

<b>Name:</b>	Nelson Mark
<b>Date of interview:</b>	6 April 2017
<b>Location of interview:</b>	KB Mission, Milne Bay Province
<b>Interviewer/s:</b>	Anne Dickson Waiko, Elizabeth Taulehebo and Keimelo Gima
<b>Duration of interview:</b>	40:05
<b>Main language of interview:</b>	English
<b>Image:</b>	

### TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

TIME	TRANSCRIPT
00:00	[Interviewer]  This is an interview with Nelson Mark dated 6 <sup>th</sup> of April 2017 and its taped at Alotau town [KB], and he's going to talk to us about his grandfather Mahuru Mark.
	He was at Kwato. He was probably around his 30s (years of age) and when the Battle of Milne Bay came in and the Japanese were doing bombing around here, the Kwato Mission started to look around for people to take part to help the Allied Forces, the Milne Force that was based at the fall river base Giligili. So Mr Abel (Cecil Abel) started to collect the men, mostly the ... all the men that were taken down to Giligili, some of them had their skills of carpentry and all that, they were employed to help the American Engineers. My grandfather was a ... earlier before the war he was taken down by the Kwato Mission to Australia to get his certificate as a Captain, captain of the ship.
02:03	When the war came, he was one of the few who had a certificate to handle a boat, like old man Sila and Giliu, these two were probably mainly dealing with the Australian casualties or the wounded during the battle around here. My grandfather was actually employed by Americans so he was running the crash

	<p>boat, the American crash boat between Giligili and then they go over to Kiwansasap, Uyaku and then they go down to Tufi. So that was his main route during the battle here. He was the Skipper. I wouldn't remember the name of the boat. That was his main duty during the battle.</p>
03:13	<p>He was around his thirties. I'm the son of his third born son. But at that time he had only one daughter. One daughter that was born during the Battle of Milne Bay. He was already married, he had a child and he was employed by the Americans. That's through the ANGAU. When ANGAU was recruiting and ANGAU was looked after by like Cecil Abel was taking care of all the ANGAU business around the place here so he employed my grandfather Mahuru Mark. He put him to run that crash boat. He was trained a Kwato trained skipper and then during the years of captain in the MV <i>Kwato</i> and all that he was sent down to Sydney to further his studies so he got his certificate there. That is why when he came back and when the battle came he was a certified captain so the Americans took him up to get a crash boat. The crash boats are smaller boats. One of the photos of the crash boat is very famous with John F Kennedy coming out of one of them during this battle of ... during the World War Two. That is one of the crash boats. My grandfather was a skipper for one of those. They were running between ... according to his children, he was never recognized. The only things that he received were gifts from his mates on the boat. He worked with the Americans, they gave him things and they are still with me, we are still using them in the village. Things like this water can and bins to put food inside.</p>
05:49	<p>I remember when I was a kid he told us to take cartridges, boxes of them. So we have to paddle right down and sink them in the sea. They were still very ... it was around 1986, 1985. Those bullets were still in the yellow packets, we have to take them down ... my cousin with me to sink them.</p>
06:24	<p>He worked for almost for the full length of the battle because the Americans I remember that they came in early so he worked until 1944. He was never paid. He was not recognized for his services like ... He worked between 1942 to 1944 because after the battle of Milne Bay, there was an American base here, naval base so he lived on to work right through moving the troops up to Tufi. He was never paid. He was not recognized for his services during the battle. He passed away around 1992 or 1993, I'm not very clear. I was already big. Usually my dad always talked to him and when he's talking with my grandma that's when we slide in. I was in my grade four and grade five so I'll come and listen to him.</p>
07:40	<p>And he also has a very small caption, one of the soldiers' encounters I mean like his little brief story about him and the patrol boat in the battle of Milne Bay book. So when I read through I read his history they were operating with his local skipper and his local crew too. Local crew as well and he led the Americans that were looking after them, soldiers. So they were skipping the boat. They were looked after like they were just ... they were liked with arms and taking the troops there. They were still dressed in laplaps. They were not</p>

