

Name:	Joe Tore
Date of interview:	7 April 2017
Location of interview:	Alotau, Milne Bay Province
Interviewer/s:	Anne Dickson Waiko, Elizabeth Taulehebo and Keimelo Gima
Duration of interview:	34:44 & 07:31
Main language of interview:	English
Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

TIME	TRANSCRIPT
00:00	[Interviewer] This is an interview with Joe Tore taped on 7 th of April 2017 at Alotau and Joe is going to talk about his uncle who was a driver during the war Gilbert Toroigawa and also about his father, his name is Apeka Toroigawa.
	My uncle Gilbert Toroigawa was employed with the labour, the group of labourers that were involved with the digging of the trench and all those pits for the air raids. Before the war came, there was one week notice to them that the Japanese, their fleet of ships were coming this way. And then that week they mobilized the labourers to give them jobs and he was one of them involved. So they were stationed at Sanderson Bay but before the Japanese landed they dug about twelve L-shaped trenches. After the digging, they were so tired that they returned home and they slept at Wagawaga.
02:08	So around eleven o'clock midnight, that's when the Japanese already landed and made their way down and they arrested them. The three of them so Gilbert Toroigawa and Modigai Gili and also there's another comrade they had but I wouldn't know his name, he's from Wahuhuba. They were captured by the Japanese that night. Okay these three were captured, they did not use

	handcuffs but they used a hundred pound fishing line and they tied their hands, and they led them all the way down to the area, that's now the Nako Marines, it used to be called Kwakwala. So it took them about around eleven o'clock all the way to Kwakwala it was around three o'clock in the morning.
03:15	When the American soldiers who were stationed at the gun post at the top open fire and that's the time they release them. Japanese crawled towards the gun post and these three were released and they have to fall into the drain and crawl away and escape. So before they could escape, the third victim from Wahuhuba was killed. He was stabbed before that gun post. He tried to escape so they held him against the tree and stabbed him with the bayonet. So these two brothers they did not want to escape. They cooperated until when the guns were firing and then that's where they escape.
04:15	<p>And after that he got involved with his friends and that's how he became a driver. So among the trucks he drove there were dump trucks and also another type of truck he described that normally runs on the ground and also on the salt water. It has a name that I wouldn't recall, he told me but they described them as duck. That's the description they give so they normally drive from the other side of the Bay they can come over here and return on the salt water. The soldiers taught him how to drive. Different gears when they come on land. It looks similar to a car without the cabin and the design was not good for rough weather, it was only for calm weather. It could take roughly five or four people.</p> <p>He was employed by the Australian Army. Just around driving soldiers down to Balaga, there's army camp taking all their wounded down to those areas so he was stationed mostly around here driving the dump trucks across the Bay driving the dump trucks. Across the Bay to Wagawaga and Gamadoudou.</p>
06:31	I'm not too sure if he was paid. I haven't interviewed him much on that. They were treated well. There were other locals about five or six of them. There's one from Wagawaga. One was Sida from Ahiona, Gapile is another one from Ahiona and there are others he named that I still can't recall. They all survived after the war. After the Japanese landed and went through and then he started driving. They were trained during the war to drive. From his end that's what I've got.
08:18	And from others they also have different stories to tell. They are just normal stories, some of them were engaged during the war, others were not, and they were just passing through the times of war they have their own stories to tell.
08:52	The people from here most of them move to the North coast side. They walked there. They were still in the village when the Japanese landed. Some of them were not used to war, they were not aware of how the war would treat them, how the effects would be, they were not sure until when the landing of the Japanese that night, most of them fled that night. There was an awareness done a week earlier, probably from the Coastwatchers who sighted the fleet of Japanese ships, they gave information to them, there was awareness done

