

CLIENT	: University of the Witwatersrand – Historical Papers
SUBJECT	: Mr Zig Zag
IDENTIFICATION	: Tape 34
CONTACT PERSON	: Michele Pickover
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Please note:

1. When typist is unsure of names, speakers will be identified by title.
2. Transcriptions are typed verbatim, and typist, when unsure of jargon, industry terms or individual's names, will type phonetic spelling followed by (unsure)

INTERVIEWER: Okay, it October 18th, and we are just outside of Rundu in (inaudible name) and we are interviewing Mr Zig Zag, he is not going to tell us his full name. Let's start from the beginning, where were you born?

MR ZIG ZAG: I was born in Namibia, that's the 2nd of February 1958 to which I'm forty eight years now, or forty seven years. Okay from there I separated with the family of Mbangani(unsure), my grandfather, and we went to Angola before, the father went to Angola, from there the war started 1960 ... the first war, between (unknown) and these still younger (inaudible) under the (unknown), SWAPO started and then I worked from Angola to Zambia, from Zambia then we

are schooling there ...

INTERVIEWER: He studied ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, he studied in Zambia, that is Lusaka, from Lusaka went to Kitwe, Kitwe in Zambia, out there (inaudible) had a girlfriend, (inaudible) was her name, .. somewhat from school, anyway (inaudible) this is 1982, she left Zambia, she came between Angola and there, Zambia that year. Then since I loved her very much, because I decided to leave this, this (inaudible) to follow the girl ... between Cuando River, the unit that people ... ja the whole, we are taken in the bush, where I stayed ten years. Anyway, we joined(?) enough the war, throughout Africa with the (inaudible), peace in Angola until 1992, September, then by that, I went to contact the United Nations to go to the towns to change the parties, and then went to Minongwe where I stayed up to 1997, I decided to come to (inaudible), and that is my short story. Anyway I was in UNITA, by that we face the many (inaudible) there, you see no war, you see I don't mean we are staying doing whatever, we suffered a lot ...

INTERVIEWER: How old were you when you were with UNITA?

MR ZIG ZAG: Anyway, I was a soldier, I did (inaudible), I was given some poison in Fodwe (unsure) and I had a very big operation, then ... I got the plasticky intestines (inaudible sentence), I was unable to enjoy, to continue with the military. I took the course of administration, leaving fore the operation, whatever ... the people ... I went through like that. It was so, when I sent to Minongwe I was in the same administration, but then I decided to come back to my motherland ... that is my story, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay

MR ZIG ZAG: Up to now I am somebody who can work, but through those difficulties I can't work perfectly, you see I have the operation, but today I'm here, I'm (inaudible), no problem, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the time with UNITA, what years were you there with UNITA, you said it was ten years. When did you start with UNITA? You said they came and they arrested you ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, ja they arrested me. By that time they started, they used to hunt here for people, whenever they got someone they arrested you and you never go back. They used to say, here you some, or we've got enough, outdoor ... (inaudible) that is you can do all the possibility to go out from those bushes, but you can't ...

INTERVIEWER: Do you think ... Were you a prisoner there?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, ja, ja.

INTERVIEWER: Did you fight for them when you were a soldier or ...?

MR ZIG ZAG: Oh ja, we fought ... against the Government, until when I got into my difficulties which I had ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay ... And where were you based? If you needed ...?

MR ZIG ZAG: Oh, I know all the camps, in the unit.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me what did the camps look like? Were they ...?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ah, it is in Ijamba (unsure), Angola whatever, we follow the Ingela Longwood (unsure) upwards ... Anyway, the (inaudible – accent) ... the camps

there, you make a hole, you make a small house, covering with the bushes, whatever. Then, you have to go ... you have to stay very far from (inaudible name), because you had to (inaudible ...) whereby somebody, if he comes, he cannot notice you. But if he is going away, you go secretly, if he goes this way you come another way, in order to make a big pass, because those people, when you come they are going to follow you.

INTERVIEWER: You had to stay off the road? When you travelled ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Oh ja, ja ... But people they were like nomads, you go there, you're with them the one day or after you're watching the sheep, they disappear just like that ... and it was very difficult, to have food, by that time whatever, you have to kill animals, whatsoever to fill yourself with ...

INTERVIEWER: So you had to ..

MR ZIG ZAG: ...hunters, whatever ... you used to eat this honey, what can I say, honey from bees ...That was the major food which they used to eat, and some foods like that.

INTERVIEWER: Honey and raw meat ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me, tell me a typical day in the forest with UNITA, what was a typical day, what did you do in one day?

