But the hate between the people in Tahiti and the French government is, like most places where people are conquered, you know, whether it's the people in New Zealand or Australia, the Aborigines, there's so much friction. Everything else is just really propaganda by the government, like the Morros in New Zealand. Everybody

talks about how ideal it is. Morro will never forget the fact that they drove them to the edge of a cliff and they had to jump off and drown to death. You know, you can talk all you want that there's a Morro that's an attorney somewhere, but overall it's just not what the Morro people think was cool.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I was wondering, too, if you could speak a little bit about your return to Japan. This is the first return to Japan since the trip that you had made in '45 to Hiroshima. This, of course, fits in well with the peace mission, because as you said, I think, earlier, you simply didn't want to show up in Japan; you wanted to go with someone.

PALCHIKOFF: That was one that was really planned. The rest were, I just felt that if I went and started talking to people, people would listen in a restaurant, on the beach, wherever I could get a group of people together and talk informally. I've got to say, up till I went to Japan, I thought it was very successful. And then when I went to Japan and saw the number of people involved in peace and how they had done it— Did I refer to the fact how the real Peace Movement in the world started?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: No.

PALCHIKOFF: On the River Ota, after the bombing, all the people that were left over, there were called hibakushas, people that were exposed to the atom bomb, lived on the banks of the Ota River. And they decided that they didn't want to be guinea pigs any longer, because the American doctors would come over to see how they were progressing, not so much for their health, but as a study group.

And they said, "This is enough," so they started and they took pride in the fact that they were going to tell the world what happened. It's still a big battle in Japan,

whether the American government should pay them. And so they got off the Ota River and started a Peace Movement, basically, of telling the world what happened during the bomb. And basically, from everything I can ascertain, it was the beginning of a concerted Peace Movement where people got mad and decided they were going to do something to help the world.

The hibakushas are still very revered in Japan, and one of the days of recognition of what happened in Hiroshima is on the Ota River, where they usually have the taiko people. You know, they're the guys that beat these drums in honor of the hibakusha. These guys have these huge drums that they run and throw themselves at the drum. It's a sight to see, really. And the Peace Movement always has a day dedicated just to the hibakusha on the Ota River.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: When you arrive— And I'm trying to— I think I've got it right, about 1986, then.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, '86, I believe it was.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: What was your first impression of landing in your native land?

PALCHIKOFF: Well, before we went, I thought, "Well, I'm going to write the different Japanese peace groups to say I'm coming." All of them were very busy, or this or that and so forth. One group, called the Gensuikyu, said that they would try to do whatever they could to help me. And when we landed in Tokyo— Well, it wasn't really Tokyo. Whatever. Narita Airport, I guess. The Yomiuri newspaper was there, which is kind of an English newspaper, and I collected fifty letters from different

dignitaries in the United States as a message to the mayor of Hiroshima. I had Simons. I had what's-her-name from California.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: [Dianne] Feinstein. Dianne Feinstein.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes. I have copies of the letters somewhere. There were fifty dignitaries, basically, and then groups of people like athletes that sent a letter to the mayor. And so when I landed there, they wanted to see it, and they took pictures of it, and on and on. And as we were about to leave, and I'm going, "What the hell are we going to do next?" this girl comes up and says, "I am from the Gensuikyu, and we are here to help you."

I said, "Well, we want to ride to Hiroshima."

She said, "You won't find your way around Tokyo, so we're here to take you to our headquarters and help you out."

So we said, "Okay."

And when we were in the bus, riding, she said to me, "I want you to know that we're a communist organization, and I wanted you to be aware of that before you decided to affiliate your trip with our help."

And that's when I made the comment, you know, that if the communists are not for peace, we're never going to have peace. And we got there, and they had a little office and a bedroom, or a tatami room. So Gail and went to sleep, and then they had the Japanese newspapers come in. And this is happening so rapidly, I'm not having any impression of Japan per se, you know. I'm just looking at the success of the trip, and this was all of a sudden. I expected them, by helping, to say, "Well, you can stay here or do this," or, "This is the way to go. Here's a map."

