

INTERVIEW OF JUAN S. DEMAPAN

by Deanne C. Siemer and Howard P. Willens

April 12, 1995

- Siemer: We are in the office of the Senate President, Juan Sablan Demapan, and President Demapan has graciously agreed to an interview. Mr. Demapan, I wonder if you could start with a little bit of your family background—your father's family and your mother's family.
- Demapan: I come from a very typical Chamorro family, a large family actually. There are nine children in this family with a working father and a mother that takes care of the children. My parents never went to an American school. They went through a Japanese education up to sixth grade. I am the second oldest in the family. I spent just about all of my childhood, up through high school, staying in Saipan and never went out of the Commonwealth. I got my education here. I am the second oldest in the family as I said. My oldest brother is just one year ahead of me. By coincidence we graduated at the same time and we left Saipan. Myself, I went straight to the United States to study engineering. I went to the University of Michigan. I graduated there in 1975. Then I went back here to Saipan to earn a living. Of course, many of my classmates were kind of shocked to see me go back here knowing that the standard of living is very, very low, and wages were very, very low. And they would tell me why not stay back in the States. It would be much better for you. But I think I owe something for the islands. They sent me to school here in the first place on a scholarship, a Congress of Micronesia scholarship. So I went back here, and I started working for the government. Of course, that was the only place; there's really not much private sector involvement back then. I worked for the Trust Territory government as Naval Architect for about two years. Then this Con-Con came by—the First Constitutional Convention. I said why not make a try. I was surprised; I think I was one of the top vote-getters at the time. I joined the Con-Con with more like in a sense I tried to do what I can do to help out, but knowing that there was just a lot to learn in politics or in government affairs. I was there not only as an education for myself but to learn from others. There's a lot of great guys in that First Con-Con—former Senator Olympio Borja, Senator Joe R. Cruz, who just died recently, Larry Guerrero, who was the third Governor of the Commonwealth, he was our President, and a lot of other guys I considered to be some of the pioneers in the Commonwealth, Marianas politics. So it was very exciting. In fact, I found it to be the probably the most rewarding experience in my life. Of course, I was very young then but I think I learned a lot by being in that body. To me it was a very respected body. In fact, I still see some of them around. The first Governor, Carlos Camacho, was there also. In fact, you know, we could feel in that group there may be a two-party lineup but I think most of them were concerned about what is good for the Commonwealth.
- Siemer: What did you do after the Convention was over?
- Demapan: I immediately went back to the States to get my Masters in Business Administration.
- Siemer: Where did you go?
- Demapan: Seattle University. And at the same time, of course, I got a family already and I have to work also.
- Siemer: Where were you working at the time?

Demapan: I worked for a naval architecture consulting firm in Seattle, in the shipyard in Seattle. I spent about three years there. Then I left to go back to Saipan. I think at the time the economy there was very bad. There was a recession or whatever you call it, and it was very bad. So I felt that maybe, not because of that, I felt that maybe it was time to go back here, to Saipan, because of the experience I got already. I also passed the Professional Engineer's examination in Washington. I thought that maybe I can get a better position to do something for myself and for the Commonwealth. So I came back here and established my own private company, engineering company, for maybe about a year. Then there was not much business, of course, and then I left again.

Siemer: What year was that, that you had your business here?

Demapan: About 1980. Then I left Saipan; I went to Guam. I stayed there for six years. I worked for the Navy, at a ship repair facility in Guam, just for about a year, and then I left and joined Mobil Oil in Guam.

Siemer: When did you join Mobil?

Demapan: In 1982. I spent with Mobil Oil five years. It was also one of the most rewarding experiences that I ever had in my life. It was an excellent company. In fact, I progressed so rapidly in the Mobil organization on Guam to a point of probably the highest ranking local in the entire Micronesia and Guam. I was the Operations Manager for Mobil Oil on Guam and Micronesia. And then my last job was like a planning analyst. Then I quit in 1987 and worked there for about a year, in Guam, or maybe two years, running an engineering company. This was my company, my own company, and we also have another company in Saipan working together with my younger brother, who also happens to be engineer. So we had this company running for about two years, three years, and then I decided to make a run for the Senate.

Siemer: What year was that?

Demapan: It was in 1991. Then that is where I am now. It is a four year term, it's coming up this November for re-election, and I am looking forward to it. I am a freshman Senator. I came here in the Senate with all kinds of dreams to accomplish a lot of things, but I found out that politics is different. It is a different profession. It requires more than just, you know, knowing your stuff or whatever, the technical aspects. It's different from any kind of profession as far as I can see it, but it has been very exciting. It's great working with all kinds of people. They live on all the islands. The Senate is very unique as far as I am concerned. It is far different from the House. The House has got more members from the Saipan population. Here we are dealing with three different islands, and I think each island is different. The two islands, Rota and Tinian, they still have still this feeling, the minority feeling, that they long been disregarded or not taken care of. And I think the Senate is probably, you know, this is the place really for them to move their agenda forward. But, I feel that it is just a matter of working with them, working together. My first year was really kind of shot because there was a major turnover in the Senate. The President was replaced, and they voted me to be the President after eight months in office. So that was one of the shocking personal experiences that I had. Then it happened again two years later. I was elected to my second term. We serve a four year term but, at mid-term, every two years, we have to reorganize the Senate or the Legislature and then they would vote in the new leadership. So again, you know, the President was replaced and in place they put me. It's been a hell of a four years for a freshman Senator just entering politics. I know that these things don't happen that frequently but I can't really say much. That's the desire of the majority. We go by majority rule here. But you know, I've been in