MR ZIG ZAG: That is, let me say ... UNITA at that time, I can't say, he was good or bad. Anyway, the people they used to go for military activities, and again, trainings, from there I loved to go to school, do the same sport, you do all production and people were then in, wherever you go you have to rent. After

military service you have to go to school.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so ... so you were doing your military training in the morning?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes ...

INTERVIEWER: And then you'd study in the afternoon. What were you studying? What were they teaching you?

MR ZIG ZAG: They were the ones ... the ones by UNITA they all speak Portuguese, French and English, so you had diverse teachers, and UNITA had the power to hire some different teachers from overseas, like the French, then some ... we are English people .. to Njumba.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you were learning languages. You learnt to ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, we were learning all this.

INTERVIEWER: And were you learning politics and ideology?

MR ZIG ZAG: Some of them they liked the politics, they used to ... but some that didn't take note in politics.

INTERVIEWER: Did you take part in the politics?

MR ZIG ZAG: No, no, I was not ...

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't ...

MR ZIG ZAG: I was involved in the civil administration ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay ... And how was the civil administration, I mean how do you have an administration in the bush?

MR ZIG ZAG: In as way, that is ... after receiving the food or anything, brought in from overseas, you were a newcomer, you had to share your goods to anyone

and every people, gofers (unsure) whatever, you have to give as is necessary, not only to your family but the share everybody to take equal. Then ...we used to give infantry(unsure) sometimes monthly, whenever they've got food, you give it to everybody, the food.

INTERVIEWER: So this was your job working ...

MR ZIG ZAG: That was my work.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you stay in one place, or did you have to move a lot?

MR ZIG ZAG: No you have to move ... from side to side because that time with the enemies that were following , if you stay one place, it means you'll be (inaudible words), but the Government you got to (inaudible). Those ... by that time they were using the politics, once you are captured, they are going to kill you whatever ... ai, both sides ... those people, the Government would talk the same to their people, people they were confused you see ... then you have to move, to save your life ... escape all the time ... But one thing that UNITA was well organised, wherever you go, they've got already toilets, even two days, you should have toilets ...

INTERVIEWER: So they leave the camps very quickly ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, ja, ja ...

INTERVIEWER: And were they comfortable, the camps?

MR ZIG ZAG: They were just like that, they cover (inaudible) ... to let things outside, they were putting this to people (unsure) ...

INTERVIEWER: So it was very clean and bearable?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja those people, they were ... clean. Although they were in the bush.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see the enemy while you were there in the bush? Did they pass close to you, did they fire ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja they used it usually, they used to come, to attack people, even the civilians, when it happened or so, those soldiers when they go to their friend for fighting, also they capture others, they bring, they show you, whatever ... just like that.

INTERVIEWER: So you saw some of the prisoners that were captured by UNITA? Some of the FAPLA troops that were ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ahh, they were daily ... they were capturing them daily, daily...

INTERVIEWER: They also ... UNITA also captured Cubans and Russians and ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes ...

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember those people?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes, they used to capture these Bulgarians(unsure) whatever, they used to capture them.

INTERVIEWER: And they kept them?

MR ZIG ZAG: And there they kept them, the soldiers we are taught, do not kill anyone, if they capture a white man ...so they save them, they way it was, it just come, there is somebody they caught them too, to come into the country, now we have ... unless by mistake, if you kill them yes, but if he's captured you need to bring him back, to keep him properly, to feed him properly, until the time he

needs to go back where the troops are.

INTERVIEWER: So they were kept for negotiation ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes, yes .. different business.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the guerrilla fighters?

MR ZIG ZAG: The guerrilla? The guerrilla fighters?

INTERVIEWER: What were they like?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ohh ... I fact I can remember, because that time when people had no (inaudible word), nê ... Anyway they were just like that, no good (inaudible word), but they're staying whatever, all the time, with no blankets, no shoes, anyway you just fight like that.

INTERVIEWER: Just, just like that ...

(overspeaking)

MR ZIG ZAG: You just hope that tomorrow you are going to be okay.

INTERVIEWER: Really ...

MR ZIG ZAG: We are telling all the people, you just suffer today, tomorrow you are going to be well.

INTERVIEWER: So the guerrilla fighters, they were ...

MR ZIG ZAG: (inaudible ...) very (inaudible word) in fact, they move in small groups, whatever, like that ...

INTERVIEWER: And were they well trained? Were they disciplined?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes, yes ... they had the training.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me do you remember, when the fighting was going on, and there were battles between FAPLA and UNITA, do you remember some very bad

times when there were a lot of wounded, a lot of casualties? What was the atmosphere like in the camp after the battles?

