An oral history collection recording the memories and stories of Papua New Guineans about World War Two

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Voices from the War

Name: Gilbert Mandio

Date of interview: Saturday, 24 May 2014

Location of interview: Beama village, Oro Bay Rural LLG, Northern Province

Chief interviewer: Didymus Gerald

Time interview concluded: 2:33 PM

Duration of interview: 11:34:12

Main language of interview: English

Image:

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW
Time | Transcript
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00:00 | [INTERVIEWER]:
This is interview number 8. The gentleman being interviewed is Gilbert Dogari from Beama village, Oro Bay, he’s going to talk about his dad, Dogari Mandio who was a carrier during the war. Gilbert, we understand your father was one of those carriers during the war. Can you be able to tell us his story now?

00:31 | My father was recruited by ANGAU officers Alan Champion and Thomas Grahamslaw at Eroro in June 1942 to work as a carrier and labourer in order to assist Australian soldiers on the Kokoda Trail. He was one of the first group of 350 men, who were recruited and who walked to Kokoda where they waited for the Australian soldiers. While they were at Kokoda, the Japanese landed at Buna, Dobuduru and Gona on July 21 1942, and began to march towards Kokoda.

01:32 | At Kokoda, the first group of Australian soldiers arrived so we helped them to Oivi, Gorari and Kumusi River, where we saw the arrival of the Japanese. There, the Japanese fought and chased Australian soldiers to Gorari. Papuan carriers also went to Gorari where they saw the ferocious fighting between Australians and Japanese.

02:20 | The Japanese were too strong and they force Australians to Oivi, and then Kokoda. And Oivi, to Eora, and Isurava, on the Kokoda Trail. Papuan carriers including my father, saw the fierce battle which killed many Japanese and Australian soldiers. And many wounded on both sides. Papuan carriers recruited [carried]? Australians wounded along this terrible mountains track to Sogeri for medical treatment. Starting at Isurava.

03:31 | Other Papuans carriers brought supplies from Isurava camp to Australian soldiers at Isurava, Eora River, Templeton’s Crossing, Eora, logi, Efogi, Menari, Nauro and Ioribaiwa. Many fathers, my father worked on Kokoda Trail, between Kokoda and Kagi. Their work was the most difficult one and they carried out there without warm clothing, little sleep, little food to eat, and with little rest.

04:34 | The work of carrying supplies and ammunition, of the wounded was a very, very fatiguing, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, four weeks a month, for three and a half months, between July and November 1942. My father and Papuan carriers worked under great pressures, and in very poor conditions. Some of them died of sickness, short rations, cold weather, exposed and from falling supplies dropped by planes at Myola, Kagi and logi.

05:45 | My father said the number of deaths has not been recorded. So the true number is still unknown. But my father said Papuan carriers were glad when the Japanese were chased out of Kokoda Trail and forced to retreat to the coastal areas at Gona, Sanananda and Buna. They were also glad to see the victory over the Japanese, celebrated in Kokoda on November 6 1942. My father says he saw five Papuan carriers were given medals for their good work on the Kokoda Trail.

06:47 | One of these men was from Pongani village, called Emmanuel Gande. Papuan carriers carried supplies and followed Australian soldiers from Kokoda to Oivi, Gorari, Kumusi River, Soputa, Gona, Dobuduru, Eroro and Oro Bay areas and worked there during the Buna battle between November 1942 to June 1943, when the battle was won.
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<td>07:38</td>
<td>My father and other Papuans, carried supplies from boats on the coast at Hariko and Cape Sudest to Dombada and Siremi. And then from Dombada and Siremi to Duropa plantation where Australian and American soldiers were fighting. On return they brought back wounded soldiers to Siremi and Dobuduru for medical treatment.</td>
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<td>08:35</td>
<td>After the Buna battle, Papuan carriers worked as labourers, building stage camps and base hospitals, food supply centres, work on bridges, airstrips and other facilities in the area known as Dobuduru, Oro Bay, Base B. This base operated between March 1943 to December 1945 to supply the Allied forces to Wewak, Aitape and Hollandia.</td>
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<td>09:27</td>
<td>My father recalls working on many roads and bridges and on staging stations and bases as well as health facilities, and power supply operations. My father and his friends worked with Australian and American soldiers [from?] Hariko which built good and understanding in relationship. But the sad thing, which has lasted, for seventy years, after the war was, was that Australians forgot its workers. I hope that with this project, Australian will wake up from its sleep to see its workers.</td>
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| 10:40 | [INTERVIEWER]:
Gilbert, just a question, you talked about your father being involved in some of the infrastructure projects during the war. Some of the roads and bridges that he worked on, are they still around today?

This story my father told me, many stories, I cannot go more. |
| 11:27 | [INTERVIEWER]:
That’s why I’m saying, some of the roads and bridges that he built, he must have told you, are they being still in use today or they are no longer in use today?

Still in use today, I think. |
| 11:27 | [INTERVIEWER]:
Thank you Gilbert for talking to us, it has been a pleasure. |