a conflict—fighting—actually been up and down. But I think what's a more important thing is that we get this Commonwealth going forward. It has been very tough. I think having two Houses is tough in itself. It is very difficult to get everything accomplished. I think that is probably one of the inefficiencies of a democracy. It is hard to get things through. But I have learned a lot; I think there is a way to make things better in the Senate. I think we should learn about the past also. But I think one of the problems is that we have two houses. But more than that, it's because of the three islands—the setup in the Senate—where this one is causing more problems. It isn't really a problem for me because I've been able to handle it well. But it's a different way, the political maneuvers are totally different. I think it's more like survival of the fittest, the way I look at it. I feel like just yesterday I got into the Senate, you know. I am very new to this, but I think with this experience that it is going to help me in the years to come, if I am able to serve again this coming November.

Siemer: Is your father's family originally from Saipan?

Demapan: Actually from my father's side they come from Guam. They came over before the war. My mother is from Rota. She married someone from Saipan. My grandmother is from Rota, my grandfather, from my mother's side I am talking now, is from Rota. The grandmother, the grandfather is a Carolinian from Truk some place there. My father's side, they come from Guam.

Siemer: And they came to Saipan before the war?

Demapan: To Saipan before the war, that's right.

Siemer: When you came back to Saipan from the University of Michigan, did you run for any political office before you ran the Con-Con?

Demapan: Only that. The Con-Con was the first one.

Siemer: Were any of your close relatives in politics at that time?

Demapan: Well, there is a relative, Juan Demapan, if you noticed; Juan DeLeon Guerrero Demapan is my first cousin from my father's side. Then from my mother's side there is Juan A. Sablan, who used to be the Deputy High Commissioner. I think he was in the Congress of Micronesia. And there is also Mike Demapan. I think those were the only ones.

Siemer: When you were in school at the University of Michigan, were you a part of any discussion or debates about the Covenant negotiations?

Demapan: No.

Siemer: Do you recall anything from those days about how your family or relatives felt about the Covenant?

Demapan: Not really.

Siemer: When you came back and were working for the Trust Territory government, what was the department that you worked for?

Demapan: Transportation.

Siemer: And what were doing in that job?

Demapan: I was actually working as an engineer. It was more like training; I just got out from college. I was working for some expatriate, it was an American. They have a lot of experience in ship inspections and repairs, and I traveled to through the Trust in Micronesia quite a bit, and to Japan and Korea for shipyard inspections and repairs of the Trust Territory ships.

Siemer: When you ran for the Constitutional Convention, can you tell us how you campaigned?

Demapan: Well, you know, at the time we go in a group, I think maybe 25 of us or something. And then we split up into parties. Actually it became a party group. So, my group was more like the Republican Party. Number one, I didn't study about politics or anything, strictly engineering. The only time I thought about politics was when I was taking the great books [course]. That was the only knowledge I have about human nature. But I think maybe protecting, you know, the precious lands that we have; and emphasizing education, that is very, very important. In fact, to me that is one of the reasons why we have this mess, because of the level of education, the quality of education for our people. I think those were the main two topics that I had [campaigned on].

Siemer: When the Pre-Convention Committee met, it decided to split the work up into three substantive committees, and you were on the Personal Rights Committee.

Demapan: Yes.

Siemer: Did you select that committee?

Demapan: Not really, I just joined it.

Siemer: Was that a decision made by the leadership at the time?

Demapan: Yes. I think so.

Siemer: At the outset of the Convention, there were some briefing books delivered to the delegates, do you remember those?

Demapan: Maybe.

Siemer: And they were fairly thick and had quite a lot of materials in them. How did you feel at that point about being prepared with respect to the issues that the Constitutional Convention was going to address?

Demapan: I don't know how anyone can be prepared. I think the work before us was just monstrous. It's probably bigger than ourselves. But I think through the help of professionals, you guys, I think helped a lot, but also like I said, we've got other great individuals in the Con-Con so that helped us out also.

Siemer: Going into the Constitutional Convention before any of the debates or any of the proposals, what were your own views about how the Commonwealth, the three island groups, should be governed?

Demapan: Well, I felt that there should be a governor. And that this governor should be like the father of the entire Commonwealth. And then, of course, we have the islands, each municipality because we are kind of separated by waters. That this will be some kind of a representative government in Rota and Tinian. And, of course, even Saipan just to make it fair politically. That's all I looked at...

Siemer: When you heard the Rota and Tinian proposal for two Lieutenant Governors and basically separate governments on each island, what was your reaction to that proposal?

