

INTERVIEW OF JOHN C. CRAFT

by Deanne C. Siemer and Howard P. Willens

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- Siemer: We are talking by telephone with John C. Craft, who is in his office in Kansas City, Missouri, where he is the chairman of Craft, Fridkin and Rhyne, a prominent law firm in Kansas City. Mr. Craft, could you tell us how you became involved with Erwin Canham's efforts in the Marianas?
- Craft: In that time period, I was practicing law in Kansas City. There was (as I understood it) some concern in the Marianas Islands that a lawsuit would be filed having to do with the plebiscite. It was determined by the Department of the Interior that all of the lawyers who worked for the United States government would necessarily have a conflict, and as a consequence they sought to find a non-U.S. government lawyer to participate. They contacted the White House. It happened that the person at the White House who was the Personnel Officer and I were good friends. He was a Missourian. So he called me and said, "Are you in a position to pick up and go to an island in the North Pacific within the week?" And it happened that I was just coming to the end of a project, so I agreed to do that. Two or three days later I was in Washington, was briefed by the person at the Department of the Interior who was involved with it, and then within a week was on an airplane to Saipan.
- Siemer: Who was the person at the White House with whom you were familiar?
- Craft: Alan Woods, who was an extraordinary man. He had an untimely death of cancer several years ago at an early age. He became the Deputy Trade Negotiator under the Reagan Administration and was the head of AID at the time of his death.
- Siemer: How had you known him in Missouri?
- Craft: He and Senator Bond were both raised in a small town, in Mexico, Missouri. When Senator Bond began his political career, Alan and I became acquainted that way. Alan was very active in Republican politics. He was the third person in the 1968 Nixon presidential campaign, and later became the spokesman for the Department of Defense, and had a very active (and I believe successful) career in Washington. He was a very able man.
- Siemer: So he was in Washington throughout the Reagan Administration?
- Craft: Yes, I think so. He was at Defense when Rumsfeld was the head of the Department of Defense. I don't recall his exact title, but it's that person who makes all the public announcements on behalf of the Defense Department. Then he was the Deputy Trade Negotiator and then head of AID.
- Siemer: Do you know who at the Department of the Interior called Mr. Wood?
- Craft: It happened that there was a Kansan who either was the Acting Secretary of the Interior or the Solicitor General for the Department.
- Siemer: At Interior?
- Craft: Yes. And then there were a couple of functionaries, one of whom also was from Kansas. I remember that of course because when I appeared from Missouri, there was some amusement and wonder, particularly in Saipan, why the lawyer who showed up was from the middle of the country.

- Siemer: Was it Stanley Carpenter? Maybe Hathaway or Kleppe or Frizzell?
- Craft: Frizzell.
- Siemer: Frizzell, the Acting Secretary, was from Kansas?
- Craft: Frizzell was. I met him casually. But the guy who had the operating responsibility—I don't recall his exact title although he was sort of the colonial administrator.
- Siemer: There was an Interior official named Rice at this time, and another named Zeder.
- Craft: I talked with him, I think.
- Siemer: He had just come in as Director of the Office of Territories, which is the functional equivalent of colonial administrator.
- Craft: There was a guy under him who was the person who gave me specific instructions.
- Siemer: Do you remember Fred Radewagen perhaps?
- Craft: No.
- Siemer: Had you done any voter registration cases at the time?
- Craft: Well, I'd been active in politics. They jokingly said that if you can negotiate the politics of Jackson County, Missouri and handle election problems there, you can deal with the Mariana Islands.
- Siemer: Had you done that kind of work for the Republican Party?
- Craft: Not as such, but exactly at that time I was the lawyer for the Police Department, in the days interestingly enough when Clarence Kelly, who then became the FBI Director, was the Chief of Police. And I'd done some work on the issue of residency. I had been in the Attorney General's Office in the State of Missouri, and the U.S. Attorney's Office. So I'd had a fair amount of governmental experience at virtually all levels. But in terms of my practice as an Assistant Attorney General, the Legal Aid and Defender Service had just come into existence at the time that I was in Jefferson City, and I was assigned to represent Missouri in all the cases involving constitutional challenges in three judge courts. What prompted my selection or what prompted the need for a lawyer in Saipan were some comments by a lawyer with the Micronesian Legal Services in Saipan indicating that he would challenge some parts of the plebiscite procedure. So I think that probably in terms of professional credentials, that probably was as important as anything.
- Siemer: Let me just go back to some biographical information so we can include that in the record. Can you tell us where you were born?
- Craft: I was born in Denver, Colorado.
- Siemer: When?
- Craft: November 28, 1938.
- Siemer: Where were you educated?
- Craft: My family then moved to Nebraska, and I grew up in North Platte, Nebraska. I went to college at the University of Nebraska as an undergraduate and received my law degree at Northwestern University in Chicago.
- Siemer: Where were you employed after you got your law degree?
- Craft: I came to Kansas City with a private law firm and was there for four years and then was recruited to go to the Attorney General's Office of the State of Missouri.

