

## INTERVIEW OF DANIEL P. CASTRO

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Daniel P. Castro, who served as a delegate to the First Constitutional Convention, has agreed to be interviewed as part of this project. Dan, thank you very much for being available to assist us. Could you begin by telling us when you were born.
- Castro: I was born October 13, 1939 on the island of Pagan.
- Willens: Who were your mother and father?
- Castro: My mother was Maria Elena Pangelinan, and my father was Santiago Villagomez Castro.
- Willens: Were your parents both born on Pagan?
- Castro: No. My mother was born on Pagan. My father was born on Tinian.
- Willens: What influenced your father to move to Pagan?
- Castro: I think the reason that my father moved to Pagan was that during the Japanese time there were opportunities for labor up on Pagan. And I think he went to Pagan first for a visit only, and then eventually met my mother, and that's how they started to reside on Pagan.
- Willens: What kind of a Japanese operation was there on Pagan based on what you heard from your parents?
- Castro: Well, prior to World War II, I think the Japanese had already intended to build up militarily, and there were quite a lot of Japanese people up on Pagan, somewhere around 3,000.
- Willens: Were they mostly military people, so far as you know?
- Castro: Well, I think they were laborers, and then the military people came in when the war started to become closer.
- Willens: I've never been to Pagan. Was there farming on Pagan in those years?
- Castro: Yes. They planted a lot of potatoes and I think sugarcane. And they have copra.
- Willens: What kind of work did your father do there?
- Castro: He actually was a copra producer.
- Willens: Did he own land on which the copra was produced?
- Castro: No. The land was owned by the government. Everything is owned by the public.
- Willens: And the public at that time was the Japanese government?
- Castro: I think so.
- Willens: So he would help harvest it and process it. Is that what he would do?
- Castro: He would harvest it and sell the end product, what we called the dry coconut, the copra.
- Willens: Where were you educated?
- Castro: Well, actually I started my education while up on Pagan way back in I think 1952 or 1953 or 1954.

- Willens: Did your family stay on Pagan during World War II?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: Was there any bombing of Pagan?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: What did you and the family do when the island was bombed?
- Castro: Well, if my recollection serves me correctly, we were hiding in a cave during the bombing.
- Willens: Did the American forces actually land on Pagan?
- Castro: I think so. After the war they did land on Pagan to take the indigenous people and to take the Japanese who were hiding.
- Willens: That was after the peace agreement had been reached?
- Castro: I really don't know.
- Willens: Was there any fighting that actually took place on Pagan so far as you knew?
- Castro: No, I think only the bombing. When the B29s went up to Japan, they would drop leftover bombs on the way back, I think.
- Willens: I've heard that before.
- Castro: So you'll find a lot of bombs all around Pagan.
- Willens: Still to this day?
- Castro: No, I think it was covered by the ash of the volcanic eruption during 1981.
- Willens: I see. Did you and your family get taken from Pagan back to Saipan by the U.S. forces?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: Was that in 1945 or 1946?
- Castro: I think it was in that year.
- Willens: And were you then put into Camp Susupe like the Carolinians and Chamorros were from Saipan?
- Castro: I don't think so. I think that the people were already sent out from Camp Susupe. They had started living in the village.
- Willens: I see.
- Castro: That's when we came.
- Willens: Where did you family live then on Saipan?
- Castro: We lived in Chalan Kanoa close to the former Mayor's office.
- Willens: How long did you live there?
- Castro: We lived there until 1949. In 1949 we went back to the Northern Islands.
- Willens: Did your education begin when you were brought to Saipan from Pagan?
- Castro: No.
- Willens: Did your family go back to Pagan in 1949 because . . . .

- Castro: In 1949 we went back to Alamagan. Pagan was still restricted because they thought that there were still Japanese roaming the island.
- Willens: Was that true?
- Castro: There were Marines on Pagan for I don't know how long trying to make sure that there were no stragglers left on the island.
- Willens: Were there some stragglers on Pagan?
- Castro: Not that I know of.
- Willens: How did your family pick, is it Alamagan?
- Castro: Alamagan, yes.
- Willens: How did they pick that island?
- Castro: Well, it was open at the time. Actually, their real intention was to go back to Pagan, but because of the military occupation on Pagan, we sort of just stopped by on Alamagan for a year.
- Willens: Just for one year?
- Castro: Yes. And then in 1950, we moved up to Pagan.
- Willens: I read recently that the Naval Administration did move about 200 Chamorros from Saipan to the Northern Islands. Do you recall the move involving a lot of people?
- Castro: Yes. They started out in 1949. They reinhabited Anatahan, Alamagan and Agrighan. Then a year later they inhabited Pagan. So in the 1950s there were quite a lot of people in the Northern Islands. That includes Anatahan, Alamagan, Sariguan, Pagan and Agrighan.
- Willens: Did the people who went to the Northern Islands at that time come from families who had lived there before?
- Castro: Yes. They were mostly former residents of the islands.
- Willens: Were they able to recover the land that they had previously owned?
- Castro: No. They did not.
- Willens: Were they given homesteads or anything of that sort?
- Castro: No. That is actually one of my struggles, trying to get the government to give them the land they occupied for so long. Like my mother, you know. She was born there and died without any land.
- Willens: What did she actually live on then?
- Castro: Well, we lived on what we called the government land. I don't know, that's what they called the government land.
- Willens: They called it public land?
- Castro: Public land, yes.
- Willens: But they would not give you a homestead?
- Castro: If you recall, Howard, that there is a provision in the Constitution where we put "as provided by law." At that time, prior to the First Constitutional Convention, Pagan was surveyed so that the people would get their agricultural homestead, they would get their village homestead.

