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| Name: | Nigebolena Buama |
| Date of interview: | 5 April 2017 |
| Location of interview: | Ahioma, Milne Bay Province |
| Interviewer/s: | Anne Dickson Waiko, Elizabeth Taulehebo and Keimelo Gima |
| Duration of interview: | 47:07 |
| Main language of interview: | Tawala and English |
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| TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW | |
| TIME | TRANSCRIPT |
| 00:00 | [Interviewer] This is an interview with Nigebolena Buama taped on the 5 th of April 2017. Nigebolena is 92 years old and she was born 1925. We are going to talk with her through her daughter Aselika Nailina, who is 65 years old and born in 1952. This is taped at Ahioma. |
| | I was living with my family here when the government officers came and made awareness about the war. The awareness was made three times to warn us about the war that was coming any time and we were asked to be prepared for it. So we were aware of the war before it reached us but we were caught by surprise and unprepared for it at the time it reached us. When the enemy came, we were not prepared for it and one of my uncle Nailina and others were watching at the beach when they landed. We knew that this was not their planned landing place. They were aiming for Giligili but somehow they ended up here. They came here but we don't understand why and they landed at Wahuhuba. They started fighting as soon as they landed at Wahuhuba. |

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| 02:39 | <p>That night when we were heard about the fighting, we all ran away into the bushes. We were living here and had to run away into the bushes. They already warned us earlier on to build huts in the mountains and to wait for the war that was to come. So before the war came some men went up and built a very big hut next to the river, just up here for as we waited for the war. That night when we saw the ships coming in, we all ran away. I was a kid back then when the war came here. We all ran away and went into the bushes and stayed there as the enemy landed at Wahuhuba with all their war materials. They were attacked by their enemies (Australians) and we heard bombings and gun shots, and our mothers and fathers said, 'oh! Where else will we go to?' So we had to walk further up the river, Bawilai river to where our hut was built. There were my mother and my father's sister Sinalehaiya living there. We arrived and they took us in so we decided to stay there and listen to the war below.</p> |
| 04:19 | <p>So we all lived there and the war raged on and on and continued until I think more of the enemies were killed and they had to stop. The Japanese left and a few of them were roaming about in the bushes. They were hiding away and we were also hiding away. After some time we were asked to move back down to our homes.</p> |
| 05:04 | <p>That's why I said, they asked us to stay in the bush and later asked us to return to our homes here so we came back here. When we returned here we were told that it was not safe for us to live here and they told us to go to Dulia. When we went up there, the Wedega family were already living so they took us in. We were living there and then they came again and advised us that all of us will move to Suau. But my mother refused saying 'I don't want to go there,' her name is Eliepa. She said 'I am not moving there.' I will rather go somewhere else.' So her husband decided that, 'no, we will go to Awaiama.' They agreed so we walked all the way to Huhuna and then further down to Awaiama. And we lived there. As for the Wedega family, they moved to Suau.</p> |
| 06:34 | <p>We were living there and they came also and told us to move back to our homes so we had to walk back here. Nothing was and went wrong but you know it was tiring traveling by foot from one place to another, walking here and there. My mother refused to go to Suau but chose Awaiama instead because she was scared of traveling on the sea.</p> |
| 08:22 | <p>We all ran away into the bushes without carrying anything when the enemies came and the war started here. Our mothers carried their baskets that they always carry around and we all ran away. Whatever we had within reach were the only things we took. Because the war here started in the night and it was very dark that night.</p> <p>Some of us did not carry anything at all, we ran away empty handed.</p> <p>Okay, we were living up here and then moved down to Dulia and stayed there for few days but I don't remember how many days we lived here and at Dulia. I was not counting the number of days we were living in each of the places.</p> |

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| 11:01 | <p>Okay what I think is at that she would have known and experienced the war but now that she had reached old age, her memory is fading and she forgot most stories of the war that she used to tell us before. She could not recall her memories of the war like how many days they travel like that far.</p> |
| 11:38 | <p>Yes, I saw them, the Japanese. Some of them were hiding in the bushes and some of them were killed by the Australians because that was their job. Some were already killed and those of them hiding in the bushes, the Australians came and said, 'oh, we want the village men to go with us into the bushes to search for these men (Japanese) and bring them out here and shoot them to death, because they are dangerous if we allow them to stay in the bushes and it won't be safe for us to move around.' So the village men went into the bushes and searched for the Japanese soldiers, arrested them, tied them up and brought them down. They continued searching for them and brought more down here, and they were taken down to Giligili. They took them down to Giligili and locked them in jail, and from there I do not know what happened next or to them.</p> |
| 13:33 | <p>I don't recall any one killed by the Japanese here, and the Japanese killed by the local men, none. They were only tied up and taken away. But I remember that when they first landed, some of my uncles down at Wahuhuba were arrested and taken somewhere I don't remember and killed.</p> <p>One of her uncles named Elekana, who has a crooked leg. One of the Japanese man was wounded or I think he was just pretending to be wounded so that old man had to carry him on his back, piggyback him. So he carried him on his back and they were walking but you know the old man was sensing that something was not alright and he realise that the Japanese man was holding tightly onto his shoulders, right side collar bone and he began to assume that, 'no this man is intending to kill me instead.' So he had to throw him down and run away ... That's another story. These were some of the stories that I heard from them as I was growing up.</p> |
| 15:30 | <p>We lived at Awaiama for one year. We were living there with people who were very supportive and helpful. They received us happily and really assisted us well.</p> <p>At Dulia they were looked after by their uncle and his family, her mother's brother so they were family members and they supported each other. And then they planned and decided to either go together or separate ways. The brother knew that her sister gets scared of traveling on the sea and also they were going to travel in the night and she was more scared, so her mother refused to let her family go. Only her brother and his wife with their children travel that night by boat to Suau. This woman's uncle, her mother's brother.</p> |
| 17:15 | <p>When the war came, it only affected the beach and coastline areas.</p> <p>Yes, you know they were hungry so they steal from the village people's gardens to feed themselves. Those Japanese when they feel hungry they eat anything even the raw vegetables like taro and unripe pawpaws. They harvest</p> |