It turns out that these people all of a sudden fall in 100 percent behind what we're doing, and they have a newspaper interview with all the newspapers in Tokyo that afternoon, and on and on. They suggest that I start the ride from the Fifth Lucky Dragon, and that's where we started from, and they had TV there, and the motorcycle peace riders were there to escort us. And anyway, it just blew into this huge thing.

As we started our first day riding, people stopped and handed money to us on our bicycles. When we got to Yokohama, first of all, all the people were in awe that we would take on this what they thought as a daunting expedition of riding in Japan on a bicycle. We got there and they were having a meeting of this organization, and they had collected five thousand, ten thousand yen or something, to help us on our trip, and a place to stay. And from then on, every day we were going somewhere.

The itinerary was always that we'd get up in the morning and ride, and at lunchtime we'd meet a mayor of a city who would always donate some more money from the employees, and, you know, we were getting money up to here. I didn't know what the hell to do with it all.

And then that evening I would meet some peace group that was part of this organization, and they would invite everybody in that community that were peace activists for dinner, and they would have these tremendous sushi dinners for us and stuff, and I would talk about peace. Gail's favorite subject was AIDS, because they had just found out her brother was sick, and women's rights. And so she would speak about women's rights that the Japanese women didn't have, and I would talk about peace.

The thing that was interesting about Japan was they all knew English, but they didn't know how to talk English. I mean, they knew the grammar and so forth, but they could barely speak English. And so Gail had a difficult time because she didn't speak Japanese.

As we approached Hiroshima, our—quote, unquote—"reputation" grew, and people anticipated us in the next city. One day I got very upset because all the newspapers, they said the same thing; you know, I was an old bastard, and here was Gail going with me about peace, and on and on.

And I said, "You know, that isn't why I'm here." I said, "I came here specifically to talk about Reagan's plan about the—." What was it at that time? Having a nuclear shield. What was that called?

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Star Wars.

PALCHIKOFF: Star Wars. And they were trying to get Japan to participate in it. And I said, "I'm against it, and that's what the message is here."

Finally a guy came up to me. He says, "I apologize. It's our policy that newspapers don't criticize our government," and so forth and so on. And he introduced himself as he was from the Yakahata which is the Red Flag.

And I said, "Well, what are you apologizing? You haven't written a goddamn thing either."

So he says, "Well, our concern is that if we wrote anything, that when we went back to the United States it would be difficult for you."

And I said, "That's not your job. Your job is to report what I'm saying, not worry about what happens to me." I said, "That has nothing to do with your job."

So the following day, the guy shows up on his bicycle and rode all day with us, talking to us, and they put in a nice big article about what my beliefs were. It was interesting that Yakahata, to keep the price down, is delivered by members to other members. And so I'd always know at the house I stayed whether a person was a member of the Communist Party, because even professors, they'd get up at four in the morning to deliver the newspapers, free of charge. So I would know that if there was a thump on the front door, somebody was sneaking out to deliver papers, that he was a dedicated member of peace, and usually a member of the Communist Party.

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

May 25, 2003

VAN BENSCHOTEN: This is tape five, side A.

I had a sort of follow-up question. We were talking about your trip to Japan, and you had mentioned all of the stories that have been written about you as you travel from town to town, the people that you met as well. The communist group that helps you, did you know about this communist group before you came to Japan? They just showed up.

PALCHIKOFF: I wrote letters to all the peace groups, and they're the ones that showed up at the airport to help me and pick me up, and they said, "There's no way you'd find your way into Tokyo." So they put the bicycles on the bus till I got into town. And what was interesting was, they had this motorcycle group, and Japanese girls usually don't ride motorcycles. They were peace riders, they call themselves, and they would ride to different military installations on weekends as a hobby of riding, and also proclaiming that we need peace in the world, and so forth and so on.