Demapan: I thought it was not right. But you know, it is surprising that kind of sentiment is still here. But I think on a little bit different scale. That's why I wanted to come into the Senate. I think the Senate has probably got one of the answers to the problems that we face right now in the Commonwealth in terms of getting legislation through, making things a little bit smoother than the way it was before. One of the ideas that I have now [with respect to the Third Con-Con] is that I think we should make the Senate a even number of senators

from each municipality. I don't want to go up because I don't like the government to be bigger; I want it to be smaller and maybe reduce the number of senators from nine to six. And then have the Lieutenant Governor be the Presiding Officer to cast the deciding vote. At least I think with that it would be stabilized so they [Rota and Tinian] lose all this power that they have in the Senate. When the two island groups work together, Saipan is at a tremendous disadvantage. But I think if we have the Lieutenant Governor in that, we can help a lot of things here.

Siemer: At the time, there was a debate about the upper House having 4-4-4 and 3-3-3 and I think there was a 2-2-2 proposal at the time. When that was being discussed, did you think back then that the Rota and Tinian delegates understood how powerful that Senate composition was going to be with equal representation from all three islands?

Demapan: Well let me say this, at that time politics wasn't in my mind at all. But I am sure that the politicians like the former Lieutenant Governor, Benjamin Manglona, and the former Mayor, Prudencio Manglona, and the others from Rota, I think they understand that. And even on Tinian, [they understood] that there's a lot of power to be had by having this Senate composition.

Siemer: They sought a lot of other kinds of protections for their islands. They sought Executive Branch protections, local government protections. They sought protection with respect to constitutional amendment and initiative. There seemed to be a great number of things that they wanted, although the core of the power relationships seemed to be in the Senate. Once they had that, which was guaranteed by the Covenant, then maybe some of the other protections may not have been that important, yet they sought every one of them as proposals came up. It seemed from the record that you and others from Saipan were concerned about that—about the amount of concessions that were being sought by the Rota and Tinian delegations. What do you recall about that?

Demapan: Well, I know that actually that was very touchy. In fact, if I am not mistaken, there was a time when there was like a boycott. There was a movement in the Con-Con for Rota delegates, in particular, stepping out from the Con-Con. In fact, they never came for the signing ceremony for the proposed provisions. Well, I guess that's politics. But then going back and from experience right now, I feel that there's other ways to reduce or meet those concerns of the minorities.

Siemer: How do you that?

Demapan: I think one of the biggest problems is the standard of living for our people. I think we get our people up in their standard of living, politics has very little meaning. I think if everyone is living well, why do I need to go to the government? Right now mostly it is the government, it is all the government now. But I think if we raise the standard of living of our people; I think then politics would not play a major part in our lives. It's really a major part of our lives [now].

Siemer: You are talking about government employment being a major part of politics?

Demapan: Yes, that's one. But I think if there is a way in the private sector—we make it a life and get more people to be working at good wages, livable wages. Also ensuring that each resident gets the share that he deserves. For example, right now I am kind of worried whether a citizen or a resident of Saipan gets the amount that is given say a Rota resident or a Tinian resident. Because right now there is really no [established] way of doing it. We have this formula 1-1-1 for the CIP from the Covenant grants, which are made evenly. I think it's not the right formula. I think there must be a way of to keep track of how much

expenditure for individual for each island.

Siemer: So, per capita benefits?

Demapan: Yes, so it kind of balances out. I think that way they will see that it is fair for them. I think it's all fairness here. I think that the feelings that they have, I mean I am looking on the minority side, is that they have been not getting their share of something.

Siemer: Do you think that factually correct?

Demapan: At this time, I don't think so. Now, I don't think so. I think if you come to Tinian or Rota, they will probably say that also.

Siemer: Thinking back to the time of the Constitutional Convention, there was a lot of talk at that time about the unfair treatment that Rota and Tinian had at the hands of the Trust Territory Government. Did you think that was the case back in those times?

Demapan: Yes.

Siemer: Did you think the Trust Territory government was unable to deliver services on those islands?

Demapan: I feel that even going to the islands of Micronesia, I saw islands that are still 20 years behind. Saipan is the only place that has been developed. And you go to Guam, even Guam and Saipan are still far away in years.

Siemer: Why did your colleagues from Rota and Tinian think that once the people from the Marianas took over their own government that they would continue to do things the way the Trust Territory had and that Rota and Tinian might not be treated fairly?

Demapan: Back to human nature, I think people, you know, after many years of having been mistreated or whatever there were these second thoughts or doubts. It is just part of human nature. But I think if we can find a way where we can really show, maybe through statistics, documentation, that, you know, each resident getting a fair share of the wealth of the Commonwealth I think nobody would complain. And I think that is what we are trying to do here in the Senate, we are trying to make sure. In fact it's very interesting, we've got nine members here [in the Senate] and each one has got a committee chairmanship. It is a testing ground for me to test new things, you know. But I think that the most important thing is the standard of living. We have to bring it up. Because myself I don't want to go into politics—to go into this kind of job or to participate in the political process. I think if you are [well off], that's why the United States there is a low turnout of participation. Because, you know, if you are in business and you are doing very well, why should you care about others. Maybe that is what you see in the States.

