

Oral Histories of the Northern Mariana Islands:

Political Life and Developments (1945-1995)

Introduction

This CD contains the transcripts of oral history interviews about political life and developments in the Northern Mariana Islands during the post-war period from 1945 to 1995. The interviews are in PDF format organized alphabetically by the last name, first name, and middle initial of the interviewee. In these transcripts, 136 people provide their oral accounts or “histories” of political developments in the Northern Mariana Islands after World War II. These oral histories were collected for the most part during the five-year period from 1993 through 1997. .

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Accessing the CD for research

This CD is fully searchable using the free Adobe Reader for individual files or Adobe Acrobat for all files on the CD. The files on this CD have the same page numbers as the

printed version which can be found at the University of Hawai'i Hamilton Library's Pacific Collection, the Micronesian Area Research Center, the Micronesian Seminar, and the CNMI Archives.

A. The PDF file format

All of the files on this CD are in Portable Document Format (PDF). The information in the original transcript is converted into text and graphics in the PDF document. A PDF document retains the appearance of the original document.

The PDF format has been chosen by many archives and by the U.S. Government as an archiving standard because a PDF document can be read on almost any computer system. The format is stable, and the documents in the collection cannot be changed in any way by viewers.

B. Viewing PDF files

Anyone can view and print PDF documents using the free Adobe Reader. PDF documents can be viewed on Windows, Mac, or UNIX systems.

The names of the documents on the CD are the names of the individuals who were interviewed, last name first. The files are arranged in alphabetical order so that materials from a specific person can be accessed and read easily. If you are interested to see what materials are available for someone named Tenorio, for example, you would do this:

1. Make sure you have the Adobe Reader on your computer. You can download it without charge from the Adobe website, www.adobe.com.
2. Open the CD.
3. Scroll through the files on the CD until you come to the first file labeled Tenorio. Hold your mouse pointer over it to see the full name of the person whose transcript is in this file.
4. Click on the file to open it.
5. Once the document is on the screen, you can print it in the normal way.

C. Searching PDF files

The content of the PDF files on this CD can be searched either individually or across all the PDF files on the CD.

To search for words within one PDF document:

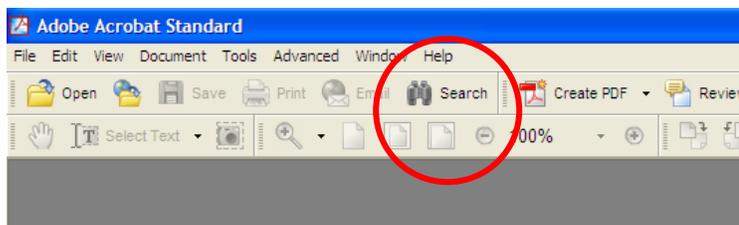
You can search for specific words in the text of an open Adobe PDF document using Adobe Acrobat or your Web browser.

1. Select or open the PDF document you want to search.
2. On the toolbar, click the Search tool, or choose Edit > Search.
3. Type the word, words, or part of a word that you want to search for.
4. Click on the radio button labeled “In the current PDF document.”
5. Use the “Whole words only” and “Case-Sensitive” settings if necessary. (See explanation below.)
6. Click on the Search button. The document will be displayed on the screen.

To search all PDF documents on a particular CD:

You can search for specific words in the entire collection of PDF documents on the CD. In order to search an entire CD, you need to have one of the versions of Adobe Acrobat on your computer. You can purchase this software from Adobe’s website, www.adobe.com.

1. Open Acrobat on your desktop (not in a Web browser window). The screen display looks like this.
2. Go to the toolbars at the top of the screen. Click the Search button or choose Edit > Search.



The Search PDF pane appears at the right side of the screen.

3. Type the word or phrase you are searching for in the top box.
4. Click on the radio button labeled “All PDF Documents in.”
5. Click on the down arrow at the right side of the location box. This displays the directory on your computer.
6. Click on the name of the CD you will be searching

7. Consider whether to use the “Whole words only” and “Case-Sensitive” options. “Whole words only” skips embedded letters. For example, if you were searching for “men,” this would skip “betterment.” It is highly recommended that you select the Match Whole Word Only option when searching indexes to significantly reduce the time taken to return results. “Case-Sensitive” skips lower case if your search term specifies upper case and visa versa. For example, if you were searching for “Peter,” this would skip “petered out.” To use these features, click on the check box so that a check mark appears.

8. Click on the Search button.

When the search is completed, the Search Pane lists in the Results Box the documents that it found. It displays each document’s unique identifying number.

Click on the number. The software will display the document. The search term will be marked with a black rectangle.

Development of the Oral Histories

We began collecting oral histories in 1993 in order to enrich the documentary record

6. Click on the oral history of the Northern Mariana Islands.
name of the CD
you will be numerous documentary materials in connection with our earlier work
searching. Marianas Political Status Commission from 1972 to 1976, counsel to the
FIRST Marianas Constitutional Convention in 1976, and counsel during the transition to
constitutional government from 1977 to 1978.