And so when I showed up, they all quit and spent the whole night. They brought me maps. I still think I have them. And they planned every town, what park I should eat at. I mean, in minutia. It was incredible, the effort they made. And then when we left, they escorted us out of Tokyo all the way to Yokohama, so I had a motorcycle escort all the way, these kids.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: And the culmination of the trip was going to Hiroshima again.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh yes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Describe that a little bit.

PALCHIKOFF: When I arrived—

VAN BENSCHOTEN: It was your first time back, right?

PALCHIKOFF: Right. When we got there, the press asked us not to go into town till that evening for their news, so we left our bicycles at the railroad station. I walked around and showed Gail where I used to live and where the house used to be, and so forth and so on, and we came back in the evening and got our bikes. They had the TV cameras grinding out the back of the van that they had, taking pictures of us riding, and so forth and so on.

And when we got to the monument—you know, the Hiroshima Peace Monument is something everybody should see—Gail and I start walking to the place that had the flame, the Hiroshima flame, which was the flame of the original bombing. Some guy decided he would save the flame, and he saved the flame. And when they built this monument, they got the flame from him, and the Hiroshima eternal flame burns.

So we were walking with our bikes up the, whatever, the concrete walk up there, which, as you know, has trees, and it's very pretty. This police officer comes rushing, and telling me I can't be there with a bicycle. I have to get my bicycle and go back. And I said, "Fellow," I said, "I've been riding this damn bicycle for a thousand kilometers, and nobody but nobody is going to stop me from going from here to there." And I said, "If you want to try," I said, "go ahead, but I'm going there whether you like it or not."

And, you know, Japanese people are courteous, and he saw that I meant what I was saying, and it was important. So he backed off.

And we went to the crypt where all the hibakushas are buried. Anybody that dies that's a hibakusha, they put their name in this vault. It is my understanding from my sister [Kaleria Sergaivna Drago]—and my sister is older than I am, so it's not all that reliable—she says my parents' names are in there, because they were hibakushas, survivors of the bomb. But whether they are or aren't, the whole atmosphere, you know, the Japanese flame and the concrete casket, if you will, it's done very well. But it's a sight to see, and obviously I was emotionally touched.

And then all this rigmarole with the mayor and everything, and finally Hiroshima Day came, which was about— I think it was six days later after we arrived. The city puts up chairs in front of the monument, you know, where the guys come to speak about—quote, unquote—"peace." [Yasuhiro] Nakasone was the prime minister of Japan then, and that's why obviously the mayor was scared to death, because Nakasone was a militarist. He's the guy that went to that shrine, remember, that was built for the Japanese military, and he caused an uproar all over, internationally. That's why the mayor was scared to death to meet with me, you know.

But anyway, we went through that ceremony. Then they had another ceremony in the afternoon where they usually gather twenty-five, thirty thousand people, and different people speak, and I had a chance to speak.

After that, I got an invitation by the mayor, by the way, to this conference that they were having for the international press. The guy from the *New York Times* got up and, you know, they were discussing the bomb, how America had to do it to save all

these lives and all this. And a guy in the audience jumped up, and he says, "You're a goddamn liar." He says, "How can you continue to lie like this?"

And the guy from the *New York Times* is just stunned, you know. And the police surround him, but he wouldn't shut up, and the Japanese police didn't know what to do. And so he finished his statement and all that, and all the other guys, the French newspaper and so forth, changed the subject right away and so forth, but it was very nice to see that there were other human beings that had known the facts and had studied the facts, and here was this guy representing supposedly the primo newspaper in the world, didn't know what the hell was going on the in the world.

The American guy got an ovation. They ultimately invited him to leave, which he did peacefully, but I thought it was very brave of him and brave of the— Not brave, but I guess sensitive of the international press, the French press and the British press and, you know, from all over the world, discussing this issue, to try to change it to save embarrassment for this idiot that got caught in a lie almost like [Colin L.] Powell, you know, and that there was somebody else that knew the history of the world.

And you're looking, and think, "God, this is a representative from the United States of America. And, number one, he doesn't have the sensitivity to broach the subject in such a way, rather than saying, 'We were right. You deserved it.'" You know, it's just almost inconceivable.