- Siemer: How long did you stay there?
- Craft: Exactly two years.
- Siemer: Then what?
- Craft: I returned to Kansas City to be in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Missouri.
- Siemer: Who was the U.S. Attorney at the time?
- Craft: I don't recall his name. But I was there about eight months. Then I set up a private law office and was in an office-sharing relationship for about a year or so and then started a firm called Park, Craft, and Morgens, which is where I was when I was recruited for this assignment.
- Siemer: How big was that law firm?
- Craft: At that time there were three, and eventually I hired another man to help me with my practice.
- Siemer: When did you set that firm up?
- Craft: In 1973.
- Siemer: And that's where you were when you got the call from your colleague in the White House?
- Craft: Yes. The Police Department in Kansas City, Missouri is organized in an unusual way. Well, Baltimore is really one of the few cities like it, where there is an independent governor-appointed Police Board that supervises (in the same sense that a board of directors supervises) the Police Department. They choose the Chief, and the Chief is intended to run it. That Board hires a lawyer who is their only employee, and I was hired to perform that function. It happened in those days there had been a fairly significant investigation, and I had been responsible for that. The day that I got the call from Alan was the day when I was getting the signatures on the final report from the members of the Board. So it was just an absolute coincidence that one of my principal activities had just come to a conclusion and I was truly ready for a change.
- Siemer: What was the general nature of the practice at Park, Craft, and Morgens?
- Craft: Well, in those days I did a lot of bank regulation. In the Attorney General's Office I represented the financial agencies, so I was active in bank regulation. In those days in Missouri, there was a board that provided bank charters and branches, and there was a fairly Byzantine set of regulations as to how that all was to be handled, and I did a fair amount of that kind of business. I had offices in their bank and did their business and then did a fairly general practice, along with the Police Department.
- Siemer: Just take us up to the present with respect to your practice. Did Park, Craft, and Morgens then evolve into the firm where you are now?
- Craft: No. It didn't. That group essentially disbanded. Warren Morgens returned to Washington, D.C., and John Park returned to the firm that he had founded some years before that, and I became of counsel with the firm called Rich, Grenoff, and Levy. I was there until 1980, at which time I rejoined the firm that I originally came to Kansas City with. That is now called Lathrop & Gage. It's had a number of iterations.
- Siemer: How long were you there?
- Craft: Until 1987, when I formed this firm.

- Siemer: When you were called about the Marianas issue, were you familiar at all with the Marianas and what had gone on there?
- Craft: No.
- Siemer: Did you do anything to try to prepare yourself with respect to background information?
- Craft: I got a fair amount of materials from Alan, and my impression was there would be a question about residency, and so I got a conflicts of law book and did the background reading on residency and citizenship and voter credentials, those kinds of ideas.
- Siemer: Did you take any legal materials with you out to the Marianas when you went?
- Craft: I took that book.
- Siemer: How did they propose to pay you?
- Craft: Frankly, I don't know. It was very complicated. When I got to Washington, I can recall there was some argument about well, do you have a red passport. Somebody was very offended that they wouldn't even have supposed that I would have a red passport—or maybe it was a blue one—anyway a different-colored passport. And there were conversations about how the expenses would be calculated. My only recollection is that it seemed to me that it was far more complicated than I could have imagined.
- Siemer: Did they in fact pay you?
- Craft: Oh, yes. All of that eventually worked out very comfortably.
- Siemer: Canham's records indicate that you arrived on May 23, 1975. Does that sound about right?
- Craft: Yes.
- Siemer: What did they tell you about the plebiscite problem that they thought you were going to be facing?
- Craft: They believed that this Micronesian Legal Services person would file a lawsuit and that the delay would preclude the election happening. It was the delay that was really more their concern. Society is much more litigious today than it was 20 years ago, and I think that we are more accustomed to lawsuits and sort of are a little more hardened than was the case 20 years ago. But I think 20 years ago they were really concerned about that, so their concern principally was how we would deal with the fact that this fellow might file a lawsuit. And frankly, I had spent two years dealing with just those kinds of issues in Jefferson City. So I was confident that if that was the problem, I'd been able to deal fairly successfully with those kinds of issues and also with those kinds of lawyers.
- Siemer: Just to try to establish the timing, if you arrived out there on May 23, back up and tell me about how long before that you got the initial phone call.
- Craft: Well, my recollection is I got there before May 23, but it would have been just a couple of weeks probably.
- Siemer: Yes, that may well be, because some of the records with respect to dates are very uncertain.
- Craft: What was the date of the election?
- Siemer: June 17. Canham himself arrived out there on April 18, and so he had been there some time when you got there.
- Craft: My recollection is that I was there a month. So if it was June 17, I would have guessed I