In the mid-1980s, we made requests under the federal Freedom of Information Act to the U.S. departments and agencies involved in shaping United States policy for Micronesia during the 1960s and 1970s. In most cases, the responses to our requests were inadequate, so we initiated lawsuits against the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Department of the Interior, and the National Security Council to obtain their documents. When these lawsuits were concluded in 1990, we had obtained about 80,000 pages of previously-classified documents from these agencies.

No matter how complete or detailed, however, documents alone can never provide the full story. They need to be supplemented, if possible, by the experiences and recollections of the people who observed and participated in the events that shaped the Northern Mariana Islands during this period. Such first-person accounts can provide a unique perspective and understanding with which to assess why things happened the way they did.

These oral histories were collected in face-to-face interviews with four exceptions: interviews were conducted by telephone with a former U.N. diplomat from New Zealand, a Kansas City lawyer, a Boston professor, and a former U.S. diplomat in San Francisco. All of the interviews were done by the authors except four: three U.S. officials were interviewed by a professor of history who assisted on the project, and one Marianas resident was interviewed in part by a lawyer from Saipan. All of the oral history materials are transcriptions of oral conversations except two: in one case an interviewee supplemented the interview with letters which we have included with his interview transcript, and in a second case Patience (Sue) Canham generously allowed us to publish the diaries of her late husband, Erwin Canham, during the period that he served in the Marianas.

In each case, the interview was recorded on high fidelity audio tape and transcribed by experienced secretaries. The transcriptions were then sent back to the interviewees who were invited to make any corrections or additions that they thought would be helpful to the historical record. All of the changes made by interviewees are included in the final versions of the transcripts, together with corrections made by the authors to adopt uniform spellings of Chamorro and Carolinian words and to ensure accuracy. In preparing these oral histories for publication, we made every effort to preserve the substance and tone of the interview while correcting the obvious errors in transcription. Words added by editors are in brackets in the transcripts.

In these transcripts 136 people provide us with their oral accounts or “histories” of political developments in the Northern Mariana Islands after World War II. These oral histories were collected for the most part during the five-year period from 1993 through 1997. Most of the interviews were conducted in the Northern Mariana Islands: Saipan (72), Tinian (7), and Rota (3). Interviews were conducted in Guam (4) and the Federated States of Micronesia (4). One of the persons interviewed was in Belgium and another person interviewed was in New Zealand. The remainder were interviewed in Washington D.C. (15) and in 16 States: Alaska (1), California (3), Colorado (2), Delaware (1), Florida (1), Hawaii (2), Maryland (4), Massachusetts (4), Minnesota (1), Missouri (1), New Jersey (1), New York (2), North Carolina (1), Pennsylvania (1), Virginia (2), and Washington (2).

Although the focus of the oral histories was on the political development of the Northern Marianas in the period following World War II, the interviews elicited a broad range of personal experiences and insights that illuminate the quality of life as lived during this tumultuous time, as the Northern Marianas people progressed from the devastation of war through the United Nations-established Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to their present status as American citizens living in a Commonwealth of the United States.

All of the interviewees gave graciously of their time and contributed significantly to this effort to capture the compelling story of the Northern Marianas people. They include most of the members of the Marianas Political Status Commission, who negotiated with the United States to achieve a unique political status, and most of the elected delegates to

the First Constitutional Convention, which shaped the governing structures for the new political entity.

These oral histories include all the Commonwealth's governors since January 1978, when the new constitutional government began, and numerous others who served as executives, legislators, or judges in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands or in the Commonwealth government. Many other Northern Marianas residents with very different backgrounds and experience in education, religious vocation, business, journalism, and the practice of law contributed their recollections. Some of the more elderly participants in these events were no longer available to participate in this project, but their invaluable contributions to the history of the Northern Marianas are described and acknowledged throughout these oral histories.

These volumes include the oral histories of many people from outside the Northern Mariana Islands. Several interviewees from Guam and the Federated States of Micronesia provided a very valuable perspective on the Northern Marianas efforts during the 1960s and 1970s to seek a future political status different from that preferred by the other districts within the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Historians who have written extensively about Guam, Micronesia, and the Northern Mariana Islands generously gave us the benefit of their expertise and insights.

Many officials from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the U.S. Department of the Interior spoke frankly about their efforts to shape and implement a coherent policy for Micronesia after President Kennedy decided in 1961 that a radically different policy for the Trust Territory should be undertaken. One former Member of the U.S. Congress and several former Congressional staff assistants provided the different perspective from which Congress viewed the future of the Trust Territory. Members of the U.S. delegation who participated in the political status negotiations with the Northern Marianas gave us their recollections; this included the ranking members of the delegation as well as several former staffers whose respect and affection for Micronesians stemmed from their earlier service as Peace Corps volunteers in Micronesia

Each person who contributed an oral history was advised, prior to taping, regarding the nature of our project and the prospective use of the oral histories in published materials about the Northern Marianas. None of the interviewees imposed any restrictions on the use of their oral histories; we have drawn freely on them in our two published works (that appeared in 2000 and 2001) about the Northern Mariana Islands as acknowledged in extensive footnoting to these materials.