Obviously everywhere I went, people knew who we were. You'd go to a restaurant to eat, and go to pay the bill, and they'll say, "Somebody's already paid the bill." Or we went to a department store, especially in Kobe, and Japanese pickles are a very, very special thing. Everybody makes them just a little different, from different

parts of the country. And the whole department store basement is usually Japanese pickles.

Everybody had read in the paper that Gail [Karon Palchikoff] loved pickles, and they wanted us to take the pickles. We said, "We can't. We don't have room. Sorry." But they insisted that we taste the pickles, and Gail just had a ball, going up and down the row, tasting all their pickles. [laughs] And, you know, they are divine. They were actually something. But it was interesting. Each one, as she'd go by the vendor, he'd come running out, you know, and want to give her some pickles. So we had very many heartwarming experiences.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: You also take another trip to Japan during the anniversary, the fiftieth anniversary, and I figure that might be a good time, if you wanted to say anything about that here, maybe combine them.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh, yes, sure. I promised them when we were there that I'd come back on the fiftieth anniversary if I was still around. So when the fiftieth anniversary came by, Gail had some surgery on her feet and the trip was very trying on her, because she was scared to death. We were riding on Japanese freeways with the truck mirrors going over our heads, and the fumes. Actually some nights we'd stop and she would just cry. She was afraid that we would get hurt or we'd get killed. So she wasn't all that looking forward to going to Japan again. The congestion, the fumes, the danger.

And so I said, "Well, I'll walk from where my school used to be to where my house is."

And so I joined the march. Every year they have a march from different parts of Japan towards Hiroshima. And what happens is, they select some people that walk the whole distance, and as you go from town to town, people join for one day on the march. And then at the end of the day they go home, and the next day another group will follow you.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: I see.

PALCHIKOFF: And so I was one of ten people that walked from Kobe to Hiroshima. Again, it was a daily occurrence. We'd be introduced in the morning to the community, and I'd be interviewed in newspapers, TV, almost ad nauseam, but I felt as long as it was doing some good, that'd be great.

It was a big joke, because the guy that was walking with me was one month younger than me, and so he was making the comment when he was introduced that he was older and so forth. So I said, "Well, I'm old enough to be your father." That brought the house down. I don't know whether he resented that I was older or not. But anyway, we got to be friends, very close friends. And every day we would march, I'd say approximately fifty— No, not fifty kilometers. I don't know. Whatever. It took us one month to go from Kobe to Hiroshima.

Again, we would stay at different people's homes. You saw the living conditions in some of the places where the mats were thrown on the floor and we slept overnight.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. You had shown me some photos of that trip.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, yes. I had to leave the march one day sooner, because I was going to speak at this conference. They called it the Geneva Conference for Peace or

whatever, and that's the article I gave you that was the final speech of the day. That was extremely well received. Actually people, till the day I left Japan after that, kept saying that I had set the tone for the conference, that they didn't realize the implications of the scars that people lived with after the incident. And I really did not participate in the incident, but the horror of seeing the incident even— That was two weeks after it happened, so what must have happened psychologically to the people that did survive, that did live through it?

My parents were really kind of out of the loop, because they had moved to the outskirts of town from where our house was, because the military— He was still teaching Russian at the military academy, and when they were bombing Kurii, they decided that it'd be better if he was out of town. So he moved five kilometers out of town. Our house was 500 meters from where the bomb was, and so there they survived. About 20 percent of the people out in that area survived, and they were one of the lucky ones that survived. It was interesting that all the Caucasians that lived in Hiroshima survived; that couple that jumped in the river.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. The Parasuchins.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, the Parasuchins. And I don't know where Borzinsky was. But those were the only three families that I recall surviving. All the Americans, of course, had long left. They had some German priests, and I guess they had all left. It was interesting that there were so few Caucasians, and out of the few that— And survival rate was so high.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Now, was it at this fiftieth anniversary of the dropping of the A-bomb that you gave your appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the mayor?

