

Name:	Russel Wakidosi
Date of interview:	5 April 2017
Location of interview:	Divinai, Milne Bay Province
Interviewer/s:	Anne Dickson Waiko, Elizabeth Taulehebo and Keimelo Gima
Duration of interview:	42:20
Main language of interview:	Tawala
Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

TIME	TRANSCRIPT
00:00	[Interviewer] This is an interview with Russel Wakidosi taped on the 5 th of April 2017 at Divinai village. He was seven years old when the war came and was at Samarai Island.
	In 1942 but I don't remember what month it was and the war came here. War reached this place and there was one man by the name of Kidilon who went to fish at those small atoll islands there, where the reef is. He was fishing and found one white man struggling to swim ashore. He loaded him in his canoe and paddled up here and cared for him. And that woman named Maiogaru was the nurse in this community. She was working as a nurse here. The man decided to take the wounded white man to Maiogaru to be nursed and treated. So that white man was hidden by her whenever there was fighting and the enemy was around. And the people too used to run away and hide in the bushes and returned to the village when the soldiers were gone. They continued to do this on and on as the war continued. They'll hide the soldier and hide each time the enemy came this way. And returned when everything was normal.

02:28	<p>The woman, Maiogaru then decided to load the white man in the canoe and paddled down to that side, Rabe or somewhere there. From there the white man's friends took him and she was released from the burden of caring for him. So the white man went away and after the war he sent some gifts for Maiogaru. That's all I know about the story.</p> <p>It was not Maiogaru who found and rescued the white man (soldier) but it was the man Kidilon who rescued him.</p>
03:52	<p>In 1942 I was seven years old and was living at Samarai. I was living at Samarai with my mother. We were living there and the Army were offloaded on Samarai. The playground at Samarai was used by the Army as their training ground and some bags were hung on the posts so their Sergeant will give instructions and they used to run then jump and punch the bags. They were exercising. After their training and they are away resting, I used to go and imitate them, my turn to practise. Myself and another boy named Isoah, who died from electrocution at Alotau powerhouse. That man is my uncle. The two of us, so my uncle would act as the commander and shout the instructions imitating what the white man said and I used to run and go and punch the bags. We always do that and one time they told us to move away because the war was already coming.</p>
05:24	<p>The government officers came and informed us to return to our villages because the war was coming soon. The government brought their boat named Panawina and we all got on to go to Ware. We travelled towards Ware direction but on the way we called in to the Engineer Group of Islands and were offloaded there on one of the islands called Tewatera. There was another boat going up to Panaeati so we got on and went up to Panaeati. From Panaeati, we travelled down to Brooker Island. We were living there and we heard that the Japanese landed on Nivan Island.</p>
	<p>The Japanese took control of it and landed there with plenty of war materials. They set up so many things on the island like planting machine guns. There were a lot of machine guns set up on the island. After everything was set up there, a message was sent down to Giligili informing them that the Japanese had already occupied Nivan Island. From Giligili some planes were flown up and they dropped some bombs on Nivan Island. That was before they invaded Alotau. First they landed and occupied Nivan Island.</p>
07:32	<p>The planes used to fly there and drop bombs. We were living on Brooker Island and we did not know that the Japanese already occupied Nivan Island. We were living there and would stand where the beach and watch the planes fly to Nivan and drop bombs and fly back.</p>
07:55	<p>The pastor for Brooker Island at that time was a man from Suau. One day as the planes were flying up to Nivan, he got a very big mirror and was reflecting on the sun towards the planes. He was really enjoying reflecting the mirror towards the planes and I think the pilots were already angry with what he was doing. They went up and drop bombs and flew back and up again and dropped bombs. They returned to drop bombs and as they were flying past this man</p>

	<p>decided to play with the mirror again by standing and doing the reflection towards the planes. One of the plane dropped something down towards us. As it was falling down and about to land, some of the people standing nearby shouted, 'Hey! It's a bomb!' So we ran away and the man threw his mirror and ran over it and smashed it. We all ran away into the bushes.</p>
08:55	<p>They continued bombing the island until the Japanese left Nivan island. They left by the sea. They travelled until at Bilawakwabu, that's the deep sea area between Duau and Woodlark island. That passage is called Bilawakwabu. Their ship was bombed there and two Japanese swam up at Kwanaula. One was named Akasmatas, and another one called Sikana, the man who attempted to plant the Japanese flag at Giligili. Sikana and Akasmatas</p> <p>Sikana and Akasmatas swam, up to Kwanaula and on Kwanaula, they collected some beach vines and attached it to a coconut shell and sent message to their friends. And that night a ship came and took them away. Later on Akasmatas and Sikana came with the other Japanese soldiers landed in Alotau for Giligili. They came by ships. That's as far as I can remember.</p>
18:06	<p>Those Japanese that ran away and came up Divinai way entered the Church and tore up Bibles that were inside.</p> <p>People from this place moved to the North coast side. This village was empty and they came and entered the people's house, got bibles they found in the houses and tore them up and used some of the pages as their toilet paper.</p> <p>Sikana does not have another name that I can recall being mentioned.</p>
19:16	<p>I was told that Sikana was once working as a labourer at Ahioma. Before there was a factory for desiccated coconut. That was where Sikana was working. And later he left and went home, and while there the Japanese landed and they killed some people around Buna area and that's where they met Sikana and took him. Yes, He was working at that desiccated coconut factory and that is why he knew the places when they brought him back.</p>
22:38	<p>It was at that place Buna where the Japanese landed and killed some of the people. They cut off some of the women's breasts. They really mistreated the people there. And it was there that Sikana was arrested.</p>
23:44	<p>Like I said earlier on, when they first came they occupied Nivan Island first. There was a plantation on Nivan Island. That's where the war started when the Australians and Americans here went up and attacked the Japanese there by bombing them. From there, they chased them off the island and like I mentioned already, they passed through Bilawakwabu passage that is between Woodlark and Duau. It was there that their ship was bombed and a Japanese named Akasmatas and Sikana swam ashore on Kwanaula.</p>
27:34	<p>We have one memory of the war here and it's about an American pilot, his name is Sheldon and his plane was shot down on that mountain there. I think his plane was shot after they bombed the Japanese on Rabaul and while they were returning, his plane was shot. And he flew back here and it crashed on</p>