- was there a month before that. Maybe it was the 23rd. I would have thought a little sooner than that.
- Siemer: It may well be. As I say, the documentation is a little fragmented. On the Marianas side, a good deal of that documentation was gathered up when the Trust was terminated and sent off to various repositories. Some of it survived and some of it did not.
- Craft: The driving piece of it was this potential lawsuit. I think Canham was the one who really was the most concerned that this lawsuit would be filed, and I think he looked around and decided that there just wasn't anybody that would be responsible. He wanted somebody who would immediately react to try to prevent anything from happening that would delay the election. So the concern when I was called was if you're going to do this you have to leave right away. My recollection is that I left within a week, maybe 10 days at the outside. My wife, who eventually joined me, did not leave for a while because she needed to make arrangements for the kids.
- Siemer: How long before that were you in Washington being briefed?
- Craft: Well, I think if I got the call on Friday as to the situation, Alan wanted me to call back, maybe I got it on a Thursday and called him on Friday and said I'd be willing to come to Washington and talk about it. I would have gone to Washington on Monday or Tuesday and would have left the next Friday. I mean it was very quick.
- Siemer: When you came to Washington, do you recall who you talked to at the Interior Department?
- Craft: No. There was a guy whose name you haven't mentioned yet who was the person I met with, and then there was a second person who was a little more senior. The one fellow was what we now call a Schedule C, a political appointee, and then there was another fellow who was a career person. Then I think at some point I met the Acting Secretary of Interior.
- Siemer: Mr. Frizzell.
- Craft: Yes. I met Frizzell briefly.
- Willens: There was a considerable turnover in the office. I guess Deanne mentioned Emmett Rice, and that didn't strike any bells.
- Craft: Well, now as you say it again, maybe there was an Emmett Rice.
- Willens: George Milner might have been back at the Department at that time, but I don't think he came in until after Carter had won the election in November of 1976.
- Craft: I'm surprised that Neiman Craley doesn't remember all these names.
- Siemer: How about Adrian deGraffenreid?
- Craft: No.
- Willens: Well, I had a question about your recollection with respect to the issue of delay. Did anyone elaborate in Washington or when you reached the Marianas as to what exactly the concern was?
- Craft: Actually the first thing I did when I got to the Marianas was to go meet with the lawyer who presumably was supposed to be the problem. I spent an afternoon with him.
- Siemer: Was that Ed King?
- Craft: I can't remember.

- Siemer: Sort of a short guy? He worked for Micronesian Legal Services.
- Craft: I recall him as short and curly-headed, maybe married to a reporter.
- Siemer: Yes, that's Ed King all right. He went on to be the High Court Judge out there and is now a Special Judge in Hawaii.
- Craft: He and I got along real well, and frankly I anticipated that occurring. Oh, I went over to Ed's office and just sat down and put my feet up on his desk. He was dressed very casually, and we chatted all afternoon about it. He had a couple of specific concerns. I can't recall, but it seemed to me they were not unreasonable. I think I went back to Mr. Canham, and I think by the second day I was there the possibility of a lawsuit had disappeared.
- Siemer: There were two issues that came up at that period of time, and you may have been associated with either one of them. One was the issue about the "no" option on the ballot—that is, if you wanted to vote no against the Covenant—how that language was formulated. There was a very clear option with respect to "yes", and it said "I approve of the Covenant to Establish a Political Union with the United States." The "no" option, however, said, "I disapprove and I understand that I'm relegated to living with the rest of the Trust Territory." That was one issue. The second issue had to do with who was going to be qualified to vote, for example Micronesians who had been long resident in the Marianas because they worked for the Trust Territory government, and people who had been resident there but owned land back in the Carolines, and things like that. Those seemed to be the two principal issues that came up during that period.
- Craft: The residency issue on who got to vote was done on a case-by-case basis, and there were several trials. I participated in those trials. I think there was a contested group of maybe 35-50 individuals. It may be smaller. But there was a trial. I remember so specifically because when I was briefed before the trial, everybody was clear that unlike a mobile society—unlike where you are a Kansas City resident and then you move to Jefferson City and you vote in Jefferson City and you are a resident of Jefferson City—that a person originally from the island of Truk had a much closer attachment to that island and the fact that they moved to Saipan, they still had feeling for Truk. So when we tried to put Anglo Saxon concepts of residency into the context of a person from Truk and whether they intended to stay a resident of Saipan, it was clear that the two cultures didn't accommodate those ideas very well. They were a group of young women, I recall, who were answering these questions [at trial], and they'd been told how to answer the questions, I guess. The whole audience was amused at the idea that someone who was a Trukese intended to be a resident of Saipan. You know, they just couldn't conceive of it. But in order to vote they had to answer that way, and so they did. And virtually everybody in the courtroom understood that was what was happening. The judge was irritated that the court was being treated frivolously by these participants. But those were individual issues in the sense that if they went one way or another would not have affected the election, and although everybody wanted the election to be orderly and therefore those procedures were significant, the reason there was a concern (and the reason I was there) really was the issue of whether the election would be stopped. I can't remember what the issue was, but my guess is you've identified it.
- Siemer: By the time you got there, had the Voter Registration Board made its initial determination as to who was qualified to vote and who was not?
- Craft: I think so.