Willens: During the last years that you have been in the government, the number of employees in the Commonwealth government has probably increased, has it not?

Demapan: Yes. I cannot really blame the government for that one.

Willens: Do you think it resulted from a decline in the private sector or how do you account for the desire on the part of most of Marianas people to work for the government?

Demapan: That's where my problem is now, Howard. I cannot blame the private sector; I cannot also blame the government. I think there's a problem. I think we have to share this problem together, work together, private and government. I think if there were no government right now in the Commonwealth and it's only the private sector, this place here would be another [failure]. The private sector is not doing its job actually. You know, in fact very few of our people are in the private sector, very few of them are really doing well out there,

- especially in corporations or businesses. To me, the foreigners just cannot take advantage. I think there's a lot of here that they take advantage of. You go say to Nikko [Hotel], I am sure that maybe the ten management positions are [all] Japanese [employees]. Maybe you find one local guy there or American guy there. If I saw it is an American or CNMI citizen, it's all right for me, but it's hard even to find one. And I haven't seen any one of these foreign companies where you find even a local U.S. citizen holding a top position.
- Willens: Do you think they are complying with the Commonwealth rule that they have to employ, what it is 10 percent local people?
- Demapan: They may be complying but the laws are very general. They could do it from the lower side, the lower employment
- Willens: How about your brothers and sisters just to take in the family setting, do they work for the government or they're working in the private sector?
- Demapan: Actually they just started working in the government. My oldest brother of course is a judge. He's been in the private sector. My third oldest, he has his own shop out there. My sister works for a bank, she is the manager for one of the small banks here. And then my younger brother is an engineer, he has his own consulting firm. Two of my brothers are in the government.
- Willens: So you have some in the private sector and some in the public sector.
- Demapan: Yes. But to tell you the truth, I hate working for the government. I don't like the government. But I think the situation out here is just a little bit different. I feel sorry for a lot of our people here because they lack education. In fact, they tell me that they are graduating in high school at about the sixth grade level. How can they stay here and work in the private sector? I think we have to start pumping in the revenue, putting more money into the education [system]. But at the same time we have problems with the Constitution. Because of that [provision for] free compulsory [education], primary and secondary, it seems like a lot of the money spent is spent for aliens, and that's a big problem. I understand that maybe 30% of our students are from the outside, and we have to pay the full [cost for these students]. So I am trying to find a way, maybe through constitutional amendment, that they have to pay something. That [provision for] free education is the problem, because they really take advantage here.
- Willens: Just a few more biographical facts. What year were you born?
- Demapan: In 1953.
- Willens: And, as I understand it, your father was from Guam.
- Demapan: He actually was born here.
- Willens: So he was not a U.S. citizen?
- Demapan: No. My grandmother was a U.S. citizen.
- Willens: And you were born on Saipan?
- Demapan: Yes.
- Willens: But no one in your immediate family was a U.S. citizen at the time?
- Demapan: No one.
- Willens: Did they have views one way or the other about becoming part of the United States and becoming U.S. citizens?

- Demapan: I think when we talked about the U.S., at least from hearing my parents then, to become an American citizen is a better life.
- Willens: Were they affiliated with the Popular Party or the Territorial Party?
- Demapan: They were affiliated with the Popular Party.
- Willens: When you came back from the University of Michigan, you must have come back just about at the time the Covenant was being voted on?
- Demapan: That's right.
- Willens: Did you come back while the political education program was underway, or had the vote already occurred by the time you came back?
- Demapan: I voted for that, I think. I remember voting in the plebiscite. At the time, I was not as concerned about becoming a U.S. citizen or just becoming a citizen of these islands. I didn't feel that way myself. Maybe because of my education, I felt that I can live wherever I go. Unlike the others here, they remain most of their lives here. They stay here. They don't know what life is. I mean, life is a contest to me, competition.
- Willens: Some of the opposition to the Covenant came from people who were concerned that the Northern Marianas would be overrun with Stateside or Japanese business concerns and investors and that the opportunities for the local people would be few and far between. Did you hear any opposition of that kind as to the Covenant?
- Demapan: Yes, I've heard about those [concerns]. But I am just speaking of myself now. I felt that through education I guess if you prepare yourself, you'd have to work on all those things. But I know that people in general, the common people, they are concerned about that.
- Willens: Some of the other college-educated young people were opposed to the Covenant because they thought the United States was deliberately separating the Northern Marianas from the rest of Micronesia for its military objectives. Did you have any feelings about the Marianas pursuing a separate course from the other districts of the Trust Territory?
- Demapan: Well, having spent some time with Micronesians, I felt that we could have been together.
- Willens: You did feel that at the time?
- Demapan: Yes. They were together. I love to be part of Micronesia. In fact, I considered myself in college as Micronesian, not as Saipanese. In fact, a lot of the employees during my government time, in the Trust Territory, were Micronesian. And, back then, I am traveling through Micronesia. You know, we can get along with them.
- Willens: Have you been to the Marshalls or Palau or the Federated States within the last few years?
- Demapan: Yes.
- Willens: To all three of them?
- Demapan: Yes.
- Willens: Could you just briefly give me your assessment of how government is working in those three different communities?
- Demapan: What do you mean by that, Howard? Can you be more specific?
- Willens: Palau and the Marshalls and the Federated States all stayed together for awhile and then they all went their separate ways.

