

INTERVIEW

Katalina Katosang

Translator: Lorenza Pedro

Questioner: Donald Shuster

October 27, 2001 at Katalina's home

Katalina mentioned that she was very disappointed last year when the U.S. Army was not able to locate the burial site of the Jesuit missionaries. Today, she thought we were driving out to Ngatpang and was ready to continue the search.

Regarding seeing U.S. prisoners of war (POWs), Katalina said she had heard that the Kempei (Kempeitai) had taken them and they were executed near the location of today's Nikko Hotel in Ngermid. She said Tadashi knew the place. However, he passed away a few months ago. She has no information or recollections about any other U.S. POWs.

Don Shuster: Did you work for the Japanese military?

Katalina Katosang: No.

DS: Where did you grow up?

KK: I grew up in Koror and completed Japanese school here. Then I moved to Ngatpang and stayed there for a while before moving to Koror when I was 20.

DS: Do you remember the bombing?

KK: Yes, I recall the bombing. We ran to the rock islands and later I moved to Ngaremlengui where there was not much bombing. It was mainly shooting.

DS: Did you see or hear about any POW's other than the ones killed near the Nikko Hotel?

KK: No, I did not hear about any U.S. flyers being in Ngaremlengui. But I remember U.S. planes shooting near our village.

DS: Do you speak Japanese?

KK: Yes, my Japanese is good.

DS: Did you go hungry during the war time?

KK: No. My mother had a very big taro patch and gardens. Sometimes we lived in a cave. The planes did not attack all day. When the planes dropped jelly bombs that burned the bush, the Japanese planted food plants there right away.

DS: Did anyone steal food from your family?

KK: Yes. Both the Japanese soldiers and civilians were stealing food from us.

DS: How long did you live in the cave?

KK: Till the time we heard that the U.S. had invaded Peleliu and Angaur. It was after Joseph Tellei and the Chamorros had escaped to the US ships off northern Babeldaob. The Japanese

knew the U.S. troops were coming and I heard some of the younger soldiers wanted to use their big guns to hit the US ships. Some of the older officers advised their men to cool down and think about surviving the war and getting back to Japan.

After the war, the Japanese were digging holes and burying things. I asked some people to go there and observe. Some people checked on this, but they did not find anything.

DS: When did you know about the killings of the padres?

KK: It was during the war. One day we had a very big rain with thunder. I thought the priests were being tortured. About 4 days later, a Japanese soldier asked me if I remembered the bad weather. He then said the priests were taken away. This soldier said he did not follow the Kempei because he was afraid. I was very surprised that this Japanese soldier would show concern for the priests. After he left, I looked for him but could not find him.

After the war... I saw a cross but it had no name on it. It was a small wooden one, about the length of my arm. I know the place where the cross was. Last year, I showed the place to Fr. Felix. The place was not on top of the hill where the Army was searching. I did not go to the top of the hill because I knew the place I saw the cross was not up there. I think the cross marked the areas of the priests' grave. There were also two wooden stakes. The cross and stakes were some 2 feet apart. The first stake marked the place where two Chamorros from Saipan were buried. The second stake marked the place where a Japanese military man and his assistant were buried.

After the war I and another woman searched for and found the cross. We also found a shack which had some bones and a very bad odor.

DS: When did you do this searching?

KK: We did it after the Japanese had left Palau.

DS: Why did you do it?

KK: To find the priests. It took us about a half to full day. The jungle was not thick then. we searched around the *Wakuei boyen* (Japanese hospital) in Koksai. There was a river near by.

DS: Was the shack you found with the bones and bad odor (smell) called Nantaku barracks?

KK: Yes, I think so. That reminds me... a woman wrote me a letter and said she had seen the priests on a boat. She later went to the shack and found a black umbrella. She took the umbrella and noticed that it had the smell of the priests. The woman's name was Matilitei. She looked for some of the priests' things. She said she had seen Fr. Elias. He asked her why she had come and told her it was a dangerous place because the soldiers were checking the place every 15 minutes. Fr. Elias said he would write a letter to Rudimch, telling him to bring some food for Fr. Marino--some smoked fish and sweet potatoes. He was sick and needed food.

Yes, I know the location of the house [Nantaku barracks] where Matilitei saw Fr. Elias. It is near the place where we were looking last year.

I mentioned these things to Fr. John a long time ago [late 1940s]. He was the only priest in Palau then. I suggested to him that we look and try to find the bones. He said to never mind. Yes, the house or shack was the Nantaku barracks. It's near the river and near the road.

Last year it was confusing with Ramona and Techitong because we had different ideas and memories.

Date transcribed: October 29, 2001