

Name:	Veronica Levi
Date of interview:	27 March 2017
Location of interview:	Laviam, Milne Bay Province
Interviewer/s:	Anne Dickson Waiko, Keimelo Gima and Elizabeth Taulehebo
Duration of interview:	00:24:10
Main language of interview:	English
Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

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00:00	[Interviewer] This interview is held at Laviam Village dated on 27 March 2017. Veronica Levi will be telling us about his father Levi Toesina who took part during the war.
	I never had much time living with my father when I finished primary school, went to high school and then I had to leave to go to Port Moresby. But when I used to come for holidays and at one time he told the story, brief story about the history and where he took part during those days.
01:05	So he told me that he was very young when the war came that time and they had to leave this little village and they had to go to Naura. The people had to go to Naura to stay around there and because these places were used during the war for fighting and they set up machine guns along our beaches too. So my dad had to leave with his mum and the other brothers to go to Naura. They

	had to live around there and wait there. But while they were there ... I do not know actually what section or where he...
01:57	He said he was a driver but I would not know whether he was a private driver or he took part driving some of the army trucks or whatever. That's what he said that he was a driver. And at one occasion he said he was driving up towards H.E.R and that hill, he happened to bump into one of his best friends who to be with him driving there taking part during the war. And then he continued working until the war ended and then they selected him to take care of the wreckages. So he took care of them down at Bogalabaubau so he did take care of them until when the ship came to shift them over to Rabaul. My dad was supposed to go on the ship but he also got married at that time so my mum decided to keep back my father. Then they stayed back so Dad never made it.
03:25	So during that time he was working, there were certain times he went with Australian armies to take part with them but he told me that there were a couple of times the Japanese almost hit them with machine guns, you know guns but he never got hurt because at that time too my grand mum was a witchcraft. So she was also protecting my dad who was working during that time. He never got hurt until everything finished.
04:13	So I have some wreckages that my dad also brought them into for him to use and now I'm still using them. That's an aeroplane fuel tank over there and a submarine floater, it's over this way here he got from the Navy Base up on the Island and he brought it. But the aeroplane fuel tank was picked up in the bushes at Giligili Plantation. So he decided to take it out and he brought it home for storing water and I still have it there. But I decided to put it up when I heard that tourists were coming I decided to put it up for sighting. So I set these things up and I had ... Along my beach there are some rubbish too, there are still there which shows that actually my place is also a historical place and sight too. And then there are parapets or whatever they call, hole or what that they used to use during the war.
05:37	When these Japanese used to shoot the machine gun, I mean throw the machine gun or what shoot at the Australians, my dad and the Australians soldiers will always run up to that hole and they used to go in. but then I decided to throw rubbish but now I'm regretting that I should clean it up as my sight too again. So I'm slowly working ... a tunnel... So I'm slowly working because I don't have many people who are interested to help me. This is just a personal interest that I'm trying to do, yes. I'm doing this at this very time.
06:24	My dad said that he was driving, I don't know what would those vehicles ... I don't know the name ... the small ones. Yeah jeep. And at that time my dad told me the first place he was driving they didn't give him what ... he was not wearing trousers. He was wearing laplap. And at one occasion he was driving towards C.I.S and the Brigadier, they picked him and he was ahead of my dad and my dad wanted to overtake that vehicle. So when they made sign to him he had to stop. And I said, dad were you scared at that time? He said I was not