	<p>because they have to recognize them separately from the ... But he was never recognized.</p>
<p>09:02</p>	<p>The children today totally forgot about the story about their father except one son, the second one, but the rest of them forgot. The two around here are the first born and the third born, the other one died. They don't really think about this battle or like the important contribution towards the war. He's a very quiet man so he never came out easily to tell his story. He was very humble. So now the old man himself. Now we are studying about the history of the battle of Milne Bay, and he was with the captain of the crash boat, American crash boat and he risked his life to cross because all these area past Wahuhuba and towards East Cape, that were Japanese occupied areas until Taupota and down that way. So yeah he played a very important role but he was never properly recognized.</p>
<p>10:42</p>	<p>Like Sila and Giliu were part of the same training so they were also on the boat but I wouldn't know if they were working with him because he was actually running to Tufi and these ones were carrying the wounded into Giligili but they paid almost the same problem. They would return [from Tufi] then back to Giligili but I wouldn't know they were actually housed before the next trip out. But they kept running because ...</p> <p>They were almost bombed too that's his favourite story he always talked about. He said the bombs were landed near their ship and they have to all jump over board, he was almost killed during the battle but he survived. That was the closest one that was around Giligili area when he came. That is when they bombed the <i>Manunda</i> the same time, the hospital boat and it turned over. That was the same time they were bombing the base. So they nearly caught them off guard down there. And at that time he was like they did not travel out yet, they probably returned and they were still there on the boat so ... he could be like the rest of the skippers like you know other local men they usually sleep on the boat when the rest are ... They work all time. After Kwato release them, that's it they just work full time at the end of the war.</p>
<p>13:11</p>	<p>My grandmother because she had a new baby. She was carrying the baby and then she was already bigger, I mean she lost the first one (baby). She lost her first child who was a boy when they were crossing over to the other side, Buhutu side. They were crossing up to Duabo so they were going up that way. So they were up there witnessing the battle that was being fought underneath. She was miscarriage probably in 1939, 1940 or 1941 and then she had this other one again. So this time they did not want to risk like again so they had to be around to go with the people because lots of their brothers and sisters were in the Mission because the Mission took them together and sent them this way. The baby was lost as a result of the war and they were walking, yes, that's the main one and that is before the first born. She had two children; before Alemita there was the other one, a guy but he passed away during that battle that time raining and all that and they were running away. They call it Tago. Soon after that. Raining. So aunty Alemita was later when</p>

	<p>she was born it was ... born during the battle. So they didn't want to risk all that so she had to go.</p>
15:12	<p>He was very very close with the Americans on the boat. That is why the only things that he has were the things that were given to him by the Americans. So he was very very close to them. They were white Americans. He had a lot of friends. He was already speaking English; they were Kwato boys so yeah.</p> <p>The only thing that is different about him is that he's got a tattoo. He got an eagle tattoo. When he grew old and frail but the eagle tattoo was still there. I was thinking he got the tattoo from the Americans. It was the eagle tattoo that was like flying his right arm. He actually asked for the eagle to be tattooed because he comes from a clan that has the Eagle totem. His people are from Ware so he decided to put that down. He says any reasons why he chose the right arm for the tattoo.</p>
16:50	<p>I can't remember anything more but he was a very interesting person. He actually did not want to talk about the war every time when ... he can't talk about it. I think because of what he went through. But when we ask our ... dad to ask about the war, they ask our grandmother. So she'll start talking and then ask him to give information. So he does not talk about it (war). He keeps quiet about it.</p> <p>And the things that he got from the Americans were highly valued to him. It's always in his room so whenever we change rooms or houses, all his things go to his room. And then they are all stacked up high like you know bins or what do we call them, to store things even a big one; it was from the ship they usually ... you have to screw it on to the ship, that one too is still there in the village. So those are from the Americans especially. When he passed on, those things finally came out in the clear place.</p>
18:36	<p>He never talked about it ... he never shared his feelings about the war but from his actions, him keeping so quiet about it probably something that was truly traumatising. He lived through it. Just imagine if you are running that way and you are somebody else operating an American boat and you are the enemy. No, not once he travelled to Gelemalaia to visit his family. Alemita was already a big when the war ended. After two to three years being away and then they met again.</p> <p>I would not know if ANGAU supplied them (grandmother) with food.</p>
20:05	<p>My grandfather was like uh he usually tells those stories when I was a young guy. Not only him but my mother's people here. I used to just brush them aside and oh that was in the 1980s and then now, like when I decided to study back the battle of Milne Bay, half of my notes up there half of my papers they are all about the battle of Milne Bay. And every time when I go online, I try to download anything about the battle of Milne Bay. It really interests me because my people were actually directly taking part in the battle. It affected us our local population. Japanese invincibility was lost in the battle of Milne Bay.</p>

