

Name:	Faola Lehui
Date of interview:	Thursday, 3 July 2014
Location of interview:	Kovelo village, Northern Province
Chief interviewer:	Javith Abavu
Time interview concluded:	2:15 PM
Duration of interview:	12:06:16
Main language of interview:	Biage
Image:	

TRANSLATION OF INTERVIEW

Time	Translation
23:36:01:13 – 23:36:21:10	In 1942 when the war reached Buna and Gona it came all the way to Kokoda area. The main track leads to Kokoda and the other track was built from Birive and then up to Kebara.

23:36:21:10 – 23:36:39:16	From Kebara the war was pushed to Kanadara and then to Felai. These group of people were 30 Battalions. These battalions were using that track to avoid the Japanese from entering that area.
23:36:39:16 – 23:36:47:18	These battalions started trekking from Felai village and crossed Eora creek and pushed further to Deniki ridge where there was a very big battle at that time.
23:36:47:18 – 23:37:03:18	Due to heavy fighting in Deniki, they could see that their defence line was weak, so they had to retreat back to Siga. When the Japanese came they were divided into two groups. The first group used the main track which started here at Kokoda and the other group started using the track at Kebara and started fighting on the other side of the river.
23:37:03:18 – 23:37:16:14	They all pushed until they reached Siga village. Some escaped through the bush until they reached Haela village.
23:37:16:14 – 23:37:24:17	From Haela village they killed a few Japanese soldiers and went over to Siga village to meet the rest of the group.
23:37:24:17 – 23:37:48:03	The Australians saw that they couldn't be able to do more and started to move their platoons out of Kaele. From there they moved from Siga to Felai.
23:37:48:03 – 23:37:59:13	The Japanese moved the Australian soldiers from Felai to Kaela. That is where the strong battle took place. The landscape of the area is very unsafe with big drops on the sides where people can't walk up to the top.
23:37:59:13 – 23:38:17:23	From this area they further pushed up onto higher ground down to Misima. The Australians on the other side of the mountain saw that the Japanese were coming very quickly towards them so they had to send some platoons to Misima.
23:38:17:23 – 23:38:32:24	From Misima the radio station was built for the war. From Misima they contacted Isurava village informing them that the Japanese soldiers are getting close, so everyone has to be ready.
23:38:32:24 – 23:38:41:21	From there the Australians got the message and started telling all the local peoples to move away and hide in the bushes for the war to take place. So the people had to run away.
23:38:41:21 – 23:38:58:13	While the soldiers were moving over to the battlefield in crossing Eora creek, one of the poor soldiers came at the back. He was left behind near the rocks. He wasn't able to catch up with the rest of the soldiers and misread the track and followed the river up to a stone where he found a very beautiful handsome young lady.
23:38:58:13 – 23:39:06:02	The lady was very polite to him and asked the soldier to come over to her. The soldier could see that the lady has the same colour as him. So he walked over to her. The soldier forgot all about following the rest of the team and spent the night with the lady. In the morning the local people found out that the poor soldier had been fooled by the bush spirit. They both slept together not thinking that the lady was a spirit from the cave. The next morning the people found the poor soldier lying in the cave dead. So the locals had to carry the body all the way up to Templeton Crossing and then to Myola for airlifting.

23:39:06:02 – 23:39:17:08	To this day, we as the landowners when we travel to that area in a very peaceful afternoon, we can see this white lady having a shower at the riverbank. She always combs her long black hair and when she senses that we are around she disappears into the cave.
23:39:17:08 – 23:39:39:09	The war grew very strong at Isurava in which some of the soldiers ran away to Misima where they hid themselves underneath a very big cave. Some of the Japanese soldiers went on the other track destroying properties and food gardens and burnt down all the houses into ashes. They also went into the gardens and stole from the gardens.
23:39:39:09 – 23:39:47:23	The people saw this and escaped through the bushes to the higher ground. However, someone by the name of Edula, she was walking through the garden when she came across the Japanese soldiers.
23:39:47:23 – 23:40:14:09	She fled back to her husband. The Japanese soldiers followed her. She ran quickly to her husband and they both ran away. Unfortunately the Japanese soldiers fired at them where the bullet hit her husband in the back with the small baby he was carrying. Then the two Japanese soldiers approached her.
23:40:14:09 – 23:40:21:23	The bullet got the husband and also killed the baby. The wife saw that the husband fell to the ground and she ran away for her safety.
23:40:21:24 – 23:40:44:23	So the wife couldn't stay and she ran away to spread the information to the people. The people knew that the war is here in receiving the message from the lady and reported the incident to one of the Australian soldiers where the Australian soldier sent a message to his platoon to defend the area.
23:40:44:23 – 23:40:56:08	The people saw what was happening and all fled to Bikoae mountain, this area has unique grasslands. Where the local people use these grasslands to build their hiding shelters.
23:40:56:08 – 23:41:21:04	The Australians have killed almost 72 Japanese soldiers on that hill. However, a few of the Australians were badly wounded. In that period our fathers helped the Australians by giving them food, provide them with shelter and also help them transporting war ammunitions to and fro. Some of our local people were used as carriers pulling the telephone cables for the radio system to operate.
23:41:21:04 – 23:41:41:06	They found out that there were so many Australians who were nearly shot down, so they had to carry the wounded to the nearest hospital for treatment and the dead casualties to Myola for transportation to Port Moresby.
23:41:41:06 – 23:42:14:22	In another event, the Japanese tied a rope to one of the trees and climbed down from a very big cliff where they wanted to escape. They couldn't walk towards the defence line of the Australians and had this escape plan via the cliff. The local spy man saw what was happening and reported it to the Australians soldiers where they came and quickly attacked them at the base of the cliff.
23:42:14:22 – 23:42:37:17	From here the Australians were pushed back to Eora Creek where they met the second battalion. On the other side of the main track, the heavy war took place at Isurava and was pushed back to Eora and then to Eora Creek.

