

Name:	Bernard Oanda
Date of interview:	Tuesday, 20 May 2014
Location of interview:	Hanau village, Oro Bay Rural LLG, Northern Province
Chief interviewer:	Barnabas Orere
Time interview concluded:	2:42 PM
Duration of interview:	10:39:47
Main language of interview:	English
Image:	N/A

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Time	Transcript
00:00	[INTERVIEWER]: Interview number three, at Hanau village, conducted on Tuesday, 20 th May 2014. Our next interviewee is Bernard Oanda, of Barisari village. He's going to tell the story of his war carrier father, Oanda Ferepa, of Mahihita village, now known as Barisari.
00:34	Bernard Oanda is my name. I would like to make known to the nation and the world also that my Dad, late Oanda Ferepa, which was the first part of the team, the rescue team who came to the aid of the late Corporal Dick Whittington, who was injured on the 25 th of December or November, in 1942.
01:10	During the time of the late Corporal Whittington who was injured, there were soldiers at the time, [who were] skilled, so they came to the aid and then when he was injured they got him, and then they dressed him up, and then there were three soldiers who came and gave the late George, Dick Whittington into the capable hands of my Dad, the late Oanda Ferepa, and they said 'this is for you to take'. So from that time, the late Oanda Ferepa was taking the late George 'Dick' Whittington up, and they came to a shady part, where they decided to have a rest.
02:07	From that time, there were so many people who had turns in carrying the late George Whittington. Therefore, my Dad – the late Oanda Ferepa – he asked if the late Raphael Oembari would hold the late Whittington so they would have turns to change to carry that person. So from that time, when

	<p>the late Oembari was in this procession to hold the late George Whittington, that was when the journalist came and took shots of him which today shows that the late Oembari is the first part of the story, but my Dad also was the first part of the story, also. And after that they took the person up to Doboduru where he was flown to Australia. Thank you.</p>
03:12	<p>[INTERVIEWER]: Bernard, tell us about how your father was recruited.</p>
03:22	<p>Well, that is a very interesting story, that I will tell. My Dad was with his parents who fled into one of the bushes where they were taking cover of themselves. And then one day my Dad, my bubu, the late Ferepa, he did not chew a betelnut for so long. During those times, we, the Melanesians, were used to chewing betelnut. So, that time when he did not chew betelnut, he was very sick. So my Dad came and then he asked his Dad why he was sick, why he was sick, and then the Dad, he got up and said, 'Oh, my son. Since then this war is going on, and I did not chew betelnut for so long, which is making me very sick'. So the son decided that he would then go and find the betelnut for his Dad.</p>
04:23	<p>So, poor fellow, he took off. He went and then, before coming to the spot where the betelnut was growing, he went and then he hid under the bushes, and he spied that there were soldiers all around. Well, there were soldiers around, but he could hardly find any. So quickly he came out of his hiding place, and then he just made rope, bush ropes, and he started climbing the betelnut tree. So, poor fellow, he went up and then – before going up he checked all the betelnuts and then found out that one of these betelnuts had a very big bunch. So he decided that he would go up and get that one with the very big bunch. So when he was right at the top, touching his hand to pull this betelnut down, there was an American soldier who was underneath the betelnut tree, who shouted and said 'Hey Joe, come down!'. 'Hey Joe, come down!'. So when he heard that voice, that was the last moment that he thought of his parents. So poor fellow, when he got down, that very moment he was being recruited. That is when he started his mission. Thank you.</p>
05:41	<p>[INTERVIEWER]: So tell us what happened after that betelnut, and 'hey Joe, come down'. What happened next?</p>
05:50	<p>When he got down, it was when he was engaged, so that was when he started his mission. So from there he started going with the soldiers, to show</p>

	<p>them where to go. That was when the battle was on, so, he was automatically in the battles, so he started going with them, the soldiers.</p>
06:10	<p>[INTERVIEWER]: So where did they go?</p>
06:12	<p>They went further down, uh, to the way.</p>
06:15	<p>[INTERVIEWER]: Give us some place names.</p>
06:18	<p>Siremi, Asoma, and then down to Buna. That was where the war was being won there, by the Americans and the Australians.</p>
06:33	<p>[INTERVIEWER]: And then, anything about your parents? The boy's parents? Did they think their son had died? What happened there?</p>
06:43	<p>During the time, as one of their sons, the parents, they were very worried. And then, you know, our Melanesian culture, they started to leave their house so that people [...] and then, poor fellows, they let their beard just grow, and then went right down. They would stay until when the war was finished now, they came and found out that their son was alive. So they celebrated with a very big feast, to welcome their son home. Thank you.</p>
07:18	<p>[INTERVIEWER]: So how long would you say that trip was, from that place where they were hiding in the bush, to the betelnut place, and how long did it take for him to return to his parents?</p>
07:28	<p>It would roughly take them about fifteen minutes to walk to the place of the betelnut, and then back.</p>
07:40	<p>[INTERVIEWER]: OK, so how long did it take for him to go back to his parents?</p>

07:45	Well, that – he never came back, that was the last time for him to say goodbye to the parents. When he came down, he touched down [from] the betelnut tree, that was the last time that he thought of his parents.
08:02	[INTERVIEWER]: But you did say that he returned after the war, so you need to say that his return, he was reunited with his parents, something like three or four years after, three or four years, is that what you are saying?
08:15	Yeah.
08:18	[INTERVIEWER]: All because of betelnut. Right, anything further you want to add? We're about to close the interview.
08:28	I think that will suit.
08:32	[INTERVIEWER]: Did he tell you anything about how he felt, being a carrier in a fighting job, with all the bullets and bombs falling everywhere? What was his experience?
08:42	Well, one of the experiences that he told me was – during the time, the carriers, during the time they were rushing, they were rushing to – I mean, these injured soldiers, during that time the people were rushing to carry the ones that were light in weight. So that it would be easy for them to carry and then walk. But during that time, the late George Whittington, he was a very huge man, and how my Dad came to his aid was that, during that time. You know, nowadays when you see a Papua New Guinea you would see him – the weight – he would see him that he's too small. But during those times, eighteen to sixteen years old were really huge people. So just because of his build and size, he managed to carry this very huge person.
09:52	[INTERVIEWER]: Well finally, how do you feel now that you have put on record your father's war story? How do you feel? We can see that you are smiling and laughing but say it in your own words.



10:04

Well, I am overjoyed, because since the war to the present date today, which is 72 years gone, this adventure has been hidden, which now I believe that it is going to be known, which is making me feel very happy, at this very moment. Thank you.