- Demapan: Yes.
- Willens: How would you compare the standard of the living and the economic development in those three areas with what's happened here in the Northern Marianas?
- Demapan: Well, the Federated States of Micronesia have not changed a bit actually. They have not changed a notch. Yap is still Yap. The Marshalls, they have changed considerably, especially in the private sector.
- Willens: Is there a substantial private sector there now?
- Demapan: Yes, I think so, coming out of Hawaii and a company in Guam. There's a large department store there, a grocery store, a supermarket. I think Palau is maybe fortunate, or unfortunate, but I think they are doing it right. I think they are the last of the islands, you know, governments to agree with the United States. I am sure they should learn a lot from the experiences of others. But overall I think the Commonwealth has achieved more than any of these islands.
- Siemer: One of the long debates at the Constitutional Convention was about the local government that should be established on each of the islands. There was one proposal from David Maratita to do away with all local governments. And then there was another proposal, mostly from John Tenorio, to have a Mayor but to do away with the Municipal Council. Then there was a proposal from most of the Rota and Tinian delegates to have a full Mayor and local council with local power to tax and local power to spend. Back in those days what was your view about the appropriate kind of local government for each of the islands?
- Demapan: Let me start with the Mayor. I think there should be a Mayor in each municipality. The Municipal Councils I had some reservation about and, in fact, I still do up to now. I think there's too much government. In fact, we have a Mayor for the Northern Islands and we have only 30 or 50 people there. I think there's a lot of things we have to do. We have to reform.
- Siemer: What was your view about the possibility for development in the Northern Islands back then?
- Demapan: At the time, we had this copra business that was making money at the time. But that is the only thing that I know of, for the Northern Islands.
- Siemer: Did you think that the Northern Islands should have a separate municipal government within the Commonwealth?
- Demapan: I don't think so. I think I would prefer that Saipan is part of the Northern Islands, and we run everything from here. It depends also on how much economic development there is [in the Northern Islands]. I can't really foresee the future, but I will tell you that anything can happen in the next 20 years in the Commonwealth if we do it right.
- Siemer: When the Finance Committee finally reported out its proposal with respect to local government, it did adopt that Tenorio proposal to just have Mayors and no municipal councils. When it came to the floor, Ray Villagomez was chairing the committee of the whole and there was quite a long debate about that. The Committee's proposal ultimately was passed. The next day you came back and made a quite an eloquent speech which maybe you could take a look at and tell me what prompted you to do that. Do you remember any of the circumstances that caused you to make that speech?
- Demapan: Back again to the earlier discussion of this minority feeling, the feeling of not really being taken care of or maybe the fairness [of the distribution of government revenues].

If you notice in that speech I talked more about the distribution of funding. Basically what I was after was we are living in a real world; we want a lot of things, but we have to remember also that we just can't do them all. As a new country or a new Commonwealth, we just have to make it work somehow. We don't want anything to disrupt getting this Constitution together. We aren't looking at it as perfect, as a perfect document. I think it's something that can work—not necessarily a perfect document but something that can work, can get this Commonwealth and the work of the government established. Some things here are kind of philosophic also. All I want to see is that the various members in the Constitutional Convention come together and accept that there are limitations that we can agree on.

Siemer: When you decided to make a speech like this one, did you typically write something out?

Demapan: I would have something that I had put my thoughts onto it, yes.

Siemer: One of the other topics that was debated a great deal in the Convention was the type of salaries for the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and other public officials.

Demapan: There is always this feeling of distrust of public officials. I always believed that public service should be because of your own wish to become a public servant, to serve your people, and the money doesn't matter. But my experience in the Senate has given me a little bit different perspective. The political life in the Commonwealth is very different. People can now go to you for just about anything. They bother you for their electric bills; they bother you for problems of [getting] their children in school off island or some relatives having to be medivac [transported off-island for medical treatment] or those kinds of things. It's a very small community. People know one another very well so they don't hesitate coming over and asking you for help. As a result of that, I don't see my paycheck. But I guess I cannot say much about it.

Siemer: Back then did you think it was a good idea to set those kinds of salaries in the Constitution or perhaps leave it up to the Legislature?

Demapan: To me, right now I prefer it if it is through the Legislature.

Siemer: To be more flexible.

Demapan: Yes. At the same time, there should be some kind of a limit. But how do we do that?

Willens: The 1985 Constitutional Convention imposed some overall limitations on the operations of the Legislature and specifically some limitations on the Legislative Bureau that was established at that time. Have those limitations worked?