- Siemer: So by the time you got there, there was a defined group of people who had been turned down?
- Craft: Yes.
- Siemer: Just focusing on that problem for the moment, what kinds of records did you have when you looked at these individual cases?
- Craft: I don't recall that there were a lot of records. I think the principal issue really was persons from other islands who were living in Saipan and working in Saipan, and the question was whether it was proper for somebody from Truk, for example, to vote on an issue involving the Northern Marianas. The idea was that presumably the rest of the islands did not want the Marianas to be independent of the rest of that group, so that you wanted to have fairly strict ideas of residence. Hence, they struck all the people who arguably were there on a temporary basis, which is the reason why that permanent residence issue was a significant issue.
- Siemer: After the Registration Board acted, there were a number of challenges. It appears from the record that there was one set of challenges from the proponents of the Covenant, that is the people who did not want people from other areas of Micronesia to vote because presumably they would vote against. And there was another challenge primarily from the Carolinian community who were opponents of the Covenant and they were primarily trying to disenfranchise people on Guam and in Hawaii and elsewhere who presumably would vote for the Covenant, or at least that's the way it appeared from the documents. What do you recall about the players?
- Craft: I really don't have much of a recollection. What I recall most vividly was this very pretty woman from Truk. They had all kinds of language problems and interpreters. And as they asked these questions on the residency issue, she answered that she was going to be a permanent resident of Saipan. And it was clear to me that her friends (as this all was interpreted) thought that was very funny. It was my impression that it was not imaginable for them that a person from Truk would say I will not be going home. I will permanently live other than on Truk. Now maybe that's just my own cultural bias coming through. In the context of hardball politics in the U.S., where there is a lot of passion and anger and charges of doing people in, that was not the atmosphere of those folks. They are not idealogues by nature. And the issues that we were talking about (it seems to me) were not issues that they were accustomed to dealing with. And as a consequence, they were participating in this sort of—I'm not sure who had motivated them to do so, but there was no passionate anger that I observed.
- Siemer: Who were the lawyers on the other side?
- Craft: I don't recall. Someone other than myself carried the laboring oar, and I would guess it was somebody from the [Trust Territory] government. Maybe it was the Micronesian Legal Services that represented the young women.
- Siemer: Did you have anybody assisting you?
- Craft: No. I was there by myself. But at those hearings, my recollection is that there was somebody, a lawyer for the [Trust Territory] government.
- Siemer: Were there any other lawyers attached to Canham's operation?
- Craft: No, not that I recall.
- Siemer: How long did the hearings go on?

- Craft: Oh, several days. Not very long.
- Siemer: Who was the judge?
- Craft: Oh, he was from South Dakota. I think he was on the High Court. He just seemed like an unlikely person. And understand, I don't mean to say he was a bad judge. My recollection is I thought it was all done appropriately. But I think his reaction to the issues was the same as mine—that we had an Anglo Saxon procedure to deal with issues that are significant for Anglo Saxon jurisprudence but which have little to do with the kinds of issues that they were accustomed to dealing with.
- Willens: There was one High Court judge before whom I argued a few months earlier who was Judge Burnett.
- Craft: Ah, that sounds familiar.
- Willens: He was on the High Court at the time, and your description of him is accurate.
- Craft: Well, that sounds right.
- Siemer: So the procedure was that each person who was challenged had to appear before the judge and testify?
- Craft: Yes. I think that the Board had made a judgment, then there could be an appeal. And I just found this guy's name [who did the briefing in Washington]. It's Fred Karen.
- Siemer: We've not run across him before.
- Craft: There were two people. There were Karen and then another fellow maybe.
- Siemer: Karen was the Schedule C?
- Craft: Yes. And then there was another person who eventually practiced law in Oklahoma I think. Maybe it's Karen and I've gotten them mixed up. But Fred Karen was actively involved in the process when I was there [in Washington for briefings].
- Siemer: When the hearings came about, was there concern on Canham's side one way or another about how they would come out?
- Craft: No. His principal concern was procedural fairness. And as a consequence, if the Board said okay these 17 can vote and somebody appealed, then they went through that process. And I was there and participated. I don't recall myself having any anxiety as to how the results would come down. You know, it's a question of fact—residency. And my recollection is that I didn't think the numbers mattered. My recollection is I didn't think that those hearings would determine the outcome of the election, and that therefore what we wanted to do, our concern was to make certain that the election was in fact procedurally fair and was perceived that way.
- Siemer: By the time that you were involved in these registration hearings, had the threat of a lawsuit to stop the plebiscite dissipated?
- Craft: Yes, in my mind. The first day I was there. My recollection is just thinking how interesting it was, just like in Missouri. They had a very specific concern, and my recollection was that it was not unreasonable. There just hadn't been very good communication, just what everybody was interested in, and once we thrashed it out, and as I say that's the first thing that I did when I got there, it all went away. My recollection is that by the second day I was there, that King was satisfied. And once he was satisfied, then of course there would not be any litigation.
- Siemer: Had you known Mr. Canham before?

