

Name:	Philemon Barminas Ogomei
Date of interview:	Saturday, 24 May 2014
Location of interview:	Beama village, Oro Bay Rural LLG, Northern Province
Chief interviewer:	Didymus Gerald
Time interview concluded:	1:49 PM
Duration of interview:	18:58:09
Main language of interview:	English (some Notu)
Image:	

#### TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Time	Transcript
00:00	[INTERVIEWER]: This is Interview number 5 at Beama, the interviewee is Philemon Ogomei from village, Kopuri village, Orobai he'll be talking about his dad, Paminas Sena Ogomei, who was initially a carrier then went on to be recruited into the PIB, Papuan Infantry Battalion. Paminas Sena was the gentlemen who was recruited.
00:37	[INTERVIEWER]: Philemon good morning to you, I understand you will be telling the story of your dad, Paminas Sena Ogomei, about what he did during the war.
00:49	Thank you, Mr Didymus Gerald, I will be telling the story about my father, who actually joined the war labourer to enlistment to PIB. While attending grade three at Eroro centre primary school, community school, under the supervision of an

	<p>Australian Anglican priest, Reverend Lionel Luscombe Newman in 1942, when the Japanese first declared Second World War on Allied forces. As the war moved further south, Private Ogomei fled to the hiding caves with his parents. Since the USA forces set up its air force base in Oro Bay area. Private Ogomei joined the labour force under the ANGAU commanded by two ANGAU officers called Alan Champion and Thomas Grahamslaw at Eroro.</p>
02:00	<p>These officers told my father and his friends that the war was not started by the Australian and Americans. It was started by the Japanese because they wanted land for their increasing population. These ANGAU officers also told my father and his friends that they were linked to the British Commonwealth which Australia is one of them. The motto they used was 'help Australians to protect Papuans, Papuan people and Papuan land'. This was the motto which embraced my father and his friends, friends' hearts, or 'jo' in our local language.</p>
02:55	<p>So they told ANGAU officers that they will stand together with the Australian and American soldiers to fight the Japanese. So they did and Australian and American defeated the Japanese in Papua.</p> <p>The role of my father as a war carrier. While the role of my father and his - they carried supplies from Oro Bay to Embi, Ambogo, Boro and Doboduru. They also carry supplies at the mouth of Sambagu river at the place called Cape Sudest to Doboduru and Siremi. They also carry supplies from Hariko to Doboduru and Siremi. From Siremi they carry supplies to the white soldiers at</p>
04:06	<p>Duropa plantation. This is the place behind the Buna battlefield where carriers could go. The battle was taking place at Buna at the end of 1942 and January 1943. On their return they would carry wounded soldiers from Duropa to Siremi and Doboduru where the hospitals were located. They were treated and looked after before they were flown over to Port Moresby for major operations. They worked as a carrier between Duropa, Siremi and Doboduru</p>
04:54	<p>was like a centipede, or 'wowuji' in our local language. In our local language because every day, seven days a week, they were working from point A to point B. My father told me that they called themselves as 'wowujis' because of the Buna battlefield.</p>
05:23	<p>Although the Japanese were dropping bombs on the battlefield. My father and all the 'wowujis' carried food supplies, medical supplies, ammunition and other weapons, ordnances, equipment for roads and bridges and other items. My father and his friends also helped to build staging camps, hospital camps, labour camps, food depots, other depots, health facilities, laundries, water supplies, signal camps, power supplies, mess and kitchen facilities and other accommodation buildings with kunai grass and tents. My father and his friends help American to build many road and bridges, shifting cargoes in and around Dobuduru area.</p>
06:32	<p>Enlistment to PIB.</p> <p>As the battle continued the Australian decided to recruit Papuans to fight side by side with the Allied forces. At the age of 21 years, Private Ogomei enlisted in PIB 1944. He and others walked to Port Moresby along Kokoda Trail and did their basic training at Bisitabu at Sogeri Plateau. Six months later, Private Ogomei first had an experience of battlefield in Bougainville.</p>
07:23	<p>Enlistment to government services.</p>

