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Chief interviewer:	Cathy Langu
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Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Ward Councilor Ward 5, Depot Ward Sogeri

I am going to give a general overview of the battlefields.

In 1939 as the war approached the colonial administration made general preparations. The road passed from 17 Mile through the Hombrum Bluff and to the rest of the Sogeri Valley. Then in 1941 onwards the Rouna passage was built by the Allied engineers.

Commencing from the 17 Mile right through the vast Sogeri plateau Allied Forces Camps were established, such as the Bisiatabu training depot for the Papuan Infantry Battalion and main Depot at Donadabu. It was here that the current Post Courier was first established; then known as the Papuan Courier. The Americans were based at Koiaki, this were the black Americans, very huge in stature. Every time they came they said: any pom pom? Meaning ladies. But our girls and women were instructed to hide from them.

It took almost 3-6 months of training for the soldiers. The troops had a good relationships amongst themselves and the locals, though there were a few exceptions; such as the one which involved my

grandfather. When the war came my village people left home to find refuge in the bush for days. At such time one group of soldiers went into my grandfather's hut and stole his artifacts and other sacred items and regalia. This prompted him to cause a thunder strike at the Army Camp. The commanding officer was informed that such a natural phenomena was arranged to avenge for the loss of a chief's personal belongings. The commanding officer took it upon himself to rectify the matter. He actually authorized the magic man to inspect the troops on parade and single out the offenders through magical means. The traditional items did find their way back to my ganny's hut.

So at Iloilo a plantation owner - namely MacDonald lived and worked. It was customary for him to prepare tea for the troops and officials passing to and from the battlefields.

Troops enjoyed every bit of their stay at the Sogeri Valley since the war started. Dead and wounded were assembled there and then further transported to 17 Mile Military Hospital.

Some important landmarks are:

Papuan Courier- lanebabai Bridge, current Post Courier.

Airstrip – Debodabu, now closed.

The Army hospitals especially helped the local people at the time of war, too.

My last point:

Thought my community in the Sogeri Plateau served the Allied [Australian] forces well, nothing much is there with the Current Kokoda Initiative Program to show for in terms of Development to improve the livelihood of my people.. The government of the day is unfair to my people of the Sogeri valley, not to mention other localities in the Rei Koiari Territory.