

Name:	Rolf Asi
Date of interview:	Friday, 23 May 2014
Location of interview:	Kokoda Primary School, Kokoda, Northern Province
Chief interviewer:	Didymus Gerald
Time interview concluded:	11:57 PM
Duration of interview:	17:38:16
Main language of interview:	English
Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Time	Transcript
00:00	<p>[INTERVIEWER]:</p> <p>This is interview number 2. The name of the interviewee is Rolf Asi, he's talking about his PIB father, Asi Fere.</p> <p>Rolf, can you be able to tell us your father's story? How he was involved in the War during the Kokoda/Buna campaign.</p>
00:35	<p>Thank you I am willing too, because it's about time we should take this on the air, show brave our PIB soldiers were. My father, Mr Asi Fere, before the war was employed at Mamba Yodda field, near the gold mine by Herbert Kienzle. As a young</p>

	man he worked there until the colonial government enlisted him to go on plantations. They were run by the Australian government at that time.
01:22	[INTERVIEWER]: Doctor, the first was a false start. Interview number 2 is Rolf Asi. Rolf is from Piravei village in the Kokoda area, he will be talking about his PIB dad, Asi Fere. Rolf, your old man was involved in the war here in Papua New Guinea. Can you be able to tell your old man's story?
01:48	Yes, thank you, I am willing to. And it's about time those forgotten heroes should be made known. This generation should come to know what happened and how this nation was shaped and brought into its present time. So I am willing. My father as a young man was employed at Yodda goldfield by Herbert Kienzle. I don't know what he was doing, he was panning gold or whatever he was doing in there, until he left and he was employed, not employed, but the colonial government went in there searching, for looking for able bodied workers to work on plantations. So he was one of them. Brought to Isiu [?] plantation. While at Isiu plantation, I don't know what, he never explained. While working there the news of the war spread out, war's coming to our shores, spread, so the manager of the plantation discharged them giving them rations preparing them to take their journey back home. He was with his relatives you know, normally they all go with tribes and families to work on the plantations. So he walked home. He ended up in the village. He realised that everyone – by then the war was already at our shores, and he heard that all his brothers and relatives were out at Doboduru. So he has to make his way there to join up with them and be able to provide whatever service he would provide.
03:51	As the war advanced towards Kokoda he followed them all the way here. There was a carrier's camp around here, where he has to stay. He walked to Port Moresby. On the first occasion I don't know what they were doing but he said he was involved in walking across to Port Moresby. He returned from Port Moresby, and then they had to go back again carrying cargoes and things I don't know, to Port Moresby and back again. On the third time when he went into Port Moresby after seeing him that he would be able to serve in the PIB he was enlisted in the Papuan Infantry Battalion, which he went on training at Bisitabu, at Sogeri. He ended up there.
04:52	After the training what he told me he was on his first operation or assignment, or whatever, after the recruit training was over, there were shipped to Isiu plantation. From there they had to walk across the Isiu, across the ranges to Ambasi. From there, there was some Japanese that were in there, which they went in to kill them. After doing that, when they completed their assignment or their operation, they had to walk up to Oro Bay. They caught a ship there and sailed back to Port Moresby.
05:45	Since the war was getting on and – sorry, that was in February 1943. After that, the war was going on pretty tough in Madang, so he has to go in there. His company was called, he was with B Company, Papuan Infantry Battalion. They had to go into Madang assisting there. The part that he was always telling me was that the Sairope, where there was a bunker building, about three to four feet thick, where no bullet