MR ZIG ZAG: Anyway they were fighting, dying whatever nê. Anyway we can't tell properly, exactly, because we see the (inaudible) nê, we are ... we had to stay a distance here, from what is going on, you can only hear but I can't promise to tell something hey ... because we didn't, we didn't participate, and you can't tell exactly what is happening.

INTERVIEWER: But there were hospitals though, you had hospitals?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, hospitals we had ... good ones in fact, they even used to make the operations, whatever. UNITA Government especially (inaudible), because we understand they used the same sum, students overseas, from they are from (inaudible) whatever, those people ...

INTERVIEWER: You had well trained people...

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: You said you had an operation there?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, a very big one ...

INTERVIEWER: At Jamba?

MR ZIG ZAG: At Jamba. But no, no, that time they took me to (inaudible name), by parachute.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so you needed to get to South Africa. To Pretoria?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, because by that time they were together with (inaudible name), where ... South African guys ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you had ... by that time you had South Africans

around Jamba ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: ... and they'd take you to the hospital in Pretoria?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What happened to you? What was the operation?

MR ZIG ZAG: This operation ... anyway, we went for work to give the food for people, then we hooked(unsure) up with these cookers, general cookers for people ...

INTERVIEWER: Cookers for (inaudible) ... ja.

MR ZIG ZAG: When we came there, I took my plate, I started eating ... But somebody has put the medicine there, this is the .. I don't know what kind of medicine, when I started eating, and I just had ... one time my stomach was falling ... (inaudible sentence ...) they were testing me, being cut inside and immediately I was taken to the hospital. When we reached the hospital, I didn't ... I couldn't see what was going on, I took nearly two weeks without hearing, without seeing people ... and last year I found that all the intestines were cut. I showed them everything, they had given me, what I thought plastic surgery(unsure), you know .. joining the remaining ones, then I was given eight years (unsure) not to eat the hard food, and I was ... those people from UNITA when I came back, they did all their best ... Anyway, they were giving me rice, polony, this light food, until ten, eight year, nine years before I started eating solid food.

INTERVIEWER: So what do you remember from the hospital in Pretoria? Did

they take care of you, while ... ?

MR ZIG ZAG: What happened, remember that side? Anyway, they treated me goodily, I was fed goodily, I used to ... anyway, I can remember some doctors who did work to me, I remember the nurses, anyway they treated me in a good way ...

INTERVIEWER: Were there other Angolans there?

MR ZIG ZAG: Well, they were next, staying with the UNITA people too.

INTERVIEWER: Were some of them wounded?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes some were ... (inaudible sentence ... bad people, you know confused people, it was just a mixture ...

INTERVIEWER: A mixture of people ... okay. What year did this happen, that you were poisoned? Which year?

MR ZIG ZAG: Oh that was in 1982 in fact ...

INTERVIEWER: 1982 ... okay ...

MR ZIG ZAG: That's why I didn't participate too much in the military. Immediately (inaudible) after two or three months, then I was ... hardly had the problems ... I was unable to join the military ...

INTERVIEWER: But after your operation in South Africa you sent back to Jamba ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Then I came ... yes I stayed in Jamba as an interpreter ...

INTERVIEWER: As an interpreter ... okay. So then, you said after ten years you left UNITA?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How did you leave UNITA?

MR ZIG ZAG: I left UNITA because one, I am a Namibian ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay ...

MR ZIG ZAG: I went there because they (inaudible) ... then I thought to come back to my country, I was suffering for a different country nê, ... by that time I didn't know how to come out, or (inaudible words) ... but when the peace came to Angola, I used the (inaudible words) ... before returning to Namibia. I knew that the way to town was in the Government, because I went there.

INTERVIEWER: So did you escape from UNITA? Or did you ...?

MR ZIG ZAG: No, no ... I took the decision, the peace was there, I have to contact the United Nations, take them to the towns, I have to explain as I am being here, then they took me to the town (inaudible name), from there they gave me documents to come back to my country.

INTERVIEWER: So what year was this that you left UNITA and came back ... to Namibia?

MR ZIG ZAG: Oh, I left UNITA then and decided to come back ...

INTERVIEWER: But which year was it?

MR ZIG ZAG: Okay, I left UNITA in '97 ...

INTERVIEWER: 1997?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR ZIG ZAG: '92 ... that when I left them to the towns. From the towns then I stayed there up to '97, when at last the peace, when it came, then I went to the

United Nation, said me, I'm here, this is not my country, I come from Namibia, I have to go back to my country, then I came back.

INTERVIEWER: Okay ... and so they gave you ... you told them your story?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ya I told them the whole story, the way I moved there the same year, then they said, you know you have the right to go back ... and then they gave me some documents, whatever I brought here, to Namibia ... to my country, they received me much, I was reaching for my grandfather ... now I'm here.

