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**Was this up in the North of the country, then?**

Yes. They come in the South and kidnap and then they take them to the Northern part of the country to keep them there.

**You said they were militia, so were they an official part of the government army?**

Yes, they are official part of the government. They were trained by the government and they are armed by the government, and even the trade slave usually go even to the city where the government is. They take some of the children, they take some of the cattle that they have looted. The government was very involved because they just want to destroy Southern Sudan, they didn't want people on that land is what they were planning, because they see them as an African and in the Northern part it was mainly Arabs.

**We're getting towards the end of the first sound card so we'll take a break there.**

Thank you.

END OF DISK 1: DISK 2

**This is sound card two of an interview between Angelo Dhel and Alison McDougall at the State Library of South Australia on Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007. Now we've been talking about that horrifying time for you –**

Yes.

**– of when the militia came through your village, and you talked about hiding and having the horsemen come very close to you.**

Yes.

**Can you remember what was going through your mind at that time?**

Yes. I was thinking two things: one was to run again and two, if I did they would see me. And I was telling myself, 'I'd better hide here. If they come and get me that's fine, but I think this place they cannot see me because it's too dark inside this big tree bush.' So I did stayed down laying and just they come past by and they are shouting, 'Come out! We are seeing you, come out, come out.' And I thought that they really just want to let people come out while they are not really looking at me, so I thought, 'No, if they are looking at me they will come and get me, so I better stay down, and then after all they shout and pass by running toward the bush.'

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**How long were there, hiding?**

I hide there for five hours in the same place, no movement. I just lay down and quiet, my chest down where's my head and lay down still for at least five hours, because I thought if I move maybe I will touch a tree or something different that would really make a sound and they would see me where I am. And I was to stay there until when I don't hear anything, and that time was around four p.m., that's when I really realised that the sound is really going down and the bush become dark and there are wild animals in the bush so it was another scary sort of thing so I thought, 'Yes, now I'm hiding here, but the sun is going down so what can I do? Maybe these people they are gone so I have to wake up and keep going and hiding.' So I keep going in between the bush and between the big tree I would attach myself to a tree and look very carefully on the road and I see nothing then I go on. So hiding, and I don't go through the road, I really walk along the roadside to avoid any further attack or capture. I want to make sure that the road was clear and I walk beside the road till I came home.

**What happened when you came home?**

I saw people crying and everybody was gathering there. Some people lost their mothers, dad and children, some people lost their husband, some people lost their children, some people lost their grandfathers like myself. And because the worst thing that they were burned alive it make it even worse because people see that this war really is not a war that is between one country, if it is why people are burned alive, why they don't capture them and take them to prison? But burning human beings alive, including children, they think that there was not any forgiveness between the two sides of the country. The Christians thought that Moslem Government was very evil and being that that's not contrast with the bible, so they become shouting '*Allah Akbar!*' [meaning that God is great]and they try to find ways for next attack of Dinka town to kill old men and then destroying the whole village. So the men in the village or the town were gathering and they are trying to buy guns and try to protect these when there is another attack. And that is how they thought because they said this would be continuing so we the men buy guns and protect the village rather than seeing people being burned alive and children are killed, so we are not worth living while we are not protecting our families. This is where the men who

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are talking like, you know, decisions and they have to make a big decision including my dad, or they have to see a way that they can gather money and send someone to ..... and buy guns from there.

**And how long was it before you could find your parents?**

It was not long. After I came back it's just a matter of some hours so after I came back I found them at home and they were surprised me turning up, they thought that I was among the people who were burned. They didn't know that I had run and I hide, and when they saw me they were really happy but not really happy because the situation was already a mess-up, so they are happy that they see me but they are not happy because they lost other family members. So they just hugged me and they're still crying. I can't tell that they were happy – I know in my heart they are happy to see me, but also they have been touched by the other lost of all thing that occur in front of them.

**So you stayed on for three more months.**

Yes.

**Then you made this decision to run away and join the army?**

Yes.

**Can you tell me what happened on the day that you decided to do that?**

On the day I decided to do this, because I asked my dad before, in between these three months, what to do and I told him, 'I will join the army', and he said, 'No! You can't do it because you are too young, and walking from here to Ethiopia you would encounter a lot of things on the way. There is big rivers that you cannot swim or you cannot cross and because of that reason you can't go. Secondly, there are a lot of things on the way like wild animals and the distance is almost three months' -- that is what he told me, because he's been in the Anyanya 1, which is the movement that signed peace in '72. He told me, 'No, you can't do it because it is too risky for a young person like you.' So that's when I decide, 'Okay, he is telling me not to and staying here is one of the two: either to be caught a slave or to be killed, so I'd better go.'