We are familiar with the extensive literature about the preparation and use of oral histories, their strengths as well as their limitations. We are aware that all oral histories must be evaluated with care, taking into account such matters as the purpose of the oral history, the preparation for the interview, and the identity and background of the interviewer. With respect to most of the interviewees from the Northern Mariana Islands, we came to the interview as former colleagues and, in most cases, as good friends. Our interview style necessarily reflected this history and the interviews are conversational and

informal as we recalled events in which we had all participated decades earlier. We believe that a more formal method of questioning would have been much less productive under the circumstances, and the interviewees who sent along comments on their transcripts told us they were pleased with the outcome.

We encountered a different challenge in dealing with the many former U.S. officials who agreed to give us the benefit of their experiences in dealing with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and the future political status of its inhabitants. To many of these officials, the Trust Territory was far down the list of the issues they faced during their years of public service. All of them, moreover, were being asked to recall specific issues and decisions made with respect to the Trust Territory 20 or 30 years ago. We concluded under the circumstances that we should provide these interviewees in advance documents that related directly to their activities affecting the Trust Territory or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Virtually without exception, each interviewee receiving such documents took the time necessary to review the materials and brought to the conversation a much refreshed recollection of the facts that we wished to explore. As the oral histories display, a few of the interviewees focused on our penchant for obscure details, but more of them seemed to enjoy the trip down memory lane and the speculation about what might have happened if different decisions had been made on their watch.

We have provided some additional tools for the users of these oral histories. Many of the interviewees used acronyms or abbreviations in their descriptions. For the less common of these, we have endeavored to include, in brackets, at the first mention, the full name of the organization or activity to which they were referring. For the convenience of the reader, we have also included in the front of this volume a list of abbreviations that were common to many of the oral histories.

The people whose oral histories are published in these volumes have made important contributions to the Northern Mariana Islands. We are pleased to have this opportunity to make their oral histories available to a wider public.

Print Copies of the Oral Histories

The full transcriptions of these oral histories have been published in eight volumes in print format. These hard copy volumes are available at the CNMI Archives, the CNMI Museum, the Micronesian Area Research Center at the University of Guam, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai'i, and the Micronesian Seminar in Pohnpei, FSM.

About the Authors

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Other Books by the Authors about the Northern Mariana Islands

Oral Histories of the Northern Mariana Islands: Political Life and Developments (1945-1995), NMI Council for the Humanities and CNMI Division of Historic Preservation (2005) (print version)

The Secret Guam Study: How President Ford's 1975 Approval of Commonwealth Was Blocked by Federal Officials, Micronesian Area Research Center and CNMI Division of Historic Preservation (2005)

The Secret Guam Study: The Documents, Micronesian Area Research Center and CNMI Division of Historic Preservation (2005)

From the White House: Documents on the Northern Mariana Islands and Micronesia (1945-1995) Collected from the Presidential Libraries, NMI Council for the Humanities (2005) (print version)

From the White House: Documents on the Northern Mariana Islands and Micronesia (1945-1995) Collected from the Presidential Libraries, NMI Council for the Humanities (2005) (CD version)

The Northern Mariana Islands: Original Historical Documents on Development as a U.S. Commonwealth, NMI Council for the Humanities (2005)

The "Infamous" Solomon Mission Report of 1963: A Reappraisal After 40 Years, Micronesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, www.mjhss.com (2003)

An Honorable Accord: The Covenant between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States, University of Hawaii Press (2001)

National Security and Self-Determination: United States Policy in Micronesia (1961-1972), Praeger (2000)

The Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands: Constitutional Principles and Innovation in a Pacific Setting, 65 Georgetown Law Journal 1373 (August 1977)

The Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands, five bound volumes containing all of the official papers of the First Constitutional Convention, Archives of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (1977)

Legislative History of the Marianas Covenant: Congressional Approval of P.L. 94-241, two bound volumes containing the Act approving the Covenant together with all of the reports, hearings, and other legislative activity by the U.S. Congress, Archives of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (1976)

Negotiations Between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States (1972-1975), 13 bound volumes containing all of the official papers of the negotiations, Archives of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (1976).

Acknowledgments

The authors are indebted to the 136 people who agreed to be interviewed for this project. They took time to recollect events during the post World War II years from 1945 to 1995 and to help present and future generations understand the important events that shaped the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. They also, in many cases, reviewed the initial transcripts that were sent to each of the interviewees, and added information or corrections to make the transcripts a better historical record.

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Preservation Office (HPO) was established by the passage of the CNMI Historic Preservation Act of 1982 (Public Law 3-39) which ensures the identification and protection of significant archaeological, historic, and cultural resources in the Commonwealth; education of the public concerning matters relating to local history, archaeology, culture and historic preservation; and development of historic and cultural properties.

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