	<p>during the air raids, they've told me that there were hailers installed along the coconut palm trees all the way down so whenever there's air raid the hailers are turned on and sirens come on to give indications for them, air raid and people run to safety and hide. Helmets were also distributed those times to the villagers as well.</p>
10:26	<p>From those areas not much idea, I haven't interviewed them and find out the kind of awareness made.</p> <p>The casualties on that side, I think two victims from Wahuhuba were killed. One was killed that night and the other one was killed the next day. He was a villager. During the night they escaped and went up to the mountains. Some of them camped out at Iyamai. Iyamai is another river right at the top of Wahuhuba. There were gardens and they have little huts built there that they went and camped out there during the night.</p>
11:31	<p>One of these old men returned back to the village to pick up a net, normally the net used to be used to trap wild pigs. It's a very big and thick net they normally use during those times. And these nets are very important to like elderly people like that so he returned to pick that one when he was killed. He was captured by the Japanese and he was pinned against the coconut palm tree with the bayonet. He came down in the morning.</p> <p>According to the information I got from the villagers, he crossed the road and picked the net and tried to return like he did his best to hide away from the Japanese soldiers but somehow he was sighted and that's how they caught him and they killed him. And the people who picked his body, one of them was Labidi Taudiyole. So they buried him at Galihani in a shallow grave. While they were still trying to bury him properly the Japanese arrived so they have to leave him half buried. The other villagers were still around trying to gather whatever they left behind to go and they found out that he was killed. Nobody returned to check for him but the others that were left behind that night found out that he was dead so they took care of the body and buried him.</p>
13:48	<p>The Bay area from here up there was no information on ladies captured. It's only one at Taupota was captured. A lady, she became a sex slave in the Japanese camp and resulting having a child from the Japanese. I wouldn't know how long she was kept. She has her family still existing today, and they look more like Japanese. She had one female child and then the daughter had more children after that so the image of the Japanese is still and you can figure it out from the faces. There could be other women captured and used as sex slaves but that's the only one I know.</p>
15:25	<p>The Allied forces did not make friends with local women.</p> <p>Along this coast, everybody feared the Japanese. Nobody assisted the Japanese.</p> <p>What I heard from my grandmother who usually cook for them, actually my grandfather and mother were in the Kwato Church that time, they learnt how to cook so my grandmother used to cater for them. What they both</p>

	<p>mentioned is these soldiers follow disciplined orders. When they come to the table and eat, whoever the officer in charge whenever he served the type of food, everybody serves the same. That's how they eat on the table. Example if the officer in charge serves potato, everybody has to serve potato. So everything they do was full of discipline. They have no contacts with the females in those times there were no records of them. My grandmother was a cook.</p>
16:52	<p>My grandfather was a captain on a local boat but I did not get more information on the type of boats he was on but he was transporting soldiers between KB Mission and up to Samarai area during the war. He was safe till after the war.</p>
17:26	<p>My grandmother was doing the cooking in Samarai area in Lowani. Some soldiers were based at Lowani, Australian soldiers. It's on the mainland. They were on patrols most of them, patrolling the area. My grandmother is from there. She's from Lowani area. Actually she originated from Sariba, my grandfather is from Logeia but we have land on the mainland and they were also sent to look after Mission station at Lowani.</p> <p>She was cooking local vegetables plus some food was supplied by the soldiers.</p> <p>She was married at that time and had children. The children were with them but when the recruiting of the armies were coming, my grandfather decided to send the children away because he did not want them to get involved in the war. The children were young boys; they were already in their teens, eighteen to nineteen years old. He sent them away back to the village on the mainland he sent them away, away from the recruiting. He was a missionary so he doesn't want the children to get involved. He was a missionary with Kwato Church. His name is Morabe. So Tom and Jonathan were sent away. They were afraid to get involved in the war.</p>
20:42	<p>Apeka is my father's name. His father's name is Toroigawa. Apeka Toroigawa was born in 1930. He was twelve years old when the invading Japanese Special Forces fleet of warships landed at Wahuhuba on the night of August. I can't remember the date the Japanese landed. It was in 1942. Apeka and family fled that night by foot crossing over the mountains towards the North coast bay. It was the most terrible experience my father would always recall; bombs exploding with heavy machine gun fire all night long. My father and his family took a few clothes and little food to take them over or cross over the mountains. They all spent the night in the garden before reaching North coast the next day. It was all terrible he would always say. The horrors of war one could always recall a life time.</p>
21:47	<p>At one event my father witnessed shooting of the Japanese troops by a Kittyhawk pilot. A number of Japanese troops who try to use the village tracks to cross over the grassland and rugged mountains found themselves trapped by a Kittyhawk fighter. The kunai grass was about a waist length. The Japs tried to disguise themselves by removing their shirts and placing clay pots over their heads like the locals. Unfortunately their plan did not work out. A</p>