	<p>that mountain. The pilot's name was Mark Sheldon. He died already. Before he died, he crawled out and removed his army badge and other personal stuff and laid them nicely on a flat stone next to him and he died while sitting. Some of the village men went up and found his body and brought him down here and dug a grave just down there and buried him. After the war, his family came and dug up the grave and took his bones away. That day when the village men went to bring the body down here, one of my grandmother delivered a baby boy that same day so when the men brought the pilot's body down and she heard that his name was Sheldon, she decided to name her child Sheldon. The name Sheldon used in Divinai was adopted from that American soldier's name. And today the name has spread widely here.</p>
30:16	<p>I witnessed the war but if only I was here then I would have remembered all that happened but I was not. I witnessed the war in another part that was fought on Nivan. While the war was going on Nivan, our village councillor informed us about a boat which was sent by the government to take us to Ware Island. We were providing our own food and survived on our own there (Brooker Island). The people on Ware did not run away, only people at Basilaki and the nearby islands ran away. Those of us on Ware Island did not run away. Our councillor was really strong and refused to move us to another island. He said, 'I don't want to move my people around and cause them to die.' So the Americans came and stood their flag on the mountain to avoid future invasion by the enemy. So while the war was on, on the other parts of the province, we were safe there and living our normal lives. There was one American ship that landed on the island and supplied us with a lot of food. The government was sending us supplies and continued to do so after the island was severely affected by a cyclone. We had plenty food and we just eat and stay.</p>
32:38	<p>The people in this village went to Guga and lived there during the war. While at Guga and when they run out of food supplies, some of them used the bush tracks to walk all the way back here to look for food in their gardens and take home. It's only a day walk from here to Guga. They climb over the mountain range and come here to look for food.</p> <p>They said that this place was bare, very big clearing. So they used to hide and were very careful when coming here. All their things here were destroyed due to strafing and there were houses built here as well. They had their army mess house here. Some of the Australians were based here and some Americans at Wagawaga.</p> <p>My uncles told me that the first sighting was observed here by my uncle Kaladi. He first sighted the Japanese ships that came in the Bay. He was on the beach and he saw the ships.</p>
34:28	<p>There was surplus food and some was found in the bushes. Tins of biscuits, some were in crates. My uncles and my grandfather came to look for food in the garden and they were walking along the beach and they saw a crate of green apples, very big one that was washed ashore and the crate was broken and the beach was full of apples. And they don't know what an apple is. So my</p>

	<p>grandfather told his nephews and nieces and they collected and heaped them, and he told them, 'you don't eat. Watch me while I eat first.' They watched and he took the first bite of the first apple and finished it then he ate the second one and continued eating. Because he told them, 'if you see me die then throw everything away but if you see that I'm alright then you can eat.' He ate the first one and second one and continued eating so they said to each other, 'eh this man is tricking us. This is food.' So they started eating too and the rest they loaded in their baskets. So instead of going to the gardens they filled their baskets with apples and returned to Guga.</p> <p>The sea was filled with floating food and the beaches were also covered with food mostly in tins.</p>
36:12	<p>First bomb on Samarai Island but only one bomb was dropped there and they were attempting to bomb the Anglican Church but the bomb fell down and it did not land on the Church and rolled into the sea instead and it exploded but it was in the sea. It was dropped but somehow it was diverted to another location. Some magnetic field above the Church.</p> <p>That was the only bomb, one. That one we are on the way to the Engineer Group already when Samarai was bombed.</p>
38:22	<p>Uh there was no rain there.</p> <p>We called in at Tewatera and lived there for some days and then went to Misima. They did not come to Misima. Goodenough, yes they did come.</p> <p>My daughter who assisted me as well is Olive Baosi.</p>