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| | <p>the local people's food and eat them raw because they were hungry and did not have enough food supply.</p> |
| 18:00 | <p>Because of the war and they lived at Awaiama for a year.</p> <p>We used to live with her and I used to ask her and she used to tell me stories but now like she's very old that she forgot some of her memories of what she told me. Her memory is fading so she is only telling whatever she can remember now.</p> |
| | <p>Okay at that time when they were running away into the bushes and were hiding, my bubu Elekana, the one with a crooked leg was caught by the Japanese so they asked him to take them up to the mountains. Elekana was with his brother Nailina. So he sent his brother Nailina and told him, 'run ahead and inform our families and friends to hide,' because they were all scared of the Japanese. They had guns and the people were scared of the guns.</p> <p>The people were living on the mountains and had the men hunted for pigs and they were preserving some of the meat by smoking them over the fire to eat later. I mean this bubu (Nigebolena) and the family. As they were walking up, Elekana, Nailina and some Japanese soldiers, Elekana spoke in vernacular and instructed his brother to run ahead to inform everyone to hide. So my bubu (Nailina) ran ahead and said to the people, 'all of you have to hide now. There are some Japanese men coming up. Elekana is bringing them here.'</p> |
| | <p>They were trying to find their way to Buna and that's why they were walking up that way with him (Elekana), because they asked him and his brother to show them the way to Buna. They were still walking and his brother went ahead and told the people so they all hid. As soon as they arrive where the people were camping, one of the Japanese looked and saw the pork meat smoking, so he ran and grabbed some pieces and started eating. No excuse or whatever, he just collected and was eating. The people hiding did nothing. They just let him eat. He ate and ate until he was satisfied.</p> |
| | <p>And my bubu, Elekana, he can speak any language. He can speak any language that is spoken in the world. So he stood up and spoke Japanese to them and started a conversation with the Japanese men. After that they walked further on to find a track that they could use and they showed them a short cut track and let them to go. They instructed them to follow this direction to Awaiama and go further down. While he went on his way, the Australians were scouting the border and alert there, and some going that way were killed by the Australians. So they did not succeed in arriving at their destination. The Japanese were killed.</p> |
| 21:40 | <p>Our things were okay here. They were not destroyed by the Japanese. Our things and other belongings were all right, they only came for people and some of the people were killed.</p> <p>But some of the old men down there at the place where the Japanese landed experienced threats by them. They said to them, 'come with us and show us</p> |

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| | <p>where Giligili is.' They went with the Japanese and on the way they were killed. So that's what happens when there is war.</p> |
| | <p>There was a man and his son at Wahuhuba. When the Japanese landed, the father said to his son, 'let's run away. Let's run away.' But the son said, 'uh, that's not our war. That is their own war they came to fight here.' So the father made a gap on the floor of his house and slid down and quietly ran to the nearby bushes and hid. The son stayed back and locked the door. When the Japanese came, they killed him. But I cannot remember their names.</p> <p>One of the man killed was called Wahai.</p> |
| 26:07 | <p>The story of Sikana, I think he is a Japanese man. I do not know his story.</p> <p>People up this side don't know much about Sikana, only those people living down that side (west). I think he was their leader and he wanted to win the war but somehow he was killed and his body was buried on our land.</p> |
| 27:22 | <p>I think a man named Dedeiyani's brother was one of the victim. Because you know the war reached them in the night, going to mid-night, around 12 o'clock when they landed so people ran away without thinking of each other. It was during this time that the old man's family left him sleeping while they ran away, and when the Japanese were checking the houses, they killed him. I forgot the name. My (Madouna Gapile) wife's grandfather. They killed him and left him under one big tree and they went away.</p> |
| | <p>Timoteu and Tom were arrested by the Japanese at Wahuhuba and were killed at Kwakwala. Timoteu is from Gabugabuna but got married to a woman from here. At Wagawaga, they bayoneted another man named Waladiba.</p> |
| | <p>The first ship that came in did not actually call in at Wahuhuba, it called in at a place further up this side here of Wahuhuba called, Piuduna. Piuduna is the place where the first Japanese ship called in. Then all the ships that called in later lined up all the way to Wahuhuba and all their rations were dropped off at Wahuhuba. Their bullets, cartridges, food and other things. That's where the Americans bombed their rations and they wandered off from there.</p> |
| 29:37 | <p>He went down to the beach and looked and saw light and came back and said, 'run away and I'll come and we go. They might kill us.' But he said, 'where is that war? Those are not the war people. You're too much of lying.' They were staying without knowing that enemies were already landing at their shores, and they got shocked when there were bombs exploding on the beach. So he came and pushed aside the palm stalk floorings, slid down and walked into the bushes and ran away. I don't remember what happened next after he left. I don't know who it was.</p> |
| | <p>She can't really remember but there was one person they left her sleeping in the house and she was stabbed to death. But this one is, this one's mother in-law (referring to Madouna Gapile). She was killed when they were running away so they left her. Her family ran away and reach Galihani river and they thought of her so some men had to return and search for her. When they</p> |

