**Voices from the War**

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

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**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW**

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<td>00:00</td>
<td>[Interviewer] This is a tape recording of Muyawa Basinauro of Rabe and taped on the 3rd of April 2017. This time she is going to talk about Maiogaru’s story. She interviewed Maiogaru when she was alive at Dago village and she is going to relay the story. She interviewed her in 1975.</td>
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<td>In 1975, we opened up a new school at Maiwara and I was teaching with Dai Andrew at Maiwara and that was in 1975. While teaching there I visited a couple of old people at the village and I also visited Maiogaru Taulebona. Maiogaru was born in 1900. She was trained at Kwato Mission as a Nurse with my grandmother Garionedid Tariowai and others.</td>
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<td>01:38</td>
<td>In 1942 she was working at Divinai looking after the Aid post there. When the war broke out they were so scared. They were told to run away and hide in the bushes. All the village people went into the bushes and hid. But then she was thinking of those people who were sick in the bush so she had to come out again. She came out to get some supplies of medicines from the Aid post to help those who were sick. Because when they stayed in the bush, there were many days and because of the heavy rain some people...</td>
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were sick so she had to medicines to and fro. Go down to the Aid post get some medicines and then take them back to the bushes.

02:55

She told me that there was this great big noise around the bay it was just like thunder and like a big storm. And during the big storm like she was helping the sick those who had malaria. She was advising the people to you know give them medicine but to go to their hide outs after they were treated. I asked her why she was not afraid and she said I’m not afraid to help the sick because I made a vow or promise to help others like sick people or people that are wounded or people that are injured. She said I have to help them. And also she mentioned about her taking the medicines that were supplied by the ANGAU. They had supplies so she had a lot of medicines at that time during the war. There were probably scouts that brought their medicines to the Aid posts that were set up around the bay.

03:35

While they were in the bush there was a man who went out fishing. His name was Kidilon Luka. He went out to fish and then while he was out there he found a soldier that was on Gauhilama Island that was close to Divina. His name was Donegan and his arm was shot away and he had a broken leg. He was in the water (salt water) for many hours. There was a ship that was going to the entrance of the bay. It was the RAAF ship. There was a man who was in command, Corporal Harry. There were five RAAF men on that ship and the Japanese, the enemy ship, was using their search light. The boat was instructed to go to Mullins Harbour that’s down Suau way and then when the search light spotted them they were on the boat. There were five men there. That Harry Turner was in charge. The boat sank and those men swam. Fara and Newman and Donegan. So Fara and Newman started swimming. They started swimming and somehow they got lost. Fara swam so hard he went ashore I don’t know which village as it was not mentioned. He went ashore and then his friend was not seen.

07:55

This Donegan, he drifted away because he was injured. He just held onto the log and he drifted away and he happened to come to that Gauhilama Island that is close to Divina. So when this Kidilon went out to fish he spotted that man and he went to see that he was unconscious and he had that arm shot away and broken leg. So he climbed a coconut tree and he got some kulau (young green coconuts). He climbed down and husked it and helped him. He helped him. That was Kidilon Luka. He climbed the coconut tree, got some green nuts, husked one and gave it to Donegan to drink.

09:06

Kidilon then went to the village for help. So when he went to get help from the village some of the village people you know paddled out to help him. One of the village men went up to the bush and told Maiogaru that there was a dimdim who was wounded and he returned to the beach and they all went and brought this man up. When they brought Donegan, Maiogaru told them, she said I told the men to take him to the hiding place because the enemies were all there and it was not safe for him to be treated in the village so they took him to a hiding place. Probably in the cave. She said it
was a hiding place but I didn’t ask … She said I let him stay there and I told him not to go anywhere and she was helping him cooking his food and you know cleaning him up. She treated the wounds. I did not ask her how many weeks … But she said for a while he stayed there until I saw that his health was improving.

10:50 When his health was improving, one early morning she had quiet time and she prayed that she would be taking this soldier back you know take him over to the hospital. So she did and before night, she collected and prepared some fruits and vegetables and she got some banana leaves. And late in the evening when the sun went down, she told Donegan, ‘my friend I will have to take you to the big hospital so that they can really help you out.’

11:56 He told him to lie down in the canoe and then she covered him with the banana leaves then she put the vegetables on top. She told him not to move or you know say anything. You have to keep your mouth shut because they are going to paddle across the bay. I don’t know how many miles was that the wide bay there. So she paddled and on their way, I was asking her, ‘were you scared?’ She said I was very very scared, you see the big ships there you know lights were there. I had to paddle between the enemy ships. And I said did the Japanese spot you? And she said they saw me but they just you know waved.

13:03 She said I paddled across to Labelabe, that’s across the bay, Dawadawa side. And then she said when I went there, probably current took them instead of coming down this way; she went that way to Labelabe, Ealeba side. And she went to a man named Fred Coleman who was working for the ANGAU. And that Fred Coleman was a manager of a plantation at Labelabe and the son is working for Enterprise up there (Alotau town). He was an ANGAU man there so when Maiogaru took this man Donegan across to Fred Coleman and he took the man down to the hospital (Gwavili). From there she went and left him there and she had to paddle back to the village at Divinai. Across the bay. She left the man there. She said when I left I didn’t know how he went Labelabe to Gwavili hospital. From Labelabe probably Fred arranged for the ANGAUs to take the wounded soldier down to Gwavili. Later Mr Donegan was taken back to Giligili.

14:54 When he was there like Maiogaru didn’t have … she was not an English speaker like she spoke little English. Her understanding was not that good but with the help of some other there she said that Mr Donegan was explaining what happened. He said that they were going down to Mullins Harbour and the Japanese search light spotted them and then they bombed the ship and it sank. But then he didn’t find his other friends maybe Newman was lost but only Fara went ashore and the villagers took care of him.