INTERVIEWER: And was your grandfather happy to see you?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, very happy ...

INTERVIEWER: Because they haven't seen you for ten years?

MR ZIG ZAG: No, no, Siswe(unsure name) was born in fact, I only saw my father, my mother, whatever ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, what did you do when you arrived back in Namibia?

MR ZIG ZAG: Okay, here now (inaudible words) because you like your documents ... ja I have struggled to get some documents as a citizen ... then, there is a promise to give me working, like up to now I didn't have work to do ... in the Government ... then I'm just doing some piece works ... but hoping that in the future, maybe I'm going to have work ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay ... So from 1997 until now you've been ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja ... just, my grandfather, he ... bless my family ... (unsure)

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Tell me, let's go back a little bit, back to Angola, back to Jamba. You were at that time, UNITA was working with the South Africans ...?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, ja, ja they were.

INTERVIEWER: Did you, do you remember which South Africans they were, were they the Buffalo soldiers?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, ja these were the Buffalo soldiers, Battalion 32, and other like that ...

INTERVIEWER: And what do you remember about them?

MR ZIG ZAG: No this people, anyway I cannot tell, they were (inaudible) you know what is a good word, what is a baddie nê, we are just (inaudible) by that time nê ... Anyway, to their side, they did the (inaudible) things, hey ... with that party, because without those people, UNITA is not supposed to be there today ... they supported the UNITA, all the things that people used to eat, the soldiers, the operation whatever, it came from them ...

INTERVIEWER: It came from South Africa?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja. Because those people served the UNITA ...

INTERVIEWER: Ja ... tell me, do you remember a battle ,... there was a time there was a battle for the town Savate?

MR ZIG ZAG: Oh no, no ... anyway I used to hear ...

INTERVIEWER: Did you hear about the battle for Savate?

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, yes, Savate whatever they called this, the battle for Savate ... Since we are a distance from them, we only used to hear the story, nê .. in the same bush ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay ... So you would always work for UNITA as a civilian, and never as a ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja since I went ... no, no I never went a fighter ... I was supposed to go for the soldiering, because that time I was young, but now the difficulty is the operation, that is the difficulty.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR ZIG ZAG: Yes, if you're not here (inaudible sentence) that time it was hot ...

INTERVIEWER: Ja, it was dangerous ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja ... I think that is my short story ... I have given you for today ... I knew UNITA anyway by mistake ...

INTERVIEWER: By accident ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja by accident ... anyway I went through, I thought with my short political way of experience, I knew the history, how my father moved from Namibia to that country, and then also I took a similar route, the Government it (inaudible) from the town's bakkie (inaudible sentence) ...

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about those ten years that you spent with UNITA? Do you feel ... angry about it, do you feel that something was taken from you?

MR ZIG ZAG: Those people in fact, nowadays they aren't (unsure) telling the truth, but anyway there was some sufferings hey ... but you know where to talk, or to tell the stories, it is better to forget because I suffered a lot ...

INTERVIEWER: Ja ... but are you angry with UNITA?

MR ZIG ZAG: No I can't be angry, that is war ... I can't be angry. Even here, if there is war, it will happen the same ... I can't, I can't ... But over (inaudible name) will forget everything ... it is war ...

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

MR ZIG ZAG: No, anyway thanks very much, to see you today. I hope I have given you a short story, although there is some mistakes in English ... we (inaudible) with many languages in speaking ...

INTERVIEWER: I know ...

MR ZIG ZAG: ... because through the war, whatever, sometimes ... those people they (inaudible) to speak English by that time, whatever they ... they knew their difficulties, why they did that, then we came to learn the Portuguese also a bit, and then in many languages, like these African languages, I've got eighteen (unsure) languages to speak, including Uzi(unsure) and Portuguese ... then, that's why I'm getting mistakes in English, whatever ...

INTERVIEWER: Don't worry about the mistakes ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

MR ZIG ZAG: (inaudible) done by Zig Zag ...

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much Mr Zig Zag.

MR ZIG ZAG: Anyway ... (inaudible) I passed the many things with Zig Zagging, I suppose that's how I reached my country ...

INTERVIEWER: Oh this is how you got your name?

MR ZIG ZAG: Ja, ja ... I went through many difficulties, I was in school in Zambia, they (inaudible) from UNITA ... (inaudible sentence) ... many corners, from there also I went to the Government, struggling to come back to my motherland, then through zig zag I came ... straight forward through these

mistakes or problems.

INTERVIEWER: And that's how you got your name ...

MR ZIG ZAG: Then I gave myself the name of zig zag ...

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

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