- Craft: No. I did not know of him at all.
- Siemer: What was your impression of how he worked out there?
- Craft: Oh, I thought he was just marvelous. It was very much a learning experience for me, and a delight. It was one of those happy circumstances, where on the one hand it's enjoyable and interesting, and on the other hand it was a very instructive to see a man of his talents function with operating responsibility.
- Siemer: How would you describe how he operated while he was out there?
- Craft: He was very clear in his own mind what it is he was about. And he was very charming, very polite. Unfailingly polite to the Micronesians. Respectful. But at the same time, he had a very clear understanding of how it was that he thought the procedures ought to operate. There were a number of journalists who came through interested in it, and Neiman Craley and I (at least to my recollection) both thought it was humorous that although we were certain that in his prior life as a newspaperman he would have insisted on press freedoms and all, Canham was real clear as to which meetings he thought the newspaper people could attend and which were closed to the press, and he did not argue about it. He just was clear.
- Siemer: What was your impression of how the Micronesians related to him?
- Craft: Well, it comes in two pieces. I think that they had a good relationship. At the same time, they had their own ways. The best illustration was when we had decided that as a part of a registration system and a way to make it clear how all this would work, we'd have magic potion, and each person who voted would put their finger in it. It would be indelible and that way we would know that you wouldn't have people voting in one registration place and then going someplace else and voting again. And there was a fair amount of discussion about this. There was a doctor on the island, a Micronesian doctor, who used to call this Canham's magic potion. So it comes to the day of the election (and it's still funny to me) and he and I are going around—just like going to the precincts in Kansas City, Missouri on election day—and of course there wasn't any magic potion. The Micronesians thought it was impolite to have people put their fingers in it, so they didn't use it.
- Siemer: It never happened?
- Craft: They just thought it was not dignified. But during the course of all that discussion, nobody wanted to say to Mr. Canham well, you know, we just aren't going to do that. And the other thing that I remember, I thought it was interesting that one of the questions we had is should you close the bars on election day. Kansas City, Missouri closes the bars. And so we had a conversation about that, and frankly I can't remember whether we closed the bars or not. I went to law school in Chicago, and when you voted in Chicago in those days, Daly's guys had a bottle of scotch in one pocket and bourbon in the other. For the regular guys that voted in my precinct, they knew how they voted and what they drank. In several of the polling places there were women with betel nut bags. And it struck me that while we worried about the bars, the Micronesians were into betel nut. I don't have any idea whether that's true or not, but the election was very straight and it came off without any kind of a hitch is my recollection.
- Siemer: Were you there when Canham drafted the procedures for how the ballot boxes were going to be treated and things like that?
- Craft: My guess is, we had a lot of meetings, and I can't remember the subject of the meetings, but perhaps that was what we met about. But there were a number of meetings.