The day I left, only the person that I told her is my mum. I said, 'Mum, I know you love me and I know that I am one of your favourite sons, but I am going because

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this would not end. As you see, everybody's killed and next time maybe it will be my turn or you guys' turn, and if you are killed then I would remain orphan and I wouldn't live a good life, so I'd better go and join the army and be trained.' And my mother's saying, 'Well, look, my son. I'm very happy that you have that bravery but you are too young to do anything. If you want I can go with you with the whole family to Ethiopia.' And I said, 'No, I don't need all the family to go to Ethiopia. I will go myself.' And therefore I told her to prepare me some things for my going and she did, and the day I steal myself, I took things after my dad was in the other stepmother house, so that night I steal myself and I went. In the morning when he came home he asked me and Mum said, 'I don't know. He was here, he was sleeping in the house before so I don't know where he went.'

And later on, when I reach to the base of the rebels, I told them to inform my dad that I am alive and I'm going to be training to be a child soldier and I will fight the Northern government. So that's when he hear I was still in the region but I wasn't with the army, and he didn't have anything to do again because he was very critical movement to think that if you can come it mean the family would remain alone, so he then wrote a letter to the person who was responsible, 'Take care of my son and I hope if all the family happen to be killed he would be the seat of my family that would remain. If he's happen to be the one who is killed, then the rest of his brothers here and sisters might remain in the family. So I just want to say that take care of him and I know he's one of the bravest sons that I have in the family. I know he's responsible and he's very social, he can live with anybody even though he don't know them, I think he would make it to the top if he's alive.' That is his comment in the letter. So from there we start our journey.

**So tell me how did you get to the base, first of all?**

The base was based in a place called ..... just in that place, the Southern Sudanese rebels who went to Ethiopia and they were trained, they have been armed, they came and they want to fight the Arabs and because there were very few they don't really face the big mass of the army from militias that were trained, there are so many. So sometimes they fight, sometimes they hide. And that's the base that I joined. I heard of them and I joined them and that's when the first lieutenants told me – he's one of the ..... son – he told me that, 'Yeah, you can stay here for a few days and then you

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will be escorted to Ethiopia.' He gave us four armed people with guns and he said, 'These people will escort you to Ethiopia.'

**How far was the base from your village?**

It's about four hours' walk to the base.

**And how did you feel walking there, was that dangerous?**

Well, it was not that dangerous but it was because that we got to walk hiding we used to walk at night and that is how I did it with other village kids. So we walk at night to go to the base because if we walk on the daytime it might be that we are a target, we can be seen by militias and maybe they will attack us. So we used night to sort of walk and it also served for not having water it will be good to walk at night-time.

**And what did the commander say to you when you arrived at the base?**

They say that, 'You are here because of the causes of the war. We know many of you are still young, probably you will be trained and taught how to shoot in Ethiopia when you are there and maybe some of you will grow up to be teenagers and therefore you will make a good army to liberate your country. And because you guys you have voluntarily come to join SPLM/A,<sup>2</sup> we don't need children but if you volunteer yourself to say "I will serve for the cause of Southern Sudan" we accept you, we don't deny anybody, because that is what you want. But we will make sure that you are kept in safe hands unless the whole army of SPLM are not existing. If they are, you guys cannot go in frontline.'

**And so you had several days there.**

Yes. I got about two weeks there for the arrangements to go on, because going from the base to Ethiopia it would be a three-month walk, so they were looking for gathering some cattles to go with us because (laughs) ..... time we have to kill one cattle for consumption of a week and if we kill one we will carry those meats with us and walking, and this is for army personnel would be escorting us because there are lions on the road and in the bush and a lot of things, other wild animals. And that's why they select these four guys to escort us to Ethiopia.

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<sup>2</sup> SPLM/A – Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army.

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**And how many of you were there in the group?**

I can remember we were no less than eight hundred and that eight hundred includes big guys, real men that were older, older men and medium men and the young boys like myself and other teenagers. And my group were the youngest ranging from eight years to nine and ten. We were kept alone, we were not mixed with these big people, we were kept alone and we were cared for.

**In what way?**

We would not cook. They would find some woman to cook for us, what we only do is to eat, and then we would be escorted to a place where we – because these four personnel, army personnel, they were mainly guiding these young people, not to really – if somebody's walking and is very tired and can't walk, they would get an older person, maybe three or four, to carry him or her in the journey, because it happened that many of the children get very tired and they don't want to walk no more and they have to be carried.

**Were there girls as well as boys?**

No, there wasn't girls in that time because it was the start of such a move to take on and there were no girls in that period of time that we went to Ethiopia.

**So describe a typical night's walking.**

Well, when we walk at night we were expecting a lot of things. You know, it is a bushy road and you will walk there at night some, as I told you, wild animals out there. Despite having four army personnel there weren't enough to protect each and every person because the number was big. We go by line, one army is in the front, one army personnel in the middle and the other one in the middle, the other one in the back. Despite all this, a lion can grab one kid here and disappear with it, that's it. And it happened, since we left it happened several times. But what you have is that you pray that it wouldn't happen to you. That is the trust only because each and every person is scared. You walk quietly and just by being quiet also it doesn't help because lion is just there and it walk at night, and because we don't prefer the daytime – the Sudan Government would bomb us if they see us walking in the day, they see a big number of people. They know that people were going to Ethiopia to join the army and come and fight, so in the daytime they go round with their