- Willens: And did they apply for the village or agricultural homestead? When the Interior Department came in, did they apply?
- Castro: We did, and that is the reason why they surveyed the land. They subdivided it.
- Willens: What happened?
- Castro: Well, they just sort of ignored it when the volcano erupted in 1981.
- Willens: So the problem had not been resolved by 1981?
- Castro: No. Up to the present time, it has not been resolved. Even during the Guerrero Administration I brought this up. I said you know, our parents were born up there. I was born up there. I have the right to get the land that people on Saipan are enjoying.
- Willens: What was the explanation during the TTPI times, during the 1960s, when there was some kind of a homestead program? Did it not apply to the Northern Islands?
- Castro: Well, that is the thing that I'm telling you. Earlier than 1968 two groups of surveyors came up to Pagan. And I still can recall the names of those people who came up to survey the agricultural land.
- Willens: Who were they?
- Castro: They were Elmer Gay, Ignacio Ada, Ricardo Sablan, Joe Tenorio, Antonio Guerrero.
- Willens: Were they all working on contract for the TTPI government?
- Castro: Yes, I think they were working for the government of the Trust Territory at the time.
- Willens: And did they complete the survey?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: And after the surveys were completed, did you or your family make any application of the TTPI for land?
- Castro: Well, the people were told that the land they were occupying would automatically go to them.
- Willens: Go to the people who were on the land?
- Castro: Who owned the land. Yes.
- Willens: That's what you were told?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: Were you personally told that by anyone?
- Castro: Yes, we were told that is the reason why they subdivided those areas, so those people who were occupying that land would eventually own the land.
- Willens: But even now, it's unclear. You and your family do not have title to any land in the Northern Islands?
- Castro: No, we don't.
- Willens: You mentioned that your education didn't begin until about in the early 1950s?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: And that's when you were back on Pagan?
- Castro: Yes.

- Willens: What kind of school system was in place on Pagan at that time?
- Castro: Well, it was very simple. We had an old Marine quonset hut, and the first teacher who was sent up there during my time was Francisco Lizama. He's a retired educator from the Marianas High School. He was an agricultural teacher I think from the Marianas. He retired about two years ago.
- Willens: When the Interior Department took over Rota and the rest of the TTPI from the Naval Administration, but the Navy kept Saipan and Tinian, did the Northern Islands stay with the Naval Administration, or did the Northern Islands go with the Interior Department?
- Castro: No, they stayed with Saipan.
- Willens: So the teacher in the educational program that you had was provided by the Naval Administration?
- Castro: I don't know whether that is the correct way to say it, you know, to say that it's provided by the Naval Administration or it's provided by our municipal government.
- Willens: That's fair enough. You're right. It may have been exactly that. How many grades did you go to school?
- Castro: I went for two years. I was too old to start in the first grade, so I started out maybe in the fourth or fifth grade.
- Willens: A lot of people did that. Were you able to continue your education later on?
- Castro: Yes. The late Mayor Ignacio Benavente came up, and he just happened to be my father's first cousin. So he came up one day during the field trip, and he took me from Pagan to Saipan, and that's where I attended Saipan Intermediate School, now Hopwood Junior High.
- Willens: Did you live with the Mayor's family?
- Castro: Yes, I did.
- Willens: And after the intermediate school, was there any further education?
- Castro: Yes, I went to PICS.
- Willens: You went to PICS?
- Castro: Yes, I went to Pacific Islands Central School in Truk for two years.
- Willens: We were just in Pohnpei last week and talked to some people who went there. So do you remember approximately when you went to PICS?
- Castro: I went to PICS in 1957, and I graduated in 1960 in Pohnpei.
- Willens: They had a new facility in Pohnpei?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: What do you remember about PICS when it was in Truk as compared to when it moved to Pohnpei? What is your recollection of it?
- Castro: Well, actually, the only difference was that the facility was greatly improved in Pohnpei. Also the food menu was quite a change.
- Willens: In what respect?
- Castro: Well, in PICS Truk, I think that was after the Korean War, so we ate a lot of C-ration food.