- Siemer: Where was your office?
- Craft: I don't recall.
- Siemer: Was it at Hamilton's? There was sort of an open-air building that had previously been used as a barbeque?
- Craft: I don't recall. Neiman would remember better than I.
- Siemer: Do you recall doing much work at the office?
- Craft: Everything was verbal. So once it was likely there wasn't going to be lawsuit filed, and for several days I would go over to the clerk's office to make certain that that was the case, and then we would have meetings. But it was not arduous duty. Mostly it was sort of procedural, making decisions. Then on one occasion the U.N. delegates came to Micronesia on an inspection tour.
- Siemer: They came shortly before the election to observe the election?
- Craft: That's right. We spent some time talking about that and how we would deal with that.
- Siemer: So once the threat of a lawsuit to stop the plebiscite was over, is it fair to say that you pitched in with whatever came up?
- Craft: Yes. I think Neiman and myself and Mr. Canham worked through the kind of procedures to use. My recollection is one of the concerns was that I guess the document itself would be translated into Chamorro, which in my recollection was basically a verbal not written language.
- Siemer: What do you remember about election day?
- Craft: We got up at the time the polls opened and just went from precinct to precinct and chatted with the judges, and that's where we discovered that in some of the precincts the magic potion wasn't being used. It was the first time I ever saw anybody using betel nut. The Micronesian women, particularly the older women, had a very strong cultural influence on the activities of the community. But it was very calm; it was characterized by good humor; and a lot of the people who manned those precincts we knew from prior activities. It was just a very relaxed, calm and appropriate procedure for an election.
- Siemer: Had there been an attempt made to match proponents and opponents of the Covenant at each polling place?
- Craft: I don't recall.
- Siemer: How about the activities on Rota and Tinian? Did you get over there?
- Craft: No.
- Willens: What was your general evaluation of the debate regarding the language on the ballot with respect to the "no" option? Did you have any personal opinion as to the fairness of that wording?
- Craft: I don't recall it in that specificity. Whatever was the discussion that occurred between myself and the lawyer for the Micronesian Legal Services, that issue was resolved happily. Because I can just remember being clear that there wouldn't be litigation. So if that was the issue that prompted the concern (and as I say I don't have a recollection that that was the case), then whatever was a resolution was satisfactory to everybody.
- Willens: What was your evaluation of the level of the political education that was undertaken with respect to the issues surrounding the Covenant?

- Craft: Well, I think it breaks into three pieces. One piece was the mandate to create a written language explanation and discussion [of issues], and I don't think that occurred at all. They had a group of men who were hired to do that, and it was clear by the time that I got there that that was just not how that society functioned and it wasn't going to happen. So in terms of the written piece to it, that did not happen. Secondly, I think there was a group that was highly motivated and clearly understood the political and economic relationships of the Commonwealth and had a fair amount of activity. I think there was absolutely no question that they understood. And then there was a third group for whom (not unlike our own time) really the issue was fairly simply struck and it was whether our group [the Marianas] ought to function independently of the others [the other Micronesian districts]. I think it was on a fairly straightforward and simple basis. It was analogous to our own elections where you have one group of people who are interested and spend a lot of time on that. They are real clear what's going on and are highly motivated to reach very precise arguments and decisions. And then you have most people who see these political matters as not the most important thing in their life. The best example (although not specifically on point) occurred when I went back after it was all over. When I finished on Saipan, my wife and I took a two-week trip through Taipei and Hong Kong and then came back. When I got back, I made a trip to Washington to give my last report to the Department of the Interior. And it just happened by chance that Neiman Craley was there with the Assistant Secretary in charge of the Trust Territory. He was a newly-appointed person and had traveled to Micronesia. There had been a lot of advance work and planning, and he was supposed to have lunch on a particular day with the President pro tem of the Senate of the Micronesian Congress. He got there, and the man just didn't show up. And the question before this small group of people was how they should deal with an insult to the dignity of the office. They went around [the table in discussion] and had different views of it, and Neiman Craley's view was just that the Micronesian had decided to go fishing that day because it was a really nice day and he didn't attach that much importance to the appointment. It wasn't that he didn't have respect, it was just that he thought that there would be another time to do that and they would do it. So they ought to reschedule the visit. And it clearly was good advice. As I say, I think there was a group of people for whom this was an important issue, but my guess is that for an awful lot of people it was a foregone conclusion. Again, this is 20 years ago and it's all anecdotal under any circumstance, but I suspect that's right.
- Siemer: Well, for some people it may be that the issue of U.S. citizenship overwhelmed everything else.
- Craft: I'm not so sure, though, that for an awful lot of Micronesians that they fully understood what that meant. I think they had an understanding more in terms of their own context, that they did not want to be with the other island groups, although I'm not sure. After 20 years I'm not sure my recollection is very good at this.
- Siemer: You mean that they wanted to have separate treatment of their island group and not stay with the rest of Micronesia?
- Craft: Yes. The relationship between Palau and Truk and Saipan, say, I think that's pretty artificial. So that when you say hey, our island group is going to be separate from all those others, my guess is that they probably thought that was not an unreasonable thing to have happen. Much the same if you asked Quebec whether it would make sense for them not to be a part of the Maritime Provinces. This is a much more distinct group of relationships. That's my recollection, and it may be that that's just wrong. I thought the people identified more with a particular island than they did with say Micronesia.