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| | <p>returned they saw her lying, dead already so they buried her under a tree, and then returned to the bushes.</p> |
| 31:38 | <p>They are saying when the Japanese came in they ran away so this one here who was left behind was shot while the others ran away right up to the mountains. When they went up there, they thought about her so they have to come back again to check on her. When they came back, she was already dead so they just buried her under that tree. They buried her and left.</p> |
| 33:11 | <p>Bubu Elekana and his brothers helped to search for the Japanese and arrested them. They were brought down here. They were loaded in the dinghy and were blindfolded so they would not know where they were going. They were arrested, brought down here and blindfolded, and taken to Dulia, then down to Giligili. They were blindfolded so they will not know where they were going. They were not paid for searching and arresting the Japanese soldiers. They were only helping and they were not paid at all.</p> <p>The Japanese were taken down to Giligili and put in the cells and used as labourers and later on shipped out to other places I do not know where.</p> |
| 35:48 | <p>I have no idea and do not remember if there was a tribunal held here (Lelehoa) after the war, by the Australians for those people who assisted the Japanese. I don't want to make up stories to lie.</p> |
| | <p>This old woman was living here with her family 1700s and 1800s even before the war but she never witnessed such event held here nor heard of it. She would remember or would have told us if that happened. But they all had to leave this place during the war here.</p> |
| | <p>We only heard and know about the hangings that were done here before the war that was during the old times. There was a court proceeding held here before the war during the times of Arthur Bibis, this is the only story that was retold to me (Madouna Gapile). I think this is the story that was mistaken to be about the war tribunal. Two men were hanged here, is also another story. This was nothing to do with the war. This happened before the war. It was during the cannibalism days. The story is known from the other side (North coast) all the way here, and this was during the times of Captain Cook's visit, where one man was killed at Awaiama and another one here. They were beheaded.</p> <p>Okay another story I was told is one white man came and caused dispute on this land here so they were trying to settle the matter with our uncle Mark. But the court ruled in favour of the white man so he was given the land, I am trying to recall the white man's name but I forgot. This white man wanted to buy this land off to construct a hotel ... This is one of the story that I know about this place told by my uncle.</p> |
| 40:30 | <p>No one from here or Wahuhuba joined in the PIB. Others not from here recruited were Pilikisi and Barnaba. Barnaba is the elder one and Pilikisi the</p> |

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| | <p>younger brother. Barnaba was in the PIB and here our uncle Lu, he was one of them who went to fight at Buna.</p> |
| | <p>There were some men from Wahuhuba as we mentioned already who were threatened by the Japanese to show them the way to Giligili and were killed on the way down. Some of the men went to Giligili and ran away. Some of the people were killed by the Japanese on behalf of their other friends who escaped. There were plenty local people who were killed.</p> <p>Three were killed from this side. We don't recall stories about women from this area being raped by the Japanese. Only that old lady who was shot and Tom and his father Timoteu who were killed, and they went to Wagawaga and killed another old man Waladiba. Those were some of the people who were killed that I remember.</p> |
| | <p>And another woman Hinadikele was also killed while trying to escape. Like I (Madouna Gapile) mentioned in my interview, Lu came earlier on and was making awareness about the war but the people were saying, 'eh Lu's ways, he's too much of joking and lying.' So they were all living their normal daily lives and that night, he came and took his mother, father and siblings away to a safer hideout while the others were caught by surprise when the war broke out. Hinadikele was shot that night by the enemy when they landed here.</p> |
| 46:08 | <p>Okona and Maielo were not killed. My mother here, her second husband's relatives are those two men. Maielo and Okona. Okona's father is that Maielo. The people who were killed here were Timoteu and his son Tom, and that woman Hinadikele.</p> <p>Pakailasi is from Huhuna.</p> |