	<p>After an active service, Private Ogomei returned to Oro Bay and had a rest for a year before taking up a job as an interpreter at Erero Creek government outstation under the leadership of Mr Des Hudson in 1946. He was later posted to Higaturu in 1951 and had served under Mr Atkinson before Mr Currie came in as a District Commissioner in 1951. This was the year of tragedy for second time for Oro provisional government station under when Mount Lamington erupted killing 36,000 people.</p>
08:19	<p>Private Ogomei was standing in front of the present district office court house in Popondetta when the volcano erupted. After being charged and won the case for escaping from the eruption Mr Ogomei continued to serve as an interpreter in Popandetta and was posted later to Kokoda in 1951 under the leadership of Mr Paul Sebire. he was later transferred to Popondetta in 1954 and resigned from the department and went to his home village of Kopore near Erero Creek.</p>
09:14	<p>The PIB soldiers fought in Bougainville for 4 months before the War ended in 1945. The battle has been described as one of the fiercest battle the PIB soldiers had experienced in Torokina, which is known in the War record as a very tough battle which claimed or wiped out the Japanese ground force completely. My father summarised the PIB action as dangerous but came out flying colours and good words of appreciation from the Australian and Americans' senior officers at Torokina.</p>
10:08	<p>My father said he was proud to be in PIB and take part in the World War Two which his ancestors had never seen. It was not a war of spears and clubs, or bows and arrows, but with modern weapons of guns and machines guns, Bren guns, bombs, mortars, explosives and air attacks. He came out of the war unharmed or without wounds and to return home to be with his family after the war and lived to tell some of his war experience as a carrier and as a soldier. During the battle he fought with a little rest and little food because every day there was fire, fire, fire.</p>
11:08	<p>But his summary of the experience at Torokina battle was to fight alongside with the Australian Americans to defend our people and our land, the Papuans. The successful conclusion of the war was the work and the cooperation of three tribes in Papua New Guinea. The black man, we are known as black people, the Americans and the Australians, or the Australians and the Americans. According to my father's story, it's known as the NA – 'na', or NA, Natives, Australians and Americans tribe. So today as one of many thousands of children of PIB heroes, I salute the Japanese for giving the name 'Green Shadow'.</p>
12:13	<p>The 'Green Shadow' is an account written by Japanese officer after Awala battle when PIB first fired shots at Japanese and disappeared like green shadows with no trace. So this is the summary of my father's story. There are plenty more to tell but I hope that the meat is what I have said. I thank my father for telling me his story, which I will write as a detailed recollection later. I support this project, so I am writing or telling my father's story. Australia has forgotten my father and other wowujis for good. It must rise up and not only fund this project but other projects and activities as well. Thank you very much.</p>
13:21	<p>[INTERVIEWER]:</p>

	Philemon, before you go, are you proud of your father's achievement during the War?
	Yes.
13:36	[INTERVIEWER -BO]: Can you explain the name Wowuji – can you explain that name that your father's group was called. What does it mean?
13:45	Well wowuji is local language, it means centipede. You know how the centipede bites people, when the centipede bites you it's painful, eh, it's a painful pain.
14:02	[INTERVIEWER]: So how old would you be now?
	I'm 43 years old now.
14:09	[INTERVIEWER]: What would you be in the family, your number in the family, sorry?
	I am the second last born in the family.
14:16	[INTERVIEWER]: You talked about your father working later as an interpreter in the government services. Do you think the war also helped in building him up or grooming him up to do the kind of work he did later as interpreter?
	No. It was only at the settlement for him to stay up at Girewa block. He was given a settlement to live there.
14:51	[INTERVIEWER]: I'll go back to the question again. During the war, obviously there was Motu spoken as communication between the soldiers. Did this also teach him so he could communicate well with the government officials at the time, later, as government interpreter?

	Yes, I think so, it was after that he went into becoming an interpreter. He was also taught at Eroro community school, central school, while doing the grade three, he was taught there by Anglican priest, Reverend Luscombe Newman.
15:38	[INTERVIEWER]: Getting back to the battle of Torokina, did your father actually pull the trigger to kill some Japanese too? Did he tell that story?
	He only, because Torokina was known as Japanese dominated area. There were Buka people there who collaborated with Japanese. So one of them wanted to attack my father, he was up on coconut, betel nut tree, then this man appeared to attack. So he had to stand still up on the coconut tree to fire down to shoot these Japanese collaborators.
16:26	[INTERVIEWER]: When the young men of your father's time, when they enlisted in the PIB, did they carry along with them some sort of magic to protect them? Are you aware of those kinds of stories?
	No, my father never told me about that.
16:45	[INTERVIEWER]: Any other comments you'd like to make?
	Yes. We have been neglected for so long and I believe this is the opportunity for some of us to express our hearts for so in bring this kind of project to help look after this kind of people. Especially the family members of those who fought during World War Two.
17:26	[INTERVIEWER]: Before I let you go, what are those medals that are on your chest?
	Thank you. Because of his services, my father's services given to the government, he was awarded these war medals. Unfortunately his Pacific Star medals have been taken away by the Guba flood, I was one of the victims of Guba flood. My house has been removed, the medals have been removed too. But these are war medals.
18:05	[INTERVIEWER]: How many war medals was destroyed by the flood?

	Two Pacific stars, and two, one crown medal, Queen Elizabeth's crown medal, have been washed away by the flood.
18:26	[INTERVIEWER]: Remember during the war, he was King George, not Queen Elizabeth. So he must be referring to King George medal.
	Two of them - Queen Elizabeth medal and King George medal.
18:45	[INTERVIEWER - JR]: What a shame. You have the memory though.
	[INTERVIEWER]: Thank you for talking to us it has been a pleasure.