We never knew what war was all about. Father James Benson made an announcement in the church and said “War is going to come”. But we never believed him, saying he was telling lies.

Tell her [Victoria Stead] what I’m saying. That is what we used to do.

One Sunday, we went to church for service. Father James Benson said, “the war has come”, and we came outside to look towards the sea.

Our parents got scared and came to the village. I was a little girl, so I used to walk along the beach, when I looked out and saw the warships with the smoke billowing, and heard the beating of the bamboo, I was lost without words.

I was lost for words so I ran and told mum, “Mum, Father used to say, the war would come, it has come, you see”, I told her. “You prepare the things”, I told her.

My mum used to have problem with her knees so we walked slowly to a village further down.
We arrived at the village and we walked up. When we walked up there was nobody there, they all had gone into the bush. Everyone was gone, and Mum was sick so we walked slowly up to the village in the middle of Soropuda, Mamburadu, and we slept there. While there, the Japanese walked up. The Japanese were walking up, mum said “you are not small girls, don’t go to sleep. People are coming.”

As they were walking up, they were calling to the people saying, “Orio! Orio! Orio!” They said that, and we were not small girls so we heard that, and we kept quiet and slept.

When they got there, they got a man named Nickson, a chief of our village. He had two wives and the Japanese held him and his two wives. They held them and said, “We will not shoot you”, they said. “We will shoot the Australia and and the America, so you sleep”, they said.

They asked, “Where is the road to Kokoda?”. He said, “I don’t know”. “Where is the road to Ioribaiwa?”, they asked. “I don’t know”, he said. So they walked away.

They said, “we won’t shoot you, so you sleep”, and they left. After that, Mendeba [Mendeba is his clan name] Nickson and his two wives, and all of we Yega people, we all went into the bush. When we went into the bush we did not eat anything, we just went into the bush.

They cut the pandanus and removed the inside part of it and gave it to the children to eat, I also ate it too. My uncle, Thompson Manudaba, he went and could not see my mum and I. He saw dad but he didn’t see us.

Our uncle Thompson went back to Mamburada looking for us, and woke mum. Mum said, “I’m here”. “Come down”, he said, “and we will go where the people are going”. He said that so, I won’t tell you about the other people but I will tell you what I have seen.

So we walked until we slept in the bush. The village named Yagi in the Orokaiva area, we slept there. Early in the morning we walked until we came to a place called Kaerada—[to Mavis] where your aunty Joycehilda and her husband live, Kaerada—we got there. When they bombed the boat we thought another boat was coming so we tried to run and we saw a lot of Japanese bodies on the beach that were bombed.

From there, the people who were called PIB in those days guarded us. They guarded us till we reached Sebaga and they said, “the Japanese are going to come, so go quickly.” We crossed Sebaga and Woruko rivers and came to the big Ope river, crossed it and arrived at Ambasi. The PIB left us and returned to fight in the war. We used to live in these places, Ambasi, Kainde and Iwaia.

While living there, those people [PIB] returned. When they left we used to live there but the local people from their huts used to tell us to beat sago and eat.
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>0:08:06</td>
<td>We tried to collect edible ferns to eat but people used to get cross with us. Some people would break the top part of the fern, others would break the bottom part and we would eat those ones. What we would take home to eat there was none. That’s why some people had friends who helped them but my mum and others never had enough to eat. We tried to get coconuts, but the local people would get on us [get cross with us], so our people used to climb at night with bags, husk the nuts at night, bag them and bring them down for us to eat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0:09:29</td>
<td>I saw these things with my own eyes. I was a little girl, when I ran, my skirt fell off so I ran naked. I had nothing on me, I ran naked. I was a little girl so I don’t know what happened to Fr. James Benson, Miss Parkinson and Miss Hayman, the white women, or what happened to them. I don’t know because I was a little girl. Maybe some other people will tell you the story, because I do not know. I have told you what I have seen. Ask others and they will tell you what they know, then you can do what you want, but I am telling you my story, how I ran with my mum and dad. And so that is the end of my story, thank you.</td>
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<td>0:10:04</td>
<td>My daughter [to Mavis], I was a small girl and Bradley’s wife [her sister] was also a small girl, so my big brother who died recently, whose name is Kaiyora, carried me on his shoulders and ran.</td>
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