Demapan: Yes and no. Let me tell you one thing. I can say there is a disadvantage, probably the biggest disadvantage. When we set these limits in the Constitution at least it's for the Legislature I think we were making this government in a sense just a one-branch government where the Executive Branch becomes very powerful because it gets unlimited resources. The budget of the Executive Branch is not limited, and we're limited here [in the Legislature]. We need to do a lot of things also to counter-check the Executive Branch. But how can you do it with a ceiling that has not changed for the past 10 years? It is very tough. We have to hire professionals. In the Senate we have only two lawyers here, but I feel that we can really make use of the money and employ more professionals in the areas of finance and economics and other areas. Now, we are just handicapped. So I feel that ceiling in a sense hurts us and gives that advantage to the Executive Branch where we really cannot go over one another on an even footing. I think that is why I see a disadvantage of this ceiling.

- Willens: If there were no ceilings in the Constitution, then the Legislature would have to set forth its needs in the proposed budget and that would be the subject of presumably negotiations with the Executive Branch.
- Demapan: That's right.
- Willens: Do you think that is a preferred way to allocate revenues as between the two branches?
- Demapan: I don't know in other places how they do it, but like Guam I understand they go by percentage of the budget, 3% of the budget. But all I want is something reasonable to be able to function as one of the branches of the government. This Legislature is very important. We play a major role here in trying to check against, you know, one branch or the other branch. If you're limited by funding, it's hard. Funding is very, very important.
- Siemer: One of the very few things that you ultimately voted against in the Constitution was the provision setting the salaries of the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor. Was that because you thought that it should be done by Legislature?
- Demapan: I voted on the Legislature, if I understand it, Legislature salaries. I think I voted for that one.
- Siemer: You did vote for that one. But on the Executive Branch you voted no. The Executive Branch salary was set in the Constitution at \$20,000.
- Demapan: Yes, something like that.
- Siemer: You also voted no on the election provision, do you remember why that was?
- Demapan: Election provision?
- Siemer: How to schedule elections and things of that sort.
- Demapan: I don't really recall.
- Siemer: And you voted no on the public land provision as well, do you remember why that was?
- Demapan: Maybe because I thought that the Executive Branch can't handle it.
- Siemer: You didn't say anything about it on the record at the time so it's hard to tell. Tell me what your view was at the time about the proposed homestead program in the public land article?
- Demapan: I guess it was a good startup for people in the first place. I think that can help boost their standard of living a little bit though only in land but not in money. Though we saw during the boom times here that a lot of people were, got very well off by having their own properties. Well, I think the homestead actually has been in a sense abused also. Of course, we have that provision that it cannot be sold, at least if it's for an outsider. But still, I wanted it to be all through lease. The reason for that is that I still consider it to be public property and should remain public.
- Siemer: So you thought all the homesteads should be leases?
- Demapan: Everything, that's all, so that we can make sure that just stays. Say you sell it to a local individual, that would be gone forever. But if it's just a lease it is going to remain within your family. It could be any person as long as it's still in a lease.
- Siemer: How did you feel at the time about the Article 12 restrictions on land alienation back in those days, back when you had just come back from college?

Demapan: I thought it was great. I think it's one way to preserve the Commonwealth. You know land is very precious for us. But then at the same time we have to look at the economic side and that's where I didn't really see that as a problem.

Siemer: There was a debate about how long the lease provision should be. Some people thought it should be 25 years, some people thought should be 40 years, what were was your view on that?

Demapan: Well, at the time I wanted it stricter actually, a smaller number of years. My mind has changed for economic reasons.

Siemer: What about the definition of Northern Marianas descent, back at that time did you think that was a fair definition that the Constitution worked out?

Demapan: What?

Siemer: Remember there was a long discussion about why, under the United States system, you could not base it on race or simply on who is a Chamorro, who is a Carolinian. You had to base it on some objective characteristics like who was here at a particular time, who was a U.S. citizen. There was a great deal of discussion and debate about whether that would work out—whether the objective criteria could define the people that the Committee really wanted to cover. Do you remember feeling uncomfortable about that at the time or did you think it would generally work?

Demapan: Was that taken care of in the Covenant negotiation?

Siemer: The Covenant allowed restrictions and then it was up to the Constitution to decide how to restrict the sale of land. But the problem back in those days and still is that those restrictions had to be consistent with the United States Constitution which will not allow you to discriminate on the basis of race. So you couldn't just say it's going to be a Chamorro, it has to be a Chamorro or a Carolinian. You had to have some objective criteria such as when the person came to the Northern Marianas, how long they had resided in the Northern Marianas, whether they were U.S. citizen or not. It had to some kind of criteria like that. And there were some delegates who were worried about whether these objective criteria could actually do the job here, could actually define the group that should be able to own land and the group that should not.

Demapan: You know that alienation provision, actually coming from the Covenant, I like that provision. My only problem right now is that, I am talking about now, is that because I have seen the economic development out here and of course our need to depend on some of the private sector for development, I think it is very restrictive.

Siemer: Now you think it is restrictive.