	<p>Kittyhawk fighter circled three times above that drew attention to my father and his friends. The pilot made a quick turn and made a low range flight like a hawk ready to scoop on and attack scattered chicks and opened fire. The Japs had no time to waste on their rifles, firing rattled and echo vibrated miles into the misty mountain tops. The Japs were torn into pieces within seconds with the clay pots in the kunai grasses. They were carrying clay pots to disguise themselves like the villagers. This is one of the horror actions of the cold bloody war my father would always recall.</p>
23:09	<p>In 1943, my grandfather made a hamlet in the mountains of Oya Nenehuna just above on the hill. Six months later they moved into this new home overlooking Bolebole at Toudidi valley of Goilanai. The one at the river bridge and on the other side. A number of houses were built, road constructed, a mini theatre for the army and a military storeroom and kitchen were also constructed by the American Engineering Battalion.</p> <p>My grandfather normally visits this kitchen in the army camp once a month. Every month he gets food supply of tinned biscuits, bully beef, lolly water candies, cigarettes and other food stuffs. So this is where my father gets food supplies. Actually my grandfather gets food supply for them during the war. Every time when my grandfather comes home, he jokes about coming from an American city, his children would rush for candies, lollies and laugh while watching the thick smoke rise up from the army camps down in the valley.</p>
24:31	<p>The noise of earth moving machines, rollers, dump trucks rattle all day long, hard stone bombers kittyhawks like flying overhead like giant eagles and lights glitter all night long like the New York city.</p>
24:45	<p>Between 1945 and 1946 after the war, Apeka and his father went down to Bolebole Goilanai to visit the army camp. A team from the ANGAU division unit of the Australian Infantry Brigade had set fire and destroyed most of the buildings, machines and vehicles after the war. Apeka who was then sixteen years old boy witnessed the remaining of the burnt down kitchen and the demolished military camp where his father collects food supplies during the war.</p>
25:25	<p>Apeka admired the view of the area and the land was good and fertile so he helped his father collect and gather half burnt roofing irons and timbers to construct a new house for the family. His interest over the land recalls back the war time memory, the sweet candies, the tin bully beef, biscuits and lolly water he tasted during the war he said never to forget.</p> <p>So that's the story of my father during the war.</p>
26:09	<p>What he mentioned was there was a theatre that normally soldiers go and watch movies. It's on the Raven Estate and at the back side of it. It was just called a theatre, entertainment area where the soldiers go and relax.</p>
27:02	<p>My father did not tell me much about the war, what I've heard from him is what I've written. He was away at the North coast during the war and until the war was over and then he returned back. When he returned there were only</p>

	<p>dumps left and the place look change. What he mentioned about the buildings and all these were destroyed by the Australian division unit they call them ANGAU, I wouldn't know but that's how he mentioned it. I don't know the reasons behind why they destroyed most of the buildings, vehicles and machines. Most of those destroyed machines still live in the jungles today, and we've witnessed most of them. If you go at the back of Wahuhuba you will notice that a lot of vehicles were lined up and burnt down in those times and the wrecks still remain today. Whatever machines were used during the war. After the Engineering group left the Australians were the last, few of them that were left destroyed most of the things.</p> <p>This grandfather is my father's father. He was from Taupota. I haven't spoken with him. I was a little boy when he died.</p>
29:26	<p>I believe it (war) was horrible. ...</p> <p>My uncle, he learnt how to drive during the war. The Australians taught him how to drive. He was born in 1926 so by 1942, he was sixteen years old. Most of the drivers I interviewed were in their eighteen and sixteen years of age like they were young boys. Normally in those days, they have a house built separately for the young boys they call that in language Potuma. They live in those potumas and at the time when the war came they were left behind and their parents fled on their own and the young boys were left behind, and that's how they engaged themselves into labour. The parents did not have time to come and warn them, because it all happened in the night. I believe in those days custom was a bit popular so boys live on their own so they were all living in the potumas when this war broke out. So their parents did not have time to gather their children so most of those ones between sixteen and eighteen were left behind in the war.</p>
31:39	<p>Young girls between sixteen and eighteen years lived close to their mothers. I believe that time, Mission was already around and mothers normally teach their children at those ages, is to cater for families, except for the young boys who were separated, and lived in their potumas. I believe Mission training was very strict on the young women while the young boys fully engaged with the customs. The young boys were attached to the customs while the young girls were attached to their mothers. Most of them (girls) made it to the mission schools but some of them were left behind.</p>
33:00	<p>They lived in army camps. They go and watch the movies with the soldiers. They mix well with the soldiers they were not treated differently or segregated. Among them they have friends they were good friends they have. I've heard from them.</p> <p>Others mixed well with the American blacks while others with the white men, and I think among the soldiers themselves, the blacks don't mix well with the whites during the war. The American blacks don't mix well with the whites so they normally separate themselves into their own camps. My uncle told me that. He observed them.</p>