- Willens: Military C-rations?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: That was not too appetizing, was it?
- Castro: Yes. That's where I started to learn to smoke also, from the C-rations.
- Willens: Oh, they had cigarettes?
- Castro: They had a lot of cigarettes in there.
- Willens: So the diet was changed, anyway.
- Castro: Yes. When we went to Pohnpei, we ate a lot of fresh fish, and actually in general the diet was a little bit better.
- Willens: Was PICS a two-year program or a three-year program when you went?
- Castro: It was a two-year program, but when I went there, that's when it changed to a three-year program.
- Willens: So you stayed for three years?
- Castro: Yes, I did.
- Willens: Do you remember who else from the Northern Marianas was with you at PICS in those years?
- Castro: In the first year, we were I think seven. The former Lt. Governor, Pete Agulto, was my classmate in the first year.
- Willens: Pete A. Tenorio was your classmate?
- Castro: Yes. And most of them died already. In fact, I think all of them died. Jack Olomar, Brian Ariola, Joe Ayuyu, Arber Cepeda.
- Willens: That's depressing.
- Castro: I think most of my original classmates are dead, although Francisco Chung, he was third year. And Frank Sablan.
- Willens: Do you remember meeting any people from the other districts who became interested in politics?
- Castro: Oh, yes. I don't know whether Digerano Kamera who is the President's older brother was there. Luke Tuman who was a former Congress of Micronesia member. Who else? Thurston Seba who was the former Governor of Kosrae.
- Willens: What's his last name?
- Castro: Seba.
- Willens: After you completed the program at PICS, did you return to Saipan, or did you go to Pagan?
- Castro: No, I returned to Saipan. I took my vacation and then I went back to Palau to attend a nursing school.
- Willens: How long were you in Palau?
- Castro: Two years.
- Willens: Then where did you go?

- Castro: Well, after graduating from nursing school, I started working at the Dr. Torres Hospital.
- Willens: How long did you stay employed there?
- Castro: I think about four years.
- Willens: Then where did you go?
- Castro: Then I changed employment. I went from nursing to work in the Community Action Agency.
- Willens: Was it related to the Peace Corps program?
- Castro: I think so. The Community Action Agency. I worked there up until . . . .
- Willens: Excuse me a minute. The CAA. What kind of work did you do for the CAA?
- Castro: I was working as an Assistant Economic Coordinator for the Community Action Agency. That's where we established the local Saipan Credit Union. We did extension work for the farmers. That was actually mostly what we did.
- Willens: Was the CAA operation under the direction of the District Administrator?
- Castro: No. It was a separate entity. It was funded by the Office of Economic—OEO.
- Willens: Opportunity.
- Castro: Opportunity, yes.
- Willens: I see. Which was called the anti-poverty program at that time.
- Castro: Yes, I think so.
- Willens: Who were some of the other people who were involved in that work, if you remember?
- Castro: The Executive Director for the Action Agency was Herman Guerrero, the former Senator.
- Willens: Herman R.?
- Castro: Yes, Herman R. And Larry Cabrera.
- Willens: How did those men and yourself get employed by the CAA? How did you hear about it, and how did you actually get the job?
- Castro: Well, we applied for the job. As to how Herman became the Executive Director and Larry became his assistant, I don't know. I think it was also applied for and appointed by the regional office in San Francisco.
- Willens: Was there a main office of the CAA for the entire Trust Territory?
- Castro: Yes, I think so.
- Willens: Was that based here in Saipan?
- Castro: I am not sure.
- Willens: But you worked for the Marianas office?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: How many years did you stay with the CAA?
- Castro: I think three years.
- Willens: You think it began in about 1969?

Castro: Yes.

Willens: To 1972?

Castro: Yes.

Willens: Then what did you do in 1972 or thereabouts?

Castro: In 1972 I went back to Pagan. I was appointed as District Representative by Frank Ada, so I went back to Pagan as District Representative of Mr. Ada.

Willens: Were you married by that time?

Castro: Yes, I was.

Willens: Any children?

Castro: Yes, I did have.

Willens: Tell me your wife's name.

Castro: Ruth A. Castro.

Willens: What's her middle . . .

Castro: Albert.

Willens: Albert?

Castro: Yes. Ruth Albert.

Willens: And how many children do you now have?

Castro: Do I have now?

Willens: Yes.

Castro: From my first marriage I have six, and from my second marriage another six.

Willens: I see. How long did you stay on Pagan as District Representative?

Castro: Let's see. I think two years.

Willens: And did you stay on Pagan at that point, or did you return to Saipan?

Castro: I stayed on Pagan.

Willens: And you were on Pagan when the Constitutional Convention began?

Castro: No. I was here when the Constitutional Convention began, because I came back from Pagan in 1974. I think in 1975 I was working for vocational rehab here. I was the first coordinator.

Willens: During the 1960s when you worked first as a nurse and then for CAA, did you become politically affiliated with one of the parties in the Northern Marianas?

Castro: I was affiliated with the party through my father's affiliation.

Willens: What was his affiliation?

Castro: My father was Popular Party, then eventually turned into the Democratic Party. So we just followed suit without any knowledge as to why we were following.

Willens: So you personally did not become active in running for office?

Castro: No, I never thought of politics as a field of choice.