21:17	<p>He (grandfather) was a very brave man. It probably comes from his upbringing or his line of family, he was already stuck to his blood so very quiet man but very brave man and he's like a hero to me. He was running a long distance from here to Tufi, passing Japanese enemy lines, he passing through them; so yeah, Rabaraba, Taupota right across. They travelled right down to Tufi and then shorter distances. They were almost nearing Oro Province. That was where he was dropping off and returning again. But there are some uh because one of the captions that I read in the battle of Milne Bay that was very funny to me whenever I told my dad because this particular soldier wrote that when he's on board the crash boat, they go to Kiwansasap, Uyaku, those two villages when they stop down the soldiers say, 'uh, we let the local skipper and his crew to go and look for women.' So that story I always remember. They used to let the skipper and the local crew to go and look for women and do whatever and then they are on their way again. So I always feel funny about this one but my granddad was ... but he never told me. Only the American soldier. But that was during the battle so family was far away and you know men that were ... He never told us those kinds of stories. You only ask, then he talks. The only place he gets closer to home is when he goes up to Kanakope. From Kanakope and then he goes out through the passage, East Cape passage. Because they couldn't run directly from Giligili to East Cape because the enemy was here so they go up that way from Gamadoudou side there and they just go straight to Kanakope from there because at Kanakope there was an American base with all the Ack-ack guns there. So from there and then they set the course again and go.</p>
24:50	<p>He didn't say how he felt working in the boat but one thing we could tell when we are growing older and he was getting very old is that he loved the job so I think he was very passionate too. It was a new type of boat and then you know only few Papua New Guineans were able to do that. So till the times when he didn't walk, he would stand at the back of the boat, our local boat and skipper. He was still doing that until he didn't walk again so that's the passion that he had about being on the boat and being the skipper.</p> <p>He was a very old man when he died because he had to come back to the village and we have to come back from Kimbe in 1994. So he was quite old, in his 80s or something like that, 75 or 80. When he came back to Daiamoni, Nuabule that was when he started aging and stayed at home. During the war, he was around his thirties. Probably early thirty-five up to forty, his late thirties.</p>
26:45	<p>The last time they were in contact was when they were in Milne Bay during the battle in 1944. In 1944 that was when the bombing of Rabaul and Bougainville were on that is when the troops were moving out and that was the last time he saw his mates. But after the war, he continued to be a Councillor. He became a President, the first Huhu President. He's also from Gwavili. Huhu LLG. So he's gone.</p>