	It was not an interview but he was just telling stories.
34:38	[Interviewer] Thank you.
PART 2	<p>... given were different from the war stories.</p> <p>For example they mentioned someone by the name, the locals call him as Shikana but he should have a proper name, there's a name but this is how the locals call him.</p> <p>The locals like call him as Sukano or Shikano. It should be Shikano Majo or somebody, there's an army General. I believe he is from a different unit engaged into the Special Forces. According to information that I got from the locals, I believe ... the way they describe him, he is a huge man. He's well in built with a hairy skin and he was more aggressive looking soldier. Shikano was mostly engaged with close combat meaning to say that he does not use rifle to fight. He was armed with a sword, the Japanese sword with one side is a sword and he was a flag bearer at the same time and he fought by foot all the way down. So I believe he was a member of the Imperial Force.</p>
01:49	There are two Forces trained in the Japanese, the ones that were landed here were the Special Forces and I believe Shikano was an Imperial Force General. I do not know how he got himself engaged with the fleet here or the navies but the way I heard stories I believe he was from a different unit. The way he fought through the enemy lines. He was engaged in a close combat. Normally when it comes to a close combat, they don't use gunfire but the bayonets that are attached to the rifles, they use that to attack. This is how Shikano attacked most of the soldiers and killed them, the Australian soldiers.
02:41	According to the history and stories from the locals, Shikano made it to the last gun post. He made it. He defended himself all the way to the last gun post when he was killed by a black American. There were two soldiers left at the last gun post, meaning to say that he passed Turnbull airstrip. He could have been killed somewhere between Waema and Gurney airport. At the last gun post the two gunmen were left, he killed one of them so one of them decided to shoot him with the rifle. And then he dragged his body, threw him at the back of the jeep and drove him back, and left him may be half a mile. That's from the information from the locals.
03:50	Looking at his distance he had gone far into the enemy lines so they had to bring him back in case the story comes out and say or the story would tell that he was killed along the way, and he did not make it to the last gun post. The problem maybe I believe the story was not revealed is the Australian government would not give a credit to an American black. The Japanese flag, I believe from the sources that they gave information that he was going to stand that flag down at Gurney airport to confirm the Japanese went through the enemy line and he made it through according to the information.

<p>04:58</p>	<p>According to the history of the war when you look at Sherrol Crow giving information, the Japanese made it through in one of the days and then they retreat. After the Japanese retreated, they mobilized again and then he did a set up again. That's where he won the battle so when you look at the retreat probably, that was the time Shikano was killed. He was returned with his flag and body and dumped close to Turnbull airstrip.</p> <p>He's a Japanese soldier. The most feared warrior of the Japanese at that time during the war. Most people described him that he was a huge and aggressive looking soldier.</p>
<p>06:10</p>	<p>Everyone told me the story; even every survivor of the war tells me the story. It's a popular story among the locals, it's a well know story.</p> <p>It's well known amongst the locals but not outside of Milne Bay. I think something was hidden.</p> <p>If everyone would have told me the story after the war then probably there's a story that was never told. Maybe a Japanese would tell the story but not an American or Australian. This is one of the information that is very popular.</p>