- Willens: When did you first become aware during the 1960s or the early 1970s that the future political status of the Northern Marianas was something that had to be decided upon?
- Castro: Actually, I never followed the history of the negotiation of the Covenant. I never did follow those. I just listened to people talking, but actually I was not interested in the matter. Personally, to be honest with you, at that time when the discussion was a little bit hot, if I were to choose at that particular time, I would have chosen independence for the Marianas instead of . . . .
- Willens: Instead of commonwealth status.
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: How did you feel about the separation of the Marianas from the rest of the Trust Territory? Did you think it would have been better if the entire six districts could have stayed together?
- Castro: No. I don't think so. I support the separation.
- Willens: Why is that?
- Castro: One thing through my experience in traveling into the outer districts—Truk, Ponape, Yap, Palau—I found that, for example in Truk the land mass is too small for the population.
- Willens: It was the most populated of all the districts.
- Castro: Yes. A very populated district. You look at the living standards at that time—it was, what do you call it, well, I just didn't want to live like that.
- Willens: Did you think that if you were affiliated with Truk, that your standard of living would be less advanced than it would be than if you were by yourself?
- Castro: No. I don't think that is the reason. But if we affiliated with them, we would be ruled maybe by the Trukese.
- Willens: Because there were more people there?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: How did you feel about the differences in language and culture? Did that suggest a problem to you?
- Castro: No, personally not, because I could learn. When I was in Truk, I spoke Trukese.
- Willens: Well, by going to PICS and by spending two years in Palau, you really had seen all of the Trust Territory with the possible exception of the Marshalls?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: Have you ever been to the Marshalls?
- Castro: No. I just stopped by maybe at Kwajalein for a short time.
- Willens: So your principal concern was one of numbers, in terms of the number of people in the other districts and the fact that that might mean the Northern Marianas would be subordinated or ruled by these other districts? Am I getting that right?
- Castro: I don't know whether that's what we should call it. I just don't know. I cannot answer your question.

- Willens: How did you feel about the desire of a lot of people here for U.S. citizenship? Did U.S. citizenship make any difference to you? I gather from what you say that you would have preferred independence, which would have meant your own citizenship.
- Castro: If I were to choose at that time when the negotiations were going on, and independence was brought up. Also, with my background in the cooperative movement, because I went to PI for that socialist movement in the Philippines.
- Willens: Explain that to me. You went to the Philippines for what reason?
- Castro: When I was working at the CAA, I was sent to PI to Mindanao and there was a socialist movement in Mindanao. The program was the Southern Philippine Cooperative Center, SPCC. I went there for three months, and we learned about—what do you call this?
- Willens: You learned about cooperatives?
- Castro: Cooperatives..
- Willens: Was there a lot of political indoctrination in the program?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: Would it be fair to say that you came away feeling somewhat more radical, but that may be too strong.
- Castro: Maybe you could say that.
- Willens: But somewhat more direct in terms of taking control over your own future?
- Castro: Yes, maybe you could say that.
- Willens: That's interesting. Well, you were on Pagan during 1972 to 1974, and that's when most of the negotiations for the Covenant were taking place.
- Castro: But prior to going to Pagan I was working for CAA, and that's the time when I went to PI, when I was working for the Community Action Agency.
- Willens: I see. Did any of the people associated with CAA become politically active? I mean Herman R. Guerrero became politically active during those years, as I recall, didn't he?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: When the Covenant was actually signed and put before the people for a plebiscite, were you on Saipan at the time or were you back in Pagan at the time? This would have been in 1975. You might have been back in Saipan for the vocational rehabilitation job.
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: Did you take any active position, either for the Covenant or against the Covenant?
- Castro: No. I think I voted for the Covenant. But I did not really participate in arguing for it. I just sort of followed suit, you know.
- Willens: Did the Northern Islands have any sort of political structure at the time? Was there a Mayor of the Northern Islands during these years?
- Castro: No. We had commissioners who were appointed by the Mayor of Saipan.
- Willens: And would there then be a commissioner on each of the Northern Islands that were settled?
- Castro: Yes.

- Willens: During those years in the early 1970s, were more people going to the Northern Islands to farm and settle there, or were people beginning to move back to Saipan?
- Castro: In the 1970s?
- Willens: In the 1970s generally.
- Castro: In the early 1970s there were a lot of people on the Northern Islands. I think copra was still harvested at that time, and people moved up there because Saipan in those days didn't have a lot of jobs. So the people went up there to make copra as a cash economy, and that is the reason why they went up there. But when the copra started going downhill, the people started moving back to Saipan.
- Willens: When would that have been?
- Castro: Gee, I really . . . .
- Willens: The late 1970s or the early 1980s?
- Castro: No, I think in the late 1970s.
- Willens: You mentioned the volcano in Pagan was 1981.
- Castro: Yes. That was May 15, 1981 when it erupted.
- Willens: When you were working in the 1960s and the early 1970s, did you have any general impression of the Trust Territory government?
- Castro: No.
- Willens: Did you have any dealings with the Trust Territory government in the various jobs that you held?
- Castro: Yes. Like for example, the vocational rehab program was still under the Trust Territory government.
- Willens: It was at the time?
- Castro: Yes. It was centralized up at Capitol Hill, and it was run through the Health Services program.
- Willens: Did they give you a lot of discretion here at the district level to run the program the way you wanted to, or was it pretty much centralized?
- Castro: No, it was pretty much centralized up there.
- Willens: Were you paid by the Trust Territory government in that job?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: Was there still the differential wage scales for Micronesians and mainlanders in effect at the time?
- Castro: Yes, I think so.
- Willens: Did you ever complain about that?
- Castro: No. I never did complain. I always thought that what the Administration was doing was the right thing. I never questioned my rights against their rights. I thought that's how it should be. Until recently when we started learning, for example, that the federal government wants to impose a minimum wage, whereas way back they never thought of that. So I don't know. I thought that what they were doing was right. I never questioned it.