- Willens: Did you meet Ambassador Williams while you were there?
- Craft: Which one was Ambassador Williams?
- Siemer: His full name is Franklin Haydn Williams. He's from San Francisco.
- Craft: Oh, I heard of him. No, I did not meet him.
- Willens: What was your general impression as a newcomer to the situation of watching 14,000 people vote on whether to become part of the United States?
- Craft: This is very personal, but I have always been impressed at how well the ballot box works. It's astonishing to me whatever is the forum, people end up doing the right thing. Even at times when I've been on the other side of a popular vote, in retrospect and after you get through the heat of the battle and all, you can understand the logic of the choosing. And I was impressed with the process. I thought Canham was a critical part of doing it with a nice hand. And although obviously we played a very significant role, he made an effort to make sure that it would be perceived to be an election which the Micronesians were the dominant force making the decision. My own opinion is that that was fairly accomplished. I think that a part of the problem with those [Micronesian Legal Service] lawyers is that they were concerned about some of the rules. My sense, when you really looked at them, and everybody ended up being comfortable with what was going on.
- Siemer: Did you ever see Canham on TV or hear him on the radio?
- Craft: No.
- Siemer: How about Ted Mitchell? Did you ever meet him? He was the head of the Micronesian Legal Services at the time.
- Craft: I'm sure I would have met him. That was a very small community.
- Siemer: How about the Saipan Women's Group? Did you have a chance to meet any of them?
- Craft: I don't know. I don't recall. If they were actively involved and sort of coming into conversations, I'm sure we had conversations. But I don't have any specific recollection.
- Siemer: Do you recall Oscar Rasa or his brother, Alfonso?
- Craft: I don't recall.
- Willens: Do you have a recollection of any individuals, either strong supporters of the Covenant or strong opponents of the Covenant?
- Craft: No, not really. There were two Foreign Service Officers there. One was a young guy about my age with whom I became pretty good friends.
- Siemer: Alf Bergesen? Lived right next door to Canham?
- Craft: I think he would have been the older one. Was he there with a wife?
- Siemer: Yes, he was there with his wife.
- Craft: Okay. He was older. Then there was a young man, younger than Alf, who would have been I guess in his mid to early 30s, and Alf would have been older than that. We went to a number of social functions. They had both been in Vietnam, and I was just very interested in their opinions about Vietnam. One night we had a particularly memorable party. But in terms of the political debate, I don't recall. And then of course I think part of it is that we didn't see ourselves as a part of the politics of it. We were there just as the umpire. I don't have any recollection of this specifically, but sort of as my recollection of what our

role was. I don't know that it would have been appropriate for us to participate in political discussions yea or nay about whether there should be a successful or an unsuccessful vote.

Willens: What recollection do you have, if any, with respect to the U.N. visiting mission?

Craft: Well, the most interesting thing was to watch the Brit come off this airplane with a tie and a vest and a watch chain and a walking stick. You hear the stories of the Brits in Burma wearing wool suits to tea at 105 degrees and 100 percent humidity, and I've never seen that before. That was just astonishing. He walked off the airplane. He was exactly like he was supposed to be.

Siemer: How was he as a person?

Craft: My recollection is it was sort of a pro forma event. They went around and met with people and chatted. Mr. Canham was mostly involved in dealing with them. I was sort of getting ready for it and wondering if it would be a problem, and then seeing him was what I really recollect. The actual fact was not much of an event.

Siemer: It didn't cause a particular problem for Canham?

Craft: No, no. I think that was something he did very well. I think we prepared well for them and had a real clear understanding. One of the things about Canham (and of course it wasn't really an intellectually taxing project), but the truth is that he had a real clear understanding of what his role was. At least my recollection now is just that there was no ambiguity in terms of what we were about. And as a consequence, there was no anxiety and everything was performed. Of course, in that atmosphere it's pretty relaxed. I'm accustomed to much more anxiety.

Siemer: If it was not intellectually taxing, how about the physical side of it? Was that hard work?

Craft: Oh, no. I was raised in Nebraska, so I'd never been snorkeling. And that was the new thing. My wife at first wasn't with me but then she joined me and we went snorkeling in the lagoons. That was just wonderful. There was a small group of people with whom we had social occasions, and it was very interesting. My most vivid memory is that there was some man and we were going to have some dealings with him or there was some involvement or his name came up in conversation, but it turned out as a part of a discussion that he had worked for the CIA. Then as a part of the discussion, somebody else said well, it used to be that half the island was off limits for everybody and it was very hard to get a visa to Saipan because the CIA were training the Red Chinese and transporting Red Chinese at some number and landing them on the mainland for all these number of years. And I was just flabbergasted that all of this had gone on and I had never heard about it. I said, "Mr. Canham isn't that extraordinary? I tend to read the newspapers, and I don't ever recall hearing anything about that." And he looked a little abashed and he said, "You know I didn't hear anything about that either." This of course is a person sitting at the top of that news organization [the Christian Science Monitor], which I thought was just extraordinary. I think either Kennedy or Eisenhower (I can't remember which President) just shut it off. But up until that time, there'd been this secret role that apparently nobody had ever known about.