28:05	<p>My grandmother lived over ninety years of age. If only she was around, she's the one that ... because she's very very talkative. The only story that is a bit faded is when he grabbed her and flew off a boat and I wouldn't know where. There was a bombing and he grabbed her and flew off a boat into the sea. I don't know where, KB Mission or at Giligili. And that is when after when he took her out they took off to Gelemalaia. They were not at KB Mission. They were still at Kwato when the war came.</p>
29:19	<p>When I was growing up I was not interested in History because we did not know the importance of it. Now that I'm showing interest in history, my advice is we got to start teaching them. We've got to start teaching them like you know when we ask people about or we just call tell a visitor about Kokoda Trail, they'll say okay the Kokoda Trail. But Milne Bay is much important than Kokoda. Even in interviews, the Australians usually say when we ask our people they don't know about it but if you ask the Yanks, the Americans they'll say okay in the Pacific there are only three major battles; Midway, the Coral Sea and the Battle of Milne Bay because this is where the turning point. This is the one that actually boost up the morale of the Allied Forces fighting in the Pacific. My little girl is six years old and every time when I'm reading she comes and ask I tell her, okay I'm reading this and this is what happened so I tell her and now she knows some. She's six years old and I'm already putting that interest where to learn. Like the other time I approach my friends we do all the battle tours, I approach them and ask them I said, boys why don't we ask primary schools and we can go in there and tell them the stories about battle of Milne Bay. We just tell them so like sights especially like Corporal John French Memorial the monument there every time they go and spit on it, you know they don't know the significance of that place. Even Kainako Turnbull now they already know it so now they are taking care of it. Corporal John French is very important, that is the hero. That is the person that actually paid back for the Australians to move the Japanese back. And the monument, every time we go there they spit on it so I told them, the only thing we need to do is go down there and teach the younger generation in the schools probably like when the schools ends and afternoon hours just go inside and talk about the battle. Tell them that it's a very important battle and this battle is ... be proud of it. Be proud that this is where ...</p>
33:28	<p>Sikana, I heard about it especially on my mother's side from Waema side. But I'm a bit confused whether ... They said Sikana was uh he was much bigger man like for the Japanese that came, well trained soldier that's what they said and I heard about. He actually was leading the way penetrating the defencing line right down this way but the place that was where he was put down I wouldn't know; and from gathering information, what I heard was that he was put down by an African-American. He had already passed Turnbull. He was down at Waema side. He was actually heading for the base (Giligili) and there was a ... after where Wehuria Creek, there were some bases there; okay he was probably killed there along that area. But he already went past Kainako now the Memorial and further down. I heard so much about it, the Sikana</p>

	<p>fellow. The name Sikana, we have to find out because there is Sikana, that name you normally hear from the local people, the Tawala locals they used to say Sikana, it sounds Japanese. But there was also a journal written by Chikanori Moji. So Chikanori Moji so it could be that Sikana they are talking about that Chikanori Moji they are talking about because he was the General that led them during the battle of Milne Bay. From the stories I heard I think its Chikanori Moji they are talking about. He was with them. I wouldn't really know if he was big. Why I'm saying this is because if Chikanori Moji was a Major-General, if Sikana was a Major-General then he is part of the Imperial Japanese Army or the Imperial Japanese Navy. But the Special Naval Landing Forces are the crew boys of the Navy boats, later trained to be like the special team to come also. They could be smaller. It could be the Japanese Army Major-General could be a bit bigger. That is why when the locals saw him they say he was big.</p> <p>And also there was another man, another Japanese soldier that was also shot down at KB Mission. He was shot by Lieutenant Betro Wilson, B-Company's lieutenant, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He was shot down when they came up to gather their maps. Some of the maps when they the Japanese came through, they have to move out and when they return again to collect the maps, there was a very ... how they describe it was very big Japanese soldier. Very tall. He came in the dark and Betro Wilson shot him, the lieutenant. That could be another one and the name to Chikanori Moji and Sikana and all of those can change them.</p>
38:13	<p>Nothing more I want to talk about my grandfather. But the role he played, we still we think that they owed. He was not properly recognized. He was not given any medals. Very quiet fellow. When they were like doing recognition or marching here and about you know he was making his copra.</p> <p>He was probably the only Papua New Guinean who was acting in that capacity at that time. He was certified in Australia that was unusual. Like if you compare the old Kwato boats with the crash boat, yeah totally different boat. He was actually on one of them, the crash boat. JFK, he just opened it and came out with his glasses on, that famous photo. That's a crash boat so my grandfather was actually on that crash boat.</p>
39:58	<p>[Interviewer] Thanks very much.</p>