Willens: Did you stay with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program until the Commonwealth government took over?

Castro: Yes.

Willens: You mentioned that you did have a job in the first Commonwealth government. What was that job in Governor Camacho's Administration?

Castro: I was the first Mayor for the Northern Islands.

Willens: That was an elected position.

Castro: Yes.

Willens: Under the new Constitution.

Castro: Yes.

Willens: And how long did you serve?

Castro: I served the first term. Then I served a second year, but I resigned in the middle of the second term.

Willens: So was a term a four year term and you served for six years?

Castro: Seven years. From 1978 to 1983.

Willens: To 1983. Why did you resign?

Castro: I became frustrated with the way politics did things.

Willens: What particularly frustrated you?

Castro: The first term had a Democratic Governor. In the second term, Teno [Pedro P. Tenorio] became the Governor. So besides politics, the volcano erupted in 1981. So I kind of became frustrated, because I had a dream to establish Pagan as the center of the Northern Islands. When the volcano erupted, they evacuated all the residents back to Saipan. When no one wanted to send us back, I thought well, there's no use to continue. That's when I decided I had to go private instead of continuing government employment.

Willens: When did people go back to Pagan, if they did? Has Pagan been resettled?

Castro: No.

Willens: Since 1981.

Castro: Yes.

Willens: And there have been periodic concerns about further eruptions, is that right?

Castro: Well, that is a concern, Howard. You know oftentimes when I argue with these people, I tell them the sea is far worse than the volcano up on Pagan.

Willens: The sea?

Castro: Yes. You have a lot of people dying out there, but we never stopped, we never closed, you know.

Willens: You never stopped them from going fishing or whatever?

Castro: Going fishing or whatever, yes. You know, why should we stop those people who have been there, like myself, I want to go back there. I invested a lot of my time and money up there, and it's hard just to let it go. When the volcanologists came here . . .

Willens: The who came?

- Castro: The volcanologists.
- Willens: Oh. People who specialize in volcanos.
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: What did they say?
- Castro: I talked to them whether Pagan could be resettled. They said: "Well, that's an administrative decision. We cannot tell you that you cannot or you can. Your government should make a decision on that." When you see what's going on, Mr. Willens, right now, you know it's not right. There are about ten Filipinos up there.
- Willens: Where?
- Castro: On Pagan.
- Willens: What are they doing?
- Castro: They are trying to mine the gravel.
- Willens: The gravel?
- Castro: Yes. The volcano gravel.
- Willens: Is that a marketable commodity?
- Castro: I don't know. But I think J&G is ....
- Willens: Is doing that?
- Castro: Is doing that.
- Willens: That's a local concern, isn't it?
- Castro: If we cannot allow the former residents to go there, I don't think they should allow anyone there, even for economic reasons.
- Willens: During the Camacho Administration, were there issues of development that you wanted to have addressed by the Commonwealth government?
- Castro: Well, one of the issues that we discussed early is the homestead program. If the volcano had not erupted, we should have title to those lands that were supposed to be issued.
- Willens: Did you have support for that in the Democratic Party and in the Republican Party for homesteads up in the Northern Islands? Did Governor Camacho and the Legislature support the homestead program?
- Castro: Yes.
- Willens: And how about Governor Pete P. Tenorio? Was he also in support of the program?
- Castro: I don't know. I cannot speak for the Governor. If I'm not mistaken, in the First Constitutional Convention there is a provision where I think it should be provided by law that where people prior to 1960-something, you know, who occupied land for 15 consecutive years should get that land.
- Willens: When you retired in 1983, did you take any other position?
- Castro: No. Since 1983 to the present, I am just a self-employed person. I work on my farm. I plant and I raise a little stuff.
- Willens: Where are you living?
- Castro: Here.