16:07 Maiogaru went back to Divinai and she was there at Divinai still helping those village people who were hiding in the bushes. I didn’t ask how long they living were in the bushes. But they stayed there and later they all came
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out. I don’t know about the Divinai people where did they run away too but like Rabe ones went down to Modewa. The ones at Divinai that I do not. That’s her side of the story.

17:00 After coming back from Gwavili ... I was asking her and you know everyone was scared and frightened about the war but why were you not scared. She was telling me that she really wanted to help that man who was injured. So you know she did not think of those enemy ships. She just paddled across. ‘I was asking what if you went and those Japanese you know point gun at you and she no, they did not point gun at me but they only waved. They waved at me. And I said oh you must be very brave.’ Okay that’s the story about Maiogaru.

18:07 She told me that she was given a medal for loyalty and every ANZAC Day, she marched with the ex-servicemen. And I witnessed it when I was a small girl at Kwato. We were in primary school when we went across to Samarai for ANZAC Day march and Maiogaru would be among the ex-servicemen marching around the streets.

18:50 She told me she really thanked God for protecting her. She did not talk about witchcraft but she talked about God. I was thinking maybe she was brought up by the Mission because Father Abel took them up there to the Mission so she did not talk about witchcraft. She thanked God for bravery and for protection. For her faith in God. And she died in 1986.

19:35 She adopted some children because she wasn’t married. One of the children was Grace. And she looked after Grace. Grace also went and trained at Kwato and when she returned she got married and had her own children. So now Maiogaru’s grandchildren are still living at Maiwara. All the time she was at Maiwara. She is from Rabe. Her brother is Gele and there was another Maiogaru here named after her. She’s from here but she went down to Maiwara and stayed there. And her children the ones that she adopted didn’t want to come up here so they stayed there because their mother brought them up at Maiwara. I think she’s from Rabe but I don’t know which village may be Dobupupu.

21:26 Part of the hand of the soldier was you know blown off and there was a loss of blood but he did not die. He managed to go to that Gauhilama Island. And I was wondering how did he manage? Did he do something you know to stop that bleeding or I do not know. Like I did not ask for that. That Kidilon Luka was the one who went out to fish that morning in that area and when he spotted him, instead of fishing he went and climbed the coconut and helped him to drink and then he quickly paddled back to the village and told the village people that he needed help to transport the wounded man to the village.

22:52 I asked her how did you go about you know dressing the wound and she said you know we have dressing supplies from ANGAU so she was able to clean up the wound and bandaged it. And she hid him in their hiding place. I did not ask her how far it was from the beach to their hiding place or how
long it takes to go down to the beach from the hiding place. They carried him to the bush but the distance, I did not ask her.

23:57 She paddled by herself. I do not know why she did it by herself. ... If you paddle from there the whole night would be alright and then she would paddle again, because you can paddle from Divinai across there and then back again still in the night. You can paddle across there and back. The fishermen do that. It takes probably one hour or more paddling across. An hour and the half maybe. Or maybe two hours. She went and just handed the man over to the ANGAU man Fred Coleman and returned. I did not ask her about the vegies but she said she put them there to pretend that she was bringing food.

26:00 She did not tell me what happened after the man got better. But she said uh after everything was done, she was given a meal for her loyalty with other Rabe people when they were giving the medals, Palemeni Litapi was also given and Barnaba Ou ... My father was given a medal but not at that time, later. They were Maiogaru, Barnaba Ou, Palemeni Litapi and Edward Guise. Those are the four that were given medals with Maiogaru. She didn't tell me what happened ...

27:25 I did not ask her about the weather when she was paddling across and back but it was dark and ... She did not say that the current was strong but because the hospital was at Gwavili that’s what she was heading for but she ended up at Labelabe means that the current must have taken her further up the coast. So she arrived at Labelabe. And Labelabe is that Coleman’s place. He was a European there and he was married to a native woman. His son is working up at Enterprise, Bob Coleman. Labelabe is on the same coastal line that’s across that side on the other side of the bay. It’s quite a distance but you can paddle across. Nowadays you don’t paddle because dinghies are available for transportation. But some fishermen do paddle across there to fish and then early mornings they return. Or they even go up to Kanakope point to fish and come back.

28:56 She really paddled you know she was strong. She was not sad but she was that she saved somebody. She said if I did not help that man I think we would have lost him because of the bad wound. As a nurse I told him quickly that I have to take you. So she did not waste time. She took him across. But that bit of medicine that was supplied by the ANGAU helped the man but I do not know what medicine that was during the war. I did not ask her.

30:25 During the ANZAC Days, I only see Maiogaru marching with the ex-servicemen. She was the only one I saw marching.

30:31 And I really disagree with people like Cecil Abel and whoever was helping during the war like I should have told them but you know my own thought. I that they should have something for our parents who really worked hard and to be recognized and you know names should be written down in a book to show their bravery. Or how hard they worked. There are a lot who are hiding out there in the villages and I was sad that our parents’ stories
were not written out in the book and their medals were not presented in the way it should be. And some of our parents who worked their claims were not given, war claims so I’m still insisting the government should do something about the parents though they are dead but the government should pay only war claims to those parents who took part. Because without them the war would be you know the Japanese would have won the war. Because of these natives helping. They were also helping in the tracks that the European soldiers do not know where they are but the native scouts were helping them to go from one hiding place to another. So that’s you know from my heart.

32:45  [Interviewer]
All right, thank you.