Willens: I just read something to the effect that, when President Kennedy closed it down abruptly, he did so in part out of pique at the CIA performance with respect to the Bay of Pigs.

Craft: Well then that sort of makes sense. That would have been the timeframe. So up until the 60s, then, you had all of that activity which, you know, in 1975 that's not so long from

1960, and you just had never heard about it. To have an operation like that, I thought it was extraordinary.

Willens: I thought you were going to say that you learned the CIA subsequently ended up wiretapping the Micronesian negotiators.

Craft: I heard that, too. What was funny about that, there's a story that some lamp was tapped, and as a part of the discussions, there was a gift given. So it [the lamp] was carried over to one of the other islands that had a different dialect, and there was this conversation. Supposedly the listeners thought it was in some sort of a code, and they now were sure that these negotiations really were foreign inspired. But I have no sense whether that's true.

Willens: Did you happen to meet Mary Vance Trent? She was a Foreign Service Officer who had preceded Bergesen on the island as the liaison officer.

Craft: No.

Willens: Just generally with respect to Neiman Craley, what was your sense of his responsibilities and his performance?

Craft: I had a very high opinion of Neiman. He functioned as Canham's chief of staff, and in addition as basically his advisor on the local world. You read about the political people in the Roman times, and they'd go out to the provinces way away from any kind of communications and clearly their role was such that they could operate without direction and have good judgment. I thought Neiman functioned that way. He had a real clear sense of what his role was. He and Canham got along very well. I thought his advice was very good. He was very calm and didn't get excited, which I think is important. He did a nice job. I liked him very much.

Siemer: We've often reflected on how unusual it was that someone like the editor of the Christian Science Monitor and someone who'd been a Congressman from Pennsylvania wound up on this little island together at the moment when the entire world was watching to see if we could calmly conduct an election.

Craft: That's right. I thought Neiman had real special qualities. And Mrs. Canham was a vigorous woman and very protective of Erwin, but in addition she had a lot of power in her own right. Not power in the sense that she exercised influence, but she had a vigorous personality.

Siemer: Was there anybody else who worked with you out there at the time?

Craft: Well, it could easily be, and I would have forgotten. The two Foreign Service Officers played a role, and I can't recall now what it was. There was always a rumor that the young one was a CIA guy. You've been to that wonderful hotel that's decorated like a Conrad book? I can't remember the hotel name now but in any event, that's where my wife and I stayed, with this just wonderful bar, and there was always a breeze through it. I'd never really lived in an area with such nice weather.

Siemer: How long after the election did you stay in the Marianas?

Craft: Just a couple of days.

Siemer: Have you been back?

Craft: No. Actually what was interesting is after I was back four or five months, somebody called me to see if I would like to be the Attorney General of Micronesia. So I talked to my wife about it, and it was not something that occupied her mind long. But it was snowing

in Kansas City that day. And then I eventually knew a guy who went over there as an attorney, a fellow from Kansas City. He called me and said he'd been contacted and was going to go there, and I sort of lost touch with him. It was a wonderful experience for me. I think that we did a good job. Of course, Canham is obviously the person who is entitled to the credit, and I think was the person who provided the leadership for our side of it, although the Micronesians I think ran a good election. During that sojourn everybody would ask me, "Who are you? What do you do?" "Kansas City, Missouri." "What sort of law practice? Do you do international law?" "Not really." And then, depending on how polite they were, they would always get to the question "Well, why you?" I decided that my answer always was, "Well, they called the White House and the White House recommended me." At that point, they really wanted to know why. And nobody was willing to ask that question, and I never volunteered. That was good fun.

Siemer: We are very appreciative of your time, and this interview has been very helpful. Thank you again for agreeing to tell us about your experiences in the Marianas.

Craft: Well, it was fun. Would you do this: would you mind sending me a copy of whatever it is you produce? Of course, you're going to send the transcript, aren't you?

Siemer: We're going to send you the transcript, and you can make any changes you want. If you remember other things or you remember names or you want to change anything you're welcome to it. I do not have your address. So if you could just give it to me.

Craft: It's 4435 Main Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64111, and Craft with a "c". It's suite 1100. My phone number is 816/531-1700.

Siemer: All right. It will be along in a couple of weeks.

Craft: Wonderful.

Siemer: Thanks very much.

Willens: Thank you.