- Willens: You've been in Saipan ever since?
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: Tell us how you decided to run for the Constitutional Convention.
- Castro: Well, actually I did not intend to run. I was asked to. I didn't have any background in that field. I didn't feel, what do you call it?
- Siemer: Comfortable?
- Castro: Comfortable, yes.
- Siemer: Who asked you to run?
- Castro: The Democratic Party.
- Siemer: Were you living here in Saipan at the time?
- Castro: Yes. I lived here because of my job. I was working for the Vocational Rehab at the time.
- Siemer: So you decided to run?
- Castro: Well, I was asked, and I thought I would try.
- Siemer: What do you remember about the campaign? Did you go out with others and speak in the villages, or how did you campaign?
- Castro: No, I did not. I don't even remember that they went out and campaigned. But personally I didn't.
- Siemer: When the Constitutional Convention got together, there was a very important question about how to treat the municipalities. What did you try to do then for the Northern Islands?
- Castro: If you recall, I was not a member of those committees. I was with you on Natural Resources. Actually, I left it pretty much on what the Local Government Committee did.
- Siemer: Remember they had a cut-off if the Northern Islands got to 1,000 population. Did you think that was practical?
- Castro: Actually, it was based on the population at that time with Tinian and Rota. But in 1976, was it 1976, 1977, Tinian did not have 1,000 plus one population. So actually, they just came up with that figure and made it harder for the Northern Islands to be represented by three Senators and a legislator.
- Siemer: Right. Tinian only had about 700.
- Castro: 700. Yes. But at that time, I thought it would be possible for the Northern Islands in a short period of time to become the fourth Senatorial district.
- Siemer: To get up to 1,000 people?
- Castro: Yes. If only there was an economic development on the Northern Islands, all people who were politically agreed, they could do it. They could just send up there 1,000 people to stay there for 45 days, you know. Then after the election, they could just bring them back.
- Siemer: That's always been a problem. It's still a problem in Tinian. You could import several hundred voters in Tinian and have a big impact.

- Castro: Yes, that's right. They just have to stay 45 days, and they're eligible to vote. So I don't know. There was a move I think in the Third Constitutional Convention to abolish the local government up in the Northern Islands. It's good that they defeated that. But one day I'm pretty sure people will migrate to the Northern Islands. It depends actually on the development. But Saipan is not that big. Tinian is not that big. Rota is not that big. And eventually our population will increase to the extent where we have to migrate to other places. Where are we going to migrate to? We have to migrate to the Northern Islands, because those are bigger.
- Siemer: Did you think back then that the homesteading program would be extended to the Northern Islands?
- Castro: It was supposed to be extended.
- Siemer: What happened to that?
- Castro: Well, I was talking to Mr. Willens earlier regarding that. It was way back in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. They surveyed Pagan. Well, that's the only place that was surveyed actually in the Northern Islands for the homestead program, both agricultural and village.
- Willens: But in fact they were never given. I mean we talked about that briefly, and it's been a source of constant frustration and political difficulty, because for reasons that are unclear, the Commonwealth government has never recognized that people who've been there for generations have some right to the land on which they lived and farmed.
- Castro: When Governor Guerrero was the Governor, I told him: "You give us the land that we occupied for so long. Even if it's turned into rocks, let us have what we have. And if development comes, let us deal with the developers."
- Siemer: Back at the Constitutional Convention and thinking about the Northern Islands in the future, were you satisfied with the homestead program that was set up under the Constitution? Would that have worked in the Northern Islands okay?
- Castro: Would you just sort of remind me, because I was talking earlier regarding the Webber Act.
- Siemer: There was a lot of debate in the Constitutional Convention about how long you would have to hold a homestead before you could sell it, whether you would get fee simple title, and whether you could mortgage it. And I remember you always commented during those discussions, and you were very concerned about how that would impact the Northern Islands. What I wondered is whether you were satisfied as it finally came out that the program would be okay in the Northern Islands if it were applied up there.
- Castro: Well actually the present systems, you know, I think if I were to rewrite that particular section in the Constitution, I would have changed it completely.
- Siemer: What would you do?
- Castro: I would have put a very rigid provision where village homesteads would not be mortgaged and would not be sold. That's for life. And later, you know, there were developments that we didn't foresee in that particular day.
- Siemer: Back then in 1976?
- Castro: But you see now, laws are being bent, and everything is being bent.
- Siemer: Many of the homesteads have been leased to somebody else?

- Castro: Sold. Even there is a provision in the Homestead Act that you cannot sell it until after ten years, but I bet you a lot of these homesteads were already sold.
- Siemer: They do it anyway?
- Castro: Yes. And a lot of our people who have only one lot, they sell and now they are squatting on the government land. As I said, if we were to rewrite it, I would impose maybe even a penalty on people who buy it and people who sell it.
- Siemer: You wouldn't let them sell at all?
- Castro: Not sell at all, especially to those who only have one lot. Whereas for people who have a lot of land, because we have to also think of the economy, maybe they could negotiate, but the Governor should make a study on like, for example, this family, how many lands they have, and if they have only one land . . . .
- Siemer: If they have only one lot, they should not be allowed to sell it.
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: Did that happen a fair amount, that people who had only one lot sold it and then wound up with nothing?
- Castro: Yes. There are a lot of people here. A lot of our local people are staying on their own land. Foreigners build an apartment and now the local people are renting a room there on that particular lot that they previously owned.
- Siemer: Back in 1976, did you give any thought to making the Northern Islands a part of Tinian instead of a part of Saipan as far as the political structure was concerned?
- Castro: I always dreamed that the Northern Islands would be a separate district. I didn't want it to be under Saipan or the other two.
- Siemer: Do you remember when Benjamin Manglona came in with a proposal for three Lt. Governors? He wanted to have a Lt. Governor on Tinian, a Lt. Governor on Rota, a Lt. Governor on Saipan.
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: What did you think of that proposal?
- Castro: To be honest with you, I never really gave it any thought. I didn't really care.
- Siemer: How about the question with respect to the preserves that people wanted to set up in the Northern Islands? Do you remember the debate about what island it should be?
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: It finally went up as Maug.
- Castro: Maug, Guguan, Sariguan—there were three islands.
- Siemer: Were you in favor of that?
- Castro: Yes, actually, I'm in favor of the preservation of Guguan. For one thing, there is nothing on Guguan. There are a lot of birds.
- Siemer: Guguan is not inhabited?
- Castro: No.
- Siemer: What kind of terrain is it?

