

Name:	Sarah Sau Hiari
Date of interview:	Friday, 23 May 2014
Location of interview:	Kokoda Primary School, Kokoda, Northern Province
Chief interviewer:	Barnabas Orere
Time interview concluded:	1:19 PM
Duration of interview:	22:41:49
Main language of interview:	English
Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Time	Transcript
00:00	Interview number 6 at Kokoda on Friday May 23, 2014. Tell us who you are, your age, the name of your village and introduce your subject. State the name of your subject and what he or she did during World War Two.
00:30	Thank you. I am Sarah Hiari, wife of Maclaren Jude Hiari the historian, and I will be talking about my father. My father, he was one of the carriers. His name's Simon Ovamene [?] Hiari, he was twenty years old when he was recruited with three hundred men by ANGAU officer, Lieutenant Claude Champion. They were taken, brought to Kokoda, and allocated various tasks to be carried out, while waiting for arrival of Australian soldiers from Port Moresby.

01:18	As one of the tasks to be performed, the ADO for Kokoda, Peter Brewer, selected my father as one of the 86 Orokaiva carriers to walk from Kokoda to Kagi to help guide Australian soldiers from A company of the 39 Battalion to Kokoda. The former planter miner in Kokoda, Yodda valley, Herbert Kienzle was in charge of guiding Australian troops from Ilolo near Sogeri to Kagi. Mr Kienzle with Mr Brewer and the Kokoda carriers guided the Australian soldiers to cross the Owen Stanley Range, and walk down the track to Eora creek, Alola, Isurava, Deniki and on to Kokoda.
02:17	The Australians arrived in Kokoda seven days before the Japanese landing at Gona, Sanananda and Buna, on July 21, 1942. In Kokoda ANGAU officers assigned various tasks to Kokoda carriers, to help Australian soldiers march down to the coast. The Australian and Papuan carriers walk down to Kumusi River and got news from PIB soldiers that the Japanese marched and encounter at Awala. Papuan carriers and Australian soldiers were surprised to see the arrival of the Japanese on the northern side of the Kumusi River.
03:11	Despite some losses of their men the Japanese managed to cross the river and fought to push back the Australians back to Oivi and Kokoda and on to Deniki. The experience of working along the [?] track was to be experienced by my father and his mates when evacuating the wounded Australians from the Isurava battles. My father and his friends saw killings of many Australians and Japanese and felt sad and sorry for them. It's reminded of the death of their own sons and relatives in their own villages, but this was not, this was different, this war was different because it was the use of rifles, guns and bombs, compared to spears and clubs.
04:15	The fight caused Australians to fall back to Eora Creek and my father's party went along with them, helping with the wounded, and supply of food and erecting shelters for them. The enormous task was ahead. This war, my father says, cost the Papuan carriers to work harder than before. Most supplies quicker and evacuated sick and wounded quicker than carrying supplies. The carrying of wounded up and down this mountain track was very difficult and very dangerous but the carriers tenderly took loving care of the patients.
05:08	When it rained, Papuan carriers used leaves to keep their patients from getting wet. This was not a easy way but they did it lovingly and willingly. The type of work was 24 hours a day, five days a week. All along the trail, there was little rest, little sleep, little food to eat, and without warm clothes. My father and other carriers complained of coldness along the track, and some got sick with pneumonia and were unable to work. Some were took weak and exhausted due to too much work but all the while they managed to carry out the task while retreating with the soldiers on top of the Owen Stanley mountains.
06:13	The Kokoda carriers' burden was exchanged with carriers of Ilolo, who took the wounded back while Kokoda carriers carried the supplies to the battlefield. This work of moving back and forth for evacuating wounded and forwarding the supplies was very hard work. It became a daily routine, between the Templeton's crossing, Eora creek, Kagi, Efogi, Brigade Hill, Menari, Nauro, Ioribaiwa and Ilolo. My father says the hard work of Papuan carriers was recognised by Australian soldier, and he gave the name, the fuzzy wuzzy angels. The Papuan carriers thank him for recognising their work.
07:16	When the carriers stopped to rest, they dropped to the ground with their loads and laid flat like dead logs. Some dropped to the ground, exhausted, half conscious, or fainting. Some dropped dead suddenly and were rolled aside and left, kept walking.