	<p>scared. I was thinking I was too good because I knew that my mum was protecting me so I was thinking that I was too good. And I said what were you wearing at that time? Were you wearing shorts and he said no. at the first place I was wearing laplap and later on they change me and I was wearing overall shirt and trousers. So actually those things were with my mum but my big brother and I decided to cut them and wear them. So we spoilt them otherwise if we should be still keeping them, you people will see and you people will help me and tell me actually what they mean. So that's the saddest thing that I'm also struggling to find out to what actually my dad ...</p>
08:08	<p>Before the war he was working in a plantation so he knew how to drive a tractor. So when the war came he already knew how to drive. So he drove the jeep. He was mainly a driver. He was happy as a driver. I did not ask him if he was paid for driving. I do not know how long he was driving but he told me that when the war came he started driving. And certain times he would want to go out and mix around with the soldiers at like sites where they set up machine guns or activities that are taking place, he used to be among them. And I asked him, I said dad when you are among the group and when they try to attack you people or this ... do some of the soldiers get accident? And he said no. I said why and he said because my mum was protecting me and those people that I was with, the group I was with. And I said oh okay.</p>
09:38	<p>Yes, he was getting along well with the Australians. And he said at some times him and one of his best friends, he's from Daio but I forgot his name. Daio is across the bay. At some nights, him and his friend would walk down to Australian Army camp to perform entertainment. So I asked him, what sort of entertainment? And he said my friend used to play the mouth organ and I used to dance. And I said what sort of dance, do you dance? He said just any style, so long as it was an entertainment. He said at one time, they were dancing and then the Brigadier came down and found out because they were laughing and it was too noisy. So he came out and when he opened his door and looked he could see my dad dancing and his friend playing the mouth organ. So he told the boys that when these two men finish entertainment, you people give them food and smoke [tobacco] and everything you people give to them. So he said that's how we were attracted and doing that, yeah entertaining the soldiers. So I said, oh that's fine and good too.</p>
11:08	<p>They were not sleeping with them. They were sleeping in their own what ... my dad and them would sleeping in their own certain areas ah, but him and his friend would want to walk down to entertain these Australian soldiers.</p>
11:40	<p>He never called some of his friends who were driving also. Maybe he was too proud of himself so he never called some his friends' names. He only talked about himself.</p>
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	lost at that time too. So I too when it comes to ANZAC Day and when I see my things, wreckages I always think of what my father said to me.
13:26	After the war when he returned home, his mother said she was there protecting him. And he believe that it was true. There are some people too were telling me too. That my grand mum was a witchcraft and they said that she was the champ, that's what they told me. Even my dad too told me that she was the champion. So to prove it is some people told me that um my grand mum bought bicycles from beneath the earth through this witchcraft and my dad and his brothers were riding them. This happened before the war. So I too I said it could be true. So I believe that my grand mum was a witchcraft.
14:32	Ah going back up towards the east at Buna at one occasion, he was with the Australians again on a dinghy. They were going up towards Buna and Japanese throw the bomb towards their dinghy and they managed to hit their dinghy and it sank but none got hurt. They all swam ashore to Buna. The distance he was not that long too, about, let's say about a kilometre. But they managed to swim ashore. Buna is up here, there's another Buna. I think at Divinai. Towards Divinai.
15:49	After the war, my dad met my mum. They have five children. I'm the last born. My three brothers are dead, my elder sister is in Port Moresby and I'm the last born.
16:24	My mum was a very young girl at that time so when the war came, she's too from Maiwara. My mum is from Maiwara and my dad is from Laviam. My mum said she was very young when the war came so them too they had to go to Naura to take refuge. So she was there. She said straight after the war the time she met my dad is when my dad was taking care of the wreckages. The war remains or whatever. My dad was taking care of them and my mum used to be sent by her mum to come and ask for diesel for their lamp and that's where my dad met up with my mum. So when my grandmother, my mum's mother told my mother to marry another man that he preferred my mum to get married to, my mum said I want to get married to a driver. And I preferred to get married to a driver so she got married to my dad.
17:36	So when I came back to, my dad was still driving so they bought a small Isuzu for him, second hand from the ..., Sebastine Mioni and his late wife bought it for him because we were looking after them here. They bought that and he was driving. So I got on and he was driving and I saw him so I said actually my dad was a driver. Of course I am proud of him.
18:22	He was just taking care of them [wreckage] for them to be shifted. So they got him to look after them. I wouldn't know whether they paid him or not. Maybe they paid him but he did not tell me.
19:01	Maybe if only I stayed around with my father, he will tell me more of the interesting ones but because I was absent from home, I went to Port Moresby and I was there until he died and I came. Now I'm really regretting. You know

	<p>when I thought that tourism is promoted to Milne Bay and they are coming, I set up these things and I'm regretting that I should know more about my dad. You know the stories that my day would tell me to share when tourists come into my sight.</p>
19:42	<p>Um he used to load tires, food stuff in the jeep. He used to drive the jeep and come around to areas, any area that they wanted him to go and do delivery of the things needed. He did not share his experiences of what it was like for him transporting those stuffs. But he was happy doing the job. And he knew that he was secured because he was looked after by his mum. He said because at times the vehicle's seats are too high for him and he was short, he had to cut timber to put it on top of the seat so he would sit and drive. I said oh that's funny. Why didn't you just get up because the seats were too high for you and you forced yourself to low, and he said no, because I enjoyed driving. I want to show my other friends that I can drive.</p>
21:01	<p>You know my mum kept his uniforms but it was my brother and I who didn't think of, you know things that would come our way. I didn't know their future importance. And now I'm really regretting. There are so many people who are telling me and I said, I'm always thinking and I'm really regretting because if only I kept his things, I would be also somebody else. And the stories too if I had stayed back and my dad shared to me. So sometimes I do think, I should be with my dad so that we should be telling stories and I'll be writing my story or record them on a cassette so when you know people come around I can play that and sit and listen. I can start writing now; yeah it's never too late. Of course.</p>
22:16	<p>I think there were only two times that they picked them up, the war veterans or whatever came around and they picked up my dad with his other friends to go to Alotau and I forgot the ship that they went on board to have lunch. I went with him but then he sent me to come back home. And he went himself and he was drunk and he came home. So my mum asked him, how was the day? So he said, oh it was fine but I was drunk and I couldn't remember what we were eating and what stories we were saying because I was drunk. That was in the 1980s. It could be 1988. My dad passed away in 1996, when I was in Port Moresby. I was 21 years old then, my dad passed away.</p>
24:02	<p>[Interviewer] Okay, thank you very much.</p>
	<p>Welcome.</p>

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