- Castro: It's mostly volcanic gravel. There are a few areas where there are trees, but half of the island is black. And Maug, it's uninhabited too, actually. It's three islands with a deep lagoon.
- Siemer: In the middle?
- Castro: It's an old volcano.
- Siemer: Oh, it's a cone from a volcano?
- Castro: Yes, so that there are three islands -- one, two and three. And there's a good harbor actually during a typhoon.
- Siemer: Did the Japanese ever do anything with Maug?
- Castro: Well, they put sort of a communication . . . .
- Siemer: Oh, a communication station?
- Castro: A station up there to tell the other islands that there are ships coming in. You know, it's a military installation. Other than that, nothing.
- Siemer: So you thought that the proposal that Manny Tenorio made for preserving those islands would work all right?
- Castro: Yes. If you go to Guguan, you will hear nothing but birds. There's a lot of coconut crabs. We have some endangered species. Yes, it's good to preserve those for that purpose.
- Willens: What kind of endangered species is it?
- Castro: It's a bird that's about that high and lays large eggs, about that size.
- Willens: The eggs are about five or six inches in length?
- Castro: It's bigger than duck eggs, much bigger. And it's very tasty. It's all yolk.
- Willens: That would be bad for cholesterol.
- Castro: I know. But we never thought of that, you know.
- Siemer: Do you remember the debate with Benjamin Manglona and the Rota Delegation about how many representatives they should have in the House?
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: What was your view about that?
- Castro: Actually, our Legislature is very weak. If I were to renegotiate this, I would have supported Justice Ramon Villagomez' idea. It's too big, and it keeps increasing. You know one thing, I don't know whether we made a mistake or what, but we should have kept it at the beginning without any increase. And also we should have decided on a unicameral instead of a bicameral. It's too big, too complicated, and the other islands [Rota and Tinian] are just too powerful. If they want to control everything, they could.
- Siemer: They have a lot of power.
- Castro: A lot of power. And this district thing also on Saipan is bad. It should be island-wide instead of by districts. Because what we thought of earlier is, you know, we could bring our family to concentrate in a particular area just to win.
- Siemer: So you'd have more votes in that particular district.
- Castro: Yes. If you are interested, you could do that, especially if you have money.
- Siemer: Back in those days, in 1976, were you in favor of island-wide?

- Castro: You know, many of these things, I never thought of them at that time. But now, as I said, if we were to start over again, I would go island-wide instead of district.
- Siemer: What district are the Northern Islands in?
- Castro: It's with Garapan. You know, that was, what do you call it?
- Willens: Gerrymandered?
- Castro: No, it's sort of, the politicians sort of make it so that the Northern Islands would have no chance. What do you call that?
- Siemer: Well, they carved up the districts....
- Castro: Yes, right.
- Siemer: ... so that the Northern Islands were put with Garapan?
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: Did you argue with them about that back in 1976?
- Castro: Well, I didn't like it. I told some of our delegates if we were to merge the Northern Islands, it should be San Roque and Tanapag instead of Garapan.
- Siemer: Why did they want to put it in Garapan?
- Castro: I don't know. I think they had some reason behind it.
- Siemer: There was a committee, the special committee that Oly Borja chaired that spent quite a long time dealing with the district question. It was not until the very end of the Convention when they finally came out with their plan. Did you ever have a chance to talk to Oly about how the Northern Islands should be treated?
- Castro: No, I never did.
- Siemer: When the Convention started to debate about public land, the Northern Islands had a large stake in that because there was a lot of public land.
- Castro: It was the entire Northern Islands, yes.
- Siemer: What did you think about the way that the public lands was dealt with by the Convention—setting up the corporation and trying to deal with it that way?
- Castro: You know, at that time back then, we thought that what we had decided was good. But taking those things in 1976 to the present, look at the MPLC, what they did. Those are the things that I said if we were to re-decide it, you know, we would make it more rigid.
- Siemer: More rigid and with tougher rules.
- Castro: Tougher rules, yes. And we put in people who are honest, you know. Look what happened since 1976 to the present day.
- Siemer: It was hard back then to foresee what would happen over 20 years.
- Castro: That's right, because that development didn't start until the 1980s. You had almost 15 years, you know, and when the development started coming in, people started getting greedy, dishonest.
- Siemer: The development came very fast. You didn't have a chance to work up very gradually.
- Castro: Yes, that's right. It was a sudden change.