	This became a daily routine for four months. At Myola they worked, built shelters and huts to store goods and supplies, dropped by planes. The dropping of supplies were retrieved and brought to the shelters and sheds.
08:10	Many supplies were lost in the thick jungle and cannot be found but the saddest part of this operation was the loss of life of 39 human beings. My father was among these carriers at Myola but he was lucky to have come out safe out of their dropping killings, and in there one of my uncles was killed too due to the dangerous and hard working, and effects of cold on the mountains. Some of the carriers ran away for good, or later captured back to work again. Papuan carriers were pleased to hear the news of the enemy retreating back over the mountain, from Ioribaiwa to Kokoda, and on to the coast.
09:06	Their constant hard work was reduced so they had time to have good rest and sleep and eat well before returning back to the sunshine climate at Kokoda. One of the saddest sights of the battle along the trail, my father recollects, Isurava, Eora Creek, Templeton's Crossing area was not a jungle full of trees, vines and shrubs but it was like a large cow paddock, full of Australian and American soldiers, the gate of this paddock was opened, and cows got slaughtered. Many Australians were killed by the Japanese and many Japanese were killed by the Australians. In the Australian paddock, we were soaked with their blood, we washed in their blood, our bodies were painted, partly painted with their blood, our clothes were stained with their blood, there was blood everywhere, soaking, and dampening that ground.
10:15	The blood from the Australian and the Japanese flowed into creeks and streams colouring them red from their normal colour. When the nights fell, nights came, we slept with them on the blood, damp ground, as our beds, the side sticks of shelters, cargo packs and dead logs became our pillows. Our sleep was not comfortable but we managed to keep ourselves awake to take care of our patients. We were their mothers, and nurses, and they appreciated our love and care. The natives shared the blood that was spilled, the natives shared the sacrifice that was made, the natives hope that the memory of those who have gone will not be forgotten.
11:23	My father's distasteful assignment, while working with ANGAU officer Lieutenant F A Franklin, he would normally call him Mr Franklin, was retrieving corpses of the Australian soldiers, at Efogi, Kagi, Myola, Templeton's Crossing, Alola, Isurava, Deniki, Kokoda, Oivi, and Gorari, and bringing them and burying them at the temporary camp cemetery at Kokoda between November 1942 to December 1943. While working at Kokoda he had a tooth problem and made his first plane visit, trip to Dobuduru, from Kokoda to Doboduru with Lieutenant Franklin for dental check up. Later he worked at Soputa cemetery before walking back to Kokoda.
12:23	Down to Oro Bay, then from Kokoda he was sent down to Oro Bay, and worked in various tasks, the tasks included helping to build bases, compounds, recreational and entertainment facilities, water supplies, roads and bridges, airstrips and other facilities. These facilities were to form the Doboduru-Oro Bay Base B area. Most of the Papuan carriers were discharged and sent home to unite with their families at the end of December 1944. Only a few stayed to carry out the closing down stage of Base B, until 1945. Thank you.
13:32	[INTERVIEWER]:

	Sarah, I don't remember you telling us the name of your father's village?
	My father is from Papaki, Papaki village, down near Kumusi River, Kumusi bridge.
	[INTERVIEWER]: The village is still known as Papaki?
	Yes.
13:57	[INTERVIEWER]: OK. You mention in your father's story that an uncle was killed. Are you able to name this uncle and was he from your father's side or your mother's side?
	He's from my mother's side, he's my mother's cousin's sister from my village, Asisi. I never asked for the name, I just hear that he died.
	[INTERVIEWER]: When did your father pass on?
	In 1991, at the age of 68.
14:40	[INTERVIEWER]: What does it mean to you, personally, to tell your father's story?
	I am one of the eight children of my father, and I am happy to be here. It wouldn't be nice for my sisters and brothers to come and sit her and talk the way I am talking, i am reading. Because they have their own stories to tell about my father, he had so much to tell us. I represent all of my three brothers and my four sisters to sit here and talk about my father.
15:25	[INTERVIEWER]: Did your father decide that you should go to school, receive an education?
	After the war, he came back home. He started planting rubber, he started planting cocoa, he got married and he had us children, and he was a very strict father. He thought that war might come again and we might face what he faced, what he experienced, so he would make us rise up early in the morning, to go to school, to go to work, to help in the gardens, he would restrict us from eating too much. There

	was so much that he said and did, that we should not slow down, to prepare ourselves for what might be coming after.
16:20	[INTERVIEWER]: What did you train as?
	I trained to be a teacher.
16:35	[INTERVIEWER - JA]: I just want to ask you one question. Your father was a employee, I mean, was used as one of the carrier along the war. Did he bring any of your people, his families with him around on the track doing this, because by talking your language they could communicate very well. Rather than talking to maybe person from Alola or Kagi would be different. Did he bring any mates on the track?
	The surrounding villages the carriers from even up here, 136 of them the first lot that was sent, he was one of them, so they were together communicated to each other. Being an outgoing personality he was able to communicate even with the whites. So it was easy for us when the missionaries came to build schools and a church because he trained us we were the only ones who could face the white people, while others fell back.
17:53	[INTERVIEWER – JW]: Sarah I'm touched. Why is it that so many of our womenfolk, who are bright, and much more brighter than men, why is it, that what you just articulated so lovingly, and so emotionally, presented the oral history of the your father's involvement in the war. Why is it that apart from teaching, why did it stop you from
18:54	writing, why did it stop from publishing the way in which you actually describe your father's pain, your father's hardship, why is it that so many of our women do not write and do not share and do not publish, not only writing, but particularly now, with the technology advancement, and we just had Vera, sharing with us the success, the record, the winning side, of the history of our females, not only within here in Kokoda, but in the province, and the country. Why is it that so many of our women folk are not coming out to write and tell and share their story?
20:25	As for me personally I respect my brothers, I like my brothers to come forward with the stories, being the menfolk, I'd like them to talk, but each one of us had put something together and its with our younger brother and hopeful that when things are working out we should publish. I'm putting what I know, what I heard, but my brother and sisters will put theirs together, because I touch some of the things but it will be interesting. I don't know, maybe majority of the women just hold back because we would rather have our brothers speak for our fathers.
	It's about time, Sarah. This is the twenty first century, the front stage the front line, we need our mothers, we need our sisters, we need our females to move forward,



because it is time, and it is your time to come out and tell this story. So many, so often, particularly now, with the technology available not from us to write, but the way you shared, the way you spoke, is much more moving and much more touching than most of our men share and so I really feel very strongly that project of this kind, and here I'm speaking with our team leader, Dr Jonathan Ritchie, this is the time that ...