PALCHIKOFF: No, no, no. They'd been doing that for years. In fact, the trip I was there the first time was when the group passed the backing for this appeal. And that's why if you have time and you want to look at the film, you'll see Gail getting some signatures, which were probably one of the first ones that were gotten.

But, no, the one on the fiftieth anniversary, to me, was emotionally even more difficult because of the speech I had to make. After the march, when Gail and I rode our bicycles, you know, they always ask you to get on top of a van and talk to the crowds. This time they asked me to do the same thing, and it's always traumatic.

You know, the Peace Movement has really gotten a little lethargic. They do the same thing every year. When I left the first time, I said, "You know, I don't want to do the same thing over and over again." I said, "I want to see some young people involved."

They had young people groups and so forth that are now active, because it'll just die if you don't get young people involved. And the issue isn't Hiroshima; the issue is peace. We all tend to forget that since my perspective is Hiroshima, and it's very hard for people to let me go free and talk about peace, and talk about what my government is doing. You know, it always goes back, "Well, what's happened in Hiroshima?"

Nothing. It's over; it's gone; it's dead. Forget it. Nobody probably even remembers the name, let alone what happened. We need to talk about the main issue, which is peace, because if we don't have peace, we're going to have a hell of a lot more Hiroshimas and everything else. And it's hard for people. It's like talking about people of the Holocaust, the people that lived through it. You know, they keep talking

about it and talking about it and talking about it. It's over, guys. The Holocaust is gone. Now we need to see that it doesn't happen again, and repeating the horrors of the Holocaust isn't what's going to make the change. It's the intellectual acceptance of people of a new concept, where peace is going to rule the world rather than we're going to throw bombs at each other. And it's very hard to do.

It's like when they asked for me to do the presentation. They wanted me to talk about my first impressions. It's like I've got something nobody else has, you know, and people get that kind of attitude of, "I've got a secret. You didn't live through it; I did. I know; you don't."

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: Who cares? The fact that you talk to your students about it is much more important than Hiroshima.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. We're finishing up here. You take a trip also to Russia, though. Was that also as part of a peace mission?

PALCHIKOFF: No. I was going to Russia, and wherever I go, I always talk about peace. Kim, Gail's daughter, lived in Russia then, and so she got me this interview. I probably got more audience there than anywhere, because it went on prime time all over Russia. There they talked more about my feelings about the United States and peace, not so much about Hiroshima. But I did take excerpts from it, because their movies that they had were so outstanding. I've never seen any motion pictures about Hiroshima. You know, I've heard my family talk about it, I've read about it, how every day people start marching, and there would be groups of people marching. And every day they figured that half of them wouldn't be there tomorrow.

By the time you get to the end, or what you think is the end, there's almost nobody left, and the only thing you can do is lie to them. Like my sister said that they would stay at a school on the floor or something. They made provisions for the marchers that were leaving. Japanese people, usually stories about the screaming of the kids wanting their parents, and all you could do is say, "Oh, yeah, we're going to find them. They'll be there," and so forth and so on, when there wasn't a chance in hell that the kid will survive till the next morning, let alone ever find his parents. The kid doesn't even know his address. Where would you go? You saw pictures.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. Nothing standing. I was trying to place the date, too, of the Russian trip, though. Do you remember what that was?

PALCHIKOFF: It was in between.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: So it was maybe 1990, '91?

PALCHIKOFF: Somewhere in there. I can look it up.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Because I think you take the first trip to Japan in 1986. I think the second one is the fiftieth anniversary. That would make it 1995.

PALCHIKOFF: Right. So about halfway between the two.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Was there still a Soviet Union?

PALCHIKOFF: Oh, no.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Yes, it was gone, so it must have been maybe after '90.

PALCHIKOFF: The Peace Building was empty. The first time I went to Russia, on Hiroshima Day I just walked in and I saw my friend that I had an argument with. He was there, and the Buddhist priest was there, and there was a big memory thing for peace. You know, they have it every year.