- Siemer: How about the proposal for an Office of Carolinian Affairs? What did you think of that back then?
- Castro: I disagreed with that then and up to now.
- Siemer: Why is that?
- Castro: We should not have those kinds of things in this small place. Carolinians Affairs—we should also have a Northern Islands Affairs and, you know, whatever group is here should have an Affairs Office. It's a bad idea, I think.
- Siemer: You made a good effort to persuade your colleagues back then, but they seemed to be determined to do it.
- Castro: Well, there were very strong delegates from the Carolinian people. And because of politics, the other group just had to follow suit.
- Willens: Are there any Carolinians who have settled in the Northern Islands?
- Castro: Yes. Actually, four islands are inhabited in the Northern Islands. Two are inhabited by Carolinians; two are inhabited by Chamorros.
- Siemer: Which is which?
- Castro: The closest one and the farthest one. Anatahan is Carolinian and Agrighan. Alamagan and Pagan are Chamorro. But then eventually some of the Carolinians migrated to Pagan and lived on Pagan. So Pagan became a two-race island.
- Siemer: Were there other things back then in 1976 that you were particularly worried about in the Constitutional Convention as far as the Northern Islands were concerned?
- Castro: Deanne, I could not remember. The only concern that I had at the time was actually when we started discussing about the land issue. I kind of had a mixed feeling regarding the economy and the land itself on our people.
- Siemer: Back then did you agree with the restrictions on land alienation, not being able to sell to outsiders?
- Castro: I actually disagreed with that. I disagreed because of the economic reason. I thought that we could make, like I said earlier, a provision where people with one lot would be restricted from selling or leasing.
- Siemer: But everybody else would be able to sell?
- Castro: Well, maybe lease, not sell. There were other concerns about this land alienation program that I begin to question, regarding adopted kids who are not of Northern Marianas descent.
- Siemer: And what about that?
- Castro: Are they entitled to own land?
- Siemer: Under the original Constitution, if they're adopted, they are.
- Castro: What about the 25% blood?
- Siemer: Not for adopted kids.
- Castro: They don't have the blood.
- Siemer: Right.
- Castro: How could they become eligible to own land?

- Siemer: I wondered about why the Convention made that exception back then, because adopted children could be anybody—could be Japanese, could be Filipino. They have no citizenship requirement and no blood requirement at all.
- Castro: Isn't there a technicality in that? The Constitution says it's of Northern Marianas descent.
- Siemer: But then it added adopted children of people...
- Castro: Oh! Is that added?
- Siemer: ...of Northern Marianas descent.
- Castro: Is that added?
- Siemer: Yes.
- Castro: What about the stipulation of 25%?
- Siemer: Back then, people decided to allow adopted children to come in regardless of their prior status. There was actually I think not too much discussion about that.
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: You would do that differently now?
- Castro: I would not allow adopted children who are not of Northern Marianas descent to own.
- Siemer: That was something that the Third Constitutional Convention tried to do, to get rid of that loophole.
- Castro: I think it should.
- Siemer: Did people from the Northern Islands come to you back then during the Constitutional Convention trying to get you to do particular things for them?
- Castro: No.
- Siemer: No? Everybody just waited to see what it was going to be?
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: How did your constituents from the Northern Islands feel after it was done? Did they think it was a good product?
- Castro: To be honest with you, we never really cared at that time. Our people were used to thinking that what the leaders were doing was for the common good, so they didn't really question it. Until recently, when the new government was established and things began to change, then people started to question what we were doing.
- Siemer: How about you back in those days? At the end of the Constitution, were you satisfied with what had been done?
- Castro: I would say I was.
- Siemer: Given what you knew back then and what information was available back then?
- Castro: I would say I am.
- Siemer: Did you work on the public education program at all?
- Castro: No.
- Siemer: What did you think about the public education program?

- Castro: It was good. I think these kinds of things like the Constitution and all those new laws I think should have public input or a public hearing to get the people's comments.
- Siemer: Back then did you think people would actually comment at a public hearing?
- Castro: I don't think so.
- Siemer: It was hard to get people to stand up and say anything, wasn't it?
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: But they would come to you in private and tell you what they thought?
- Castro: At that time, I doubt it. Very few people were aware of what a Constitution was. I told Mr. Willens earlier that I wasn't interested actually. I was sort of brought in. I hate to do things which I'm not comfortable doing, and to be honest with you, I'm not comfortable with these issues.
- Siemer: You were very good once you got there, though.
- Castro: Well, it's a learning experience. I learned as I went through.
- Siemer: You got the Northern Islands put in every place that it could be.
- Castro: But you know, if we were to rewrite everything, it would be different. It would have been different.
- Willens: That pretty much concludes our questions, Dan. We appreciate your taking the time. It's been very helpful, and we wanted very much to talk to someone about the Northern Islands because, as you know, too often that part of the Northern Marianas gets lost. We wanted to make sure that we understand the issues and can treat them fairly in our book.
- Siemer: Are you still optimistic about development in the Northern Islands now?
- Castro: Yes.
- Siemer: Good.
- Willens: Thank you very much.