	or no bomb would ever penetrate. They were involved more in there to try and overrun that bunker. So he told me that they called in the
06:58	the marksmen from First World War from Australia, they called them in there, to help keep the bunker occupied whilst one of the soldiers would get in there with the hose with petrol in to burn that place up. So everyone was involved there trying to keep their heads down, those machine gunners, those were the men in the machine gun, the Japanese, they were to keep their heads down. So they were more involved in that, and it was very tough, they said they stayed there until this brave Australian soldier has to get in there with his hose of petrol to burn them out. When they burn them out they all flew out like men flying out with flames on them, and they have to shoot them, finish them off.
07:55	After that they return to Bisitabu. That was in 1944, from April to August in 1944. So after they stayed in waiting for any other operations to be assigned to them, the battle in Bougainville, Torokina, was so severe, so they got all the PIBs to get in there to help assist the Australians and the NGIB to complete the task. He told me that they got on the vehicles, maybe the whole battalion. They were escorted by military police all the way to the wharf and transported. They got on the ship. They sailed across to Bougainville.
08:53	As soon as they got there, it was, one of the elderly men who was also a PIB by name of Victor Juffa, told my father, he said, Asi, in language, I will quote in language, he said, 'Asi, [in language]'. When in the battle was severe, the battle was going on, fighting was going on. So as they went in he said 'Apa, I'm with you all'. They went in, they went in, got themselves settled. On some operations he told me that you know, on one occasion he was leading, he was in front as a first scout.
09:56	One day he said son, there was a time I would have died. He went in there he saw something shining, metal, shining, and then he has to signal the platoon or the company, platoon, he was in, he signal them to deploy or take cover while he observed. He went in closer. He signalled the platoon commander to come forward, and as he was looking he saw a Japanese. Lucky for him because the Japanese was asleep. Once the platoon commander observed and saw that he was asleep, he said 'he's asleep, shoot him'. They had to clear that off before they... On another occasion they shot him. In another operation he told me, he said, it was very severe fighting. I think most of our PIB deserted.
10:57	And he was there with the Australian officer, they were fighting, he said he grabbed one Rigo young man, he put him under him, he took cover behind – we call it in our language the ombora, ombora tree and he started shooting. He started shooting until the other was so. After he lobbed his grenade, because there was so much he couldn't do, he had to get his grenade to lob it, after he lobbed his grenade when he was taking his hands back they shot him. He had a wound in here, and he always showed me, 'this is what I received during the war'. It was severe. As an ex-soldier, I was in the army from 1977 to '83, and I know what it means.
12:02	I'm pleased that he assisted the Australians. I don't know why the war for, what was the war for, but I am very pleased he assisted and that he got an Australian military medal.
12:18	[INTERVIEWER - JR]:

	Can you explain what the medals are?
	I'm not prepared to explain, this could be the Pacific Star. I don't know about this one.
	[INTERVIEWER - JR]: They're very special.
12:39	Yeah, so this is what he was awarded with. After the war he came, he was dropped, that's how much I know. After the war he was embarked, I mean, with the rest of Oro Province PIBs, they were put off at Oro Bay and he walked home.
13:08	[INTERVIEWER]: Are you proud of your father's achievement?
	Oh yes I am. Well he's done a lot, because at that time the Australians told him, the soldiers told him, the Papuans. I was in the army I know what dressing that was needed to be in the battle but he was not dressed that way, he had only a calico with the weapons on and a pack at the back. But he said that was good because, you know, they moved faster, he said they crawled in, they crawled out, and they could smell the Japanese, they knew where they are, they could even smell their brew, their coffee, or even repellent, their insect repellent or whatever they applied, they would smell them, and they would warn the Australians that these guys were close. So, I am pleased.
14:08	[INTERVIEWER]: Did your father have any rank in the army?
	No, no rank, he was not ranked. He was not promoted.
	[INTERVIEWER]: But did your father actually kill some Japanese?
	He did, yes.
	[INTERVIEWER]: Did he give you the number?

	Ah, he never gave me the number but I think he killed quite a lot.
14:30	[INTERVIEWER]: Getting back to your interview earlier, your father talked about PIB deserted when battle got tough. What actually happened to them? Did he ever tell you?
	No he never told me. He never told me what happened to them, but he just said that because the battle was so severe, so fierce, they had to back off.
	[INTERVIEWER]: When your father settled back in the village did he have any trauma? How did he relate to other village people when he came back?
15:09	Well that's another thing that saddens me, because he should have been properly rehabilitated. That also affect our life as well, because our father was so fierce. ... with the family, you know, getting into war, coming out of war, not being rehabilitated, that's what you and I would expect back at home, so that was what happened.
	[INTERVIEWER]: Would it be safe to say you must be the last born in the family?
	I am the fourth out of eight.
15:48	[INTERVIEWER]: Before we conclude do you have any other comments you would like to make?
	I don't have much to say, but, that was a service, I don't know how, as I said, I don't know how the war began, why the war came into our shores, but that was my father's service to the Australian and also to Papua New Guinea. And that's all I would say, thank you.
	[INTERVIEWER]: Thank you Rolf Asi, for talking to us.
16:25	[INTERVIEWER - JA]:

	I just want to ask you one last question before you go. When do you think your dad live and how many years he live and when did he pass away? In what year do we think he passed away?
	I don't really remember what year he passed away. I think it was in the 80s, 87, late 80s, maybe he was in his late 70s.
17:01	[INTERVIEWER]: One final question before you go, it slipped out of my mind. When the soldiers got sick, where they treated with medicine, and all this?
	Which soldiers?
	[INTERVIEWER]: The PIBs.
	They were treated because after my father's wound that he took he was dressed in the field, a field dressing, they carry it out, it was dressed, and later he was brought into the hospitals, the field hospital that was established there.
17:33	[INTERVIEWER]: Thank you.