But, you know, it's hard to believe, and I didn't believe it till I really looked into it, I think, that Russia has never attacked any country, that they're a very peaceful nation. But we have attacked Russia, which amazed me, and we did support Admiral [Alexander] Kolchak to try to overthrow the communists.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right. We landed American troops there.

PALCHIKOFF: Yes, in Archangel.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right.

PALCHIKOFF: So did the Japanese and so forth. So when you start talking about peace and so forth, who emphasizes not killing each other? So [Joseph] Stalin killed them another way, I guess, with forced labor. But from the standpoint of historical truth of Russia attacking a country, they've always been— In fact, first it was Peter the Great, and the Tartars, or whatever, you know.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Right, right. Well, I thought we'd sort of bring it up to date now. I mean, we're talking now, we're having this oral history, and I was wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit about what your hopes were for getting the word out. You know, I mean, obviously this will help, and all that you've done, your activism, has helped.

PALCHIKOFF: I guess the only way that it'll ever happen is, people talk about death and so forth. To me, I feel very satisfied that my memorial would be if one person remembers what I said, not that I said it, but the principle of what I said. That's the memorial. And hopefully, as I— You know, you read those kids' letters, and my kids and my grandkids, that I've touched enough people that when they go to the voting booth, or when they start discerning by watching TV, as fewer and fewer companies

own more and more outlets of news, that they will consider that, and demand that we as human beings get our country back.

I mean, you know, we preach this all over the world except we don't do it in our own country. The concept of "If the people lead, the leaders will follow" is very, very true. We need to get interested enough that by somebody reading this says, "Gee, this is interesting. I'll look into it to see if it's true or not," and get them interested in going to the library and getting books to read, to find his own truth. Because if he searches properly, the truth will be that we can't continue to live slaughtering each other, that it's impossible.

So that's my— You know, I don't have any sights, like I've written the next Bible or anything like that. It's just an idea, just an experience. It's a little unusual, but that isn't the important thing. The important thing is that people change their values. It's like, I hope my grandkids will have the courage, if they ever do have a draft, to refuse to go, and that I have given them the courage and the reason for doing that.

I go to the Veterans Hospital for my medical care, and you sit there and you hear these guys who have been traumatized, obviously, with the war, and as they're close to death, they have to justify that what they did in life was really worthwhile. So they have to continue to support, "Kill the Japs," "Kill the Germans." But that we, as we get more intelligent, that we have to admit, you know, that we're not all intelligent, and that the learning process should go on till the last day, because as you learn more, you really see how much you really don't know, which is kind of a frightening thing.

And most people like to be experts. They don't like to say, "I don't know." It's hard for them to. For some reason we think it belittles ourselves by saying, "I don't know." I think it's a great tribute to the person's humanity, if you will, to say, "I don't know, but I'm going to find out." And instead of going to those casinos that you saw last night, to find study groups.

I tried to start some, and people aren't interested. The way I wanted to do it was that we select a subject the week before, and the only thing that will be acceptable is documentation by an authority of some sort, so that would mean you'd have to go read. If you're going to talk about what happened at Dunkirk, you'd better be able to say what happened at Dunkirk. If I question you, you say, "Well, here it is. Here's the documentation why I've said that," so that it'll stimulate us. Nobody cares. And I would think that would have been so interesting, where people could just sit and talk about their knowledge of what they had found out.

But American people really don't care about peace. They really don't want peace. That's not our psyche. It's "Kill the goddamn Indians. Kill the niggers." We got our land for nothing, we got our labor for nothing. That's why we're successful. We don't understand. In Europe, people own property for a thousand years, and they're fighting about who really has the rights. Here, we've just taken the rights over by force, and if you didn't like it, you're dead.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Is there anything? We've covered a lot of ground.

PALCHIKOFF: Well, you might have something come up. Call me. Send me an e-mail.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. All right. Well, otherwise, then, other than that, I want to thank you for allowing me to talk with you.

PALCHIKOFF: Oh, don't be silly. Do you want me to flip that film on? It's about thirty minutes.

VAN BENSCHOTEN: Okay. Let's do it.

[End of interview]

GUIDE TO PROPER NAMES