23:42:37:17 – 23:42:48:17	To this date, my father told me that he did not know how many Australian soldiers were shot and killed between Isurava and Eora Creek because he did not go to school. And that also goes for the Japanese soldiers because he did not go to school to learn, he did not know how many Japanese had been killed at that time. But he told me that the area was filled with so many dead bodies and the bush was filled with blood.
23:42:48:17 – 23:43:06:05	That's the story about the track on the main road. However, the story on our side is very different. Our people also got involved in the war and the Australians were very close to us. We moved from one location to the other trying to kill the enemies.
23:43:06:05 – 23:43:20:02	The Japanese came with so many labourers and carriers. They helped the Japanese and our people helped the Australians. The Japanese were very good in attacking, my father used to say. They were very short people with small eyes. They ate whatever they could find in our village. The war went on until it came to Myola and went further to Efogi and Kagi.
23:43:20:02 – 23:43:32:16	The Australians brought one of the Japanese to a place called Usikala. They brought the Japanese soldier and killed him for stealing our garden foods and destroying local properties.
23:43:32:16 – 23:43:41:05	In this situation my father saw that the Japanese couldn't do more because the war was retreating back to Ioribaiwa. They chased the Japanese soldiers back from the same track that they came from.
23:43:41:05 – 23:43:53:08	When my father left the Australian soldiers, he went straight to our gardens and our houses to check if everyone was OK. Before reaching the village he came to a point where he saw the Japanese soldiers sitting together around the fire, cooking the flesh of the Australian soldier. Upon arrival the Japanese saw him and ran away. He saw half of the body of the Australian soldier had been cut and eaten away. He saw what was happening and quickly alerted the Australian soldiers. The Australian soldiers came and saw their mate and took him away.
23:43:53:08 – 23:44:11:08	Beside the fire they found his nametag together with his medal and a picture of his mum and dad. That's the historical story my father usually tells me about the 38 th Battalion who used this track for fighting.
23:44:11:08 – 23:44:26:18	When the Japanese reached Siga village, they slaughtered all the pigs, burnt down all the houses and destroyed most of the food crops. Nothing was left. From that they took control of our things and used it to fight against the Australians.
23:44:26:18 – 23:44:42:09	The Australians moved from our village to Etoa where the Japanese never followed them up. However, somehow the Japanese caught up with them. From there the Australians were pushed back to Eora Creek. That is the story I want to pass it on to you.
23:44:42:09 – 23:44:54:16	This story I am now telling you has been passed onto me from my father. I think I will end here.
23:44:57:19 – 23:45:08:15	The war started here at Kokoda and retreated back to Ioribaiwa. The Australian soldiers had to push the Japanese all the way back to Eora Creek.

	That is where some of the Japanese soldiers knew about the track and followed it.
23:45:08:15 – 23:45:23:10	By following this track they have found some Japanese soldiers and killed them. That is where the Japanese found the dead Australian body and cut his meat to cook it on the fire for food.
23:45:23:10 – 23:45:18:02	So when my father arrived with the soldiers they found his medal, his gun with the photo of his mother and father by his side.
23:45:18:02 – 23:45:49:10	When seeing these things the Australian soldiers were very angry and scared the Japanese away. From here they pushed all the Japanese to Buna and Gona.
23:45:59:03 – 23:46:17:24	After the war my father did not take part in the collection and disposing of ammunition. He told some of the younger boys to take part in cleaning all the remaining rubbish, the bombs, bullet shells and other left over food supplies to Kokoda and then to Buna and Gona. He lived on for some years and later he passed away.