Demapan: But I would still like to maintain the substance of that provision.

Siemer: That's what I was going to ask you, do you think the economy and the people are at a point where you can abandon those restrictions?

Demapan: Well, maybe we can change the term, I mean push it to 70 years or something like that. I think that's not a problem. That void ab initio is also a problem; that kind of makes things very difficult. But maybe there's a way. Actually right now if I am looking back now at all the mess that was created by Article 12, I would like to see if we can put something in the Constitution to clear this mess up. Because I think it is really hurting us.

Willens: One suggestion that has been made relates to the legislation that was enacted to provide for certain clarifying rules. One of the provisions I think sets a statute of limitations?

- Demapan: That's right, yes.
- Willens: So it's been proposed that those clarifications be written into the Constitution. Do you think that legislation served some of the purposes that you would like to see achieved in the Constitution?
- Demapan: Well, I don't keep track of the lawsuits here. I don't know whether that law was ever used in the courts here.
- Willens: I don't know it has been either.
- Demapan: But what I really want is that if there is any way—you know, the Article 12 by itself, the people out here they like that—but I think there's some changes have to be made to be made (not necessarily to put more meaning to it) to make things more clear or something.
- Siemer: To avoid litigation.
- Demapan: Yes. There's a lot of misunderstanding to a point where lawyers, as far as I understand it, they are going to try to over, go overboard by the provision that we have right now. I don't want that to happen. I want to be specific so that any lawyer will know that this is it, you know, we cannot go beyond here. But at the same time, that void ab initio, I think maybe we have to redefine what that one is, because, the way I have been told, if it's wrong, it's wrong. Whatever you do, if it's wrong, it's wrong.
- Willens: That's a good legal definition.
- Siemer: Let me ask you about a couple of other things to see what you recall. One was the discussion as to the advice and consent power with respect to the Governor's appointments. Some delegates thought that should be exercised by the Legislature as a whole and others thought that it should be in the upper house where the representation was equal. Do you remember what your own view was back in those days?
- Demapan: Well, reading the U.S. Constitution I guess the Senate had that power.
- Siemer: How about the reorganization power which was also discussed back in those days, and actually you and your colleagues reached a very complicated compromise on this, but some delegates thought that the power to reorganize the Executive Branch should be in the Legislature and others thought that the power to reorganize the Executive Branch should be in the Executive Branch. Do you remember whether you had a view on that back then?
- Demapan: I think it should be two-way street. I really recall at that time no, but now I think it should be two-way street, so that we can have a check on the Executive Branch.
- Siemer: One of the principal issues that came before your committee, the Personal Rights Committee, was how to deal with the initiative. Do you remember that—the popular initiative generating legislation by initiative? It was a proposal that generated a lot of controversy in the Convention. Your Committee made a proposal, and the Convention kicked it back, and you discussed it again. Then your Committee made another proposal, and the Convention kicked it back. Tell me what you recall about that debate and the positions that people took with respect to that?
- Demapan: Well, that was really a long, long time ago.
- Siemer: It was.

- Demapan: Well, you know the discussions on the initiative as far as I can recall was if the people having a voice to make legislation [was a good idea].
- Siemer: Was this something that nobody had ever had any experience with out here at all?
- Demapan: In fact, we never had heard about it. This was the first time [it was considered]. But it's great I think knowing that the people could do that, I supported that also.
- Siemer: One of the questions was how many people should have to sign a petition in order to get an initiative on the ballot. And the Committee set that at 20 percent of the qualified voters, that's pretty high, that's quite a large number at least in the United States terms. Was the feeling at the time that it should be a high barrier, that it should be difficult to get initiative petitions on the ballot?
- Demapan: Well, I think it should be greater. The reason for that is this is an extremely small community and it's easy to get 20 percent. In fact, you go to a funeral here and it's like the whole island.
- Siemer: You could get 20percent at a funeral.
- Demapan: So it is different from the States in that regard. And word of mouth passes very quickly.
- Siemer: Then the Rota and Tinian delegates came back and wanted 20 percent on each of the islands. What was your view about that?
- Demapan: Well, at the time I can't just respect 20 percent for each [island]. My feeling at the time was that if it's Rota saying something because of its minority status, then I support that.
- Siemer: And then there was proposed compromise in which it would be 20 percent of each of two of the three islands.
- Demapan: That's right.
- Siemer: As the discussion went on the Rota and Tinian delegates seemed to focus less on what it would take to get it on the ballot and more on what it would take to approve the measure once it was on the ballot. Was it your expectation back in those days that if something was put on the ballot it would be likely to be approved if it was just a majority requirement?
- Demapan: Yes.
- Siemer: Why is that?
- Demapan: Well, I guess it's just by having it there in the ballot.
- Siemer: In the States it's very difficult to get something approved. People will vote against it, their instinct is to vote against. And here, people's instinct seems to vote for.
- Demapan: That's right.
- Siemer: And I wondered why that is—if there's a feeling that if it is on the ballot, somebody's made a judgment that it's probably good?
- Demapan: Especially if it's been moved by a major party. As you know, in a small community like Rota, everybody is involved. So if its placed in the ballot, it is almost guaranteed to be supported.
- Siemer: Then once people began to focus on how much it would take to approve—what kind of vote it would take to approve it—there was a proposal for approval by three-fourths of the registered voters, which seemed like a very substantial super-majority. Then there was a proposal for two-thirds of the votes cast. There were a lot of discussions about those

super-majorities—what would be comfortable. Was it your own view that it should be as difficult to pass an initiative, for example, as a Constitutional amendment?

Demapan: Well, I think it all depends.

Siemer: That discussion about how much, what kind of super majority should be required, took up quite a bit of time at the Convention. There were actually a large number of discussions of that. Was it the feeling of the folks from Rota and Tinian that the initiative was a serious threat to their power in the Senate?

Demapan: Well, it could be yes.

Siemer: Has that ever happened out here that you know of?

Demapan: No.

Siemer: Is there much use of the initiative?

Demapan: Not that I know of, not that much experience.

Siemer: At the time back then, when you were discussing this, did you expect that there would be much use of the initiative?

Demapan: No. The reason is that, you know, it was just a new thing for us, actually that concept. So I supported it because that gives our people the alternative.

Siemer: One of the other speeches that you made at the time was on this subject. Let me see if I can find it. It's at Page 68 and Page 69, and you made this speech at a time when the Convention had kicked this proposal back to your Committee and you were addressing that fairly emphatically.

Demapan: I think the problem at that time was that there was still doubt, that mistrust, or that something is going to be done to them [Rota and Tinian]. But I felt that probably we were worrying about something that we don't even need to worry about at all. I think that what I was trying to say. I want to see the Constitution work, this body work.

Siemer: Were you surprised at the end of the Constitution when Ben Manglona and others walked out?

Demapan: I was surprised; I was so surprised. But I will tell you this that I think they made a mistake.

Siemer: Why do you think so?

Demapan: They really don't have to [walk out]. I felt that in life just because you don't get one thing, that doesn't mean it's bad or it's not workable. There is a lot of give and take also in this life. I think that maybe if they can only look at the bigger picture, look at a total picture. I think if they had done that way, a lot of our differences probably would not have occurred in the first place, or would not have mattered really. But I think, in fact, I see that even right now here in the Senate.

Siemer: If there had been a different quality of leadership back, then that didn't foster the differences, maybe the outcome would had been different?

Demapan: Yes. But at the same time, with respect to education probably, the levels of the delegates' education, exposure, the way of looking at life.

Siemer: Were there efforts made to get the delegates who walked out to come back?

Demapan: I didn't see that at the time, no.

- Siemer: Were you worried at the time when they walked out that they might be able to bring the Convention to a halt?
- Demapan: Yes. That's why, in fact, in some of my speeches I always tried to emphasize this—to work, to try to come together.
- Siemer: Had there been either threats or discussions or talk about the possibility that they would walk out that you heard before they actually did?
- Demapan: Yes.
- Siemer: At the time, were you worried that there might be an effect on the vote to ratify the Constitution if the Rota delegates walked out—that even if they didn't bring the Constitution to a halt, there would be an effect on the vote later on?
- Demapan: No.
- Siemer: Let me ask you about a couple of the proposals that you made that did not make into the Constitution. Do you remember that process by which we wrote all of those down? You had a proposal which you said, with respect homesteads you wanted every family get a 100 x 100 plot out of the public lands? That was a lease proposal? Everybody would have use of 100 x 100?
- Demapan: Yes.
- Siemer: Was there enough land to go around at that time?
- Demapan: I think at the time, yes.
- Siemer: How do you feel about that now?
- Demapan: No. We have to do some changes, major changes also. We are running out; we have run out of lands.
- Siemer: One of the other proposals that you made was a proposal to prohibit the government from relinquishing any of its natural resources. And it seemed to be a proposal that wanted to limit the Legislature's authority to sell things. Do you remember anything about that?
- Demapan: Well, you know, not really.
- Siemer: Were you a part of the Committee that worked on the public education program after the Convention was over?
- Demapan: No.
- Siemer: What did you think about the public education program? How did you think it went?
- Demapan: I think it went very well.
- Siemer: Was there very much opposition to the Constitution at the time?
- Demapan: No.
- Siemer: How did you feel overall? Were you pleased with what the Convention had done?
- Demapan: I was extremely pleased. Except for one thing—it left me alone in this mid-term relationship. And for Saipan it's different. I am not really complaining, but you know in the general election you have all the senators, all the mayors, the Washington Rep, the Lieutenant Governor, the Governor together. I was by myself in this election, and that is an inequity. But it was good actually in a sense.

Willens: Well, thank you Mr. President. We have really enjoyed it very much and you have been very, very candid and constructive in your comments and I think it provides a very good record.

Demapan: Thank you so very much. I know that this [Third] Constitutional Convention is very important for us. I think there is a lot of things that we can fix, you know, some of the holes that we made [back in 1976]. Make it better.

Willens: Thank you.