

## INTERVIEW OF ALICIA DLG GUERRERO

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

February 12, 1997

- Willens: Alicia DLG Guerrero, has a very distinguished reputation on the island as one of the supreme organizers and she has helped three Constitutional Conventions do their job. Thank you, Alicia, for being available to help on this project. Could you begin the interview by telling us when and where you were born?
- Guerrero: Howard, thank you for the privilege to be interviewed. I was born here on Saipan on October 9, 1951. My father, who was the late John Pangelinan, was the former Director of Public Works for a long time for the Commonwealth government. He passed away on July 7, 1991. My mother is still alive and her name is Maria, and she works as a Shop Manager for Duty Free at the Grand Hotel.
- Siemer: What is her family name?
- Guerrero: Ada De Leon Guerrero.
- Willens: Were both of your parents born in the Northern Marianas?
- Guerrero: Yes, they both were.
- Willens: How far back do their individual families go in this community?
- Guerrero: My maternal grandparents, my grandmother from my mother's side, is a member of a very prominent family. She belongs to the Ada family that owned large businesses back in the early German period through the Japanese time. They lost most of their belongings during the war. They were seized by the Japanese government. They owned one of the big houses here in Garapan and that was years ago the Central Intelligence Office for the Japanese.
- Willens: Did they ever recover their land after the Americans came?
- Guerrero: They recovered part of what they really owned, not everything. One of their major holdings was land and that is where most of our families are now residing from the outer area. We all residing at the golf course area, Chalan Kanoa, that is one of the major portions that they own.
- Willens: And is it your understanding that on the maternal side of your family they came over during the German time?
- Guerrero: I understood that my great-grandfather was half Spanish and the other side of what he came from I don't know.
- Willens: Where did he come from?
- Guerrero: They said they originally came from Mexico. I don't know for sure. We are still tracing back our maternal side. They said that there were some records available over at the University of Guam, and one of my cousins are working on our family tree.
- Willens: How about on the paternal side?
- Guerrero: On the paternal side again on my mother's side, my grandfather came from a very poor family and worked as a baker for my grandmother and that is how they met and started their lives together with a small grocery store.

- Willens: When would that had been?
- Guerrero: That was back in the early 1940's. I remember very little in the 1950's because I was still a small girl then. Their store managed to stay put until the late 1950's about 1958 or 1959.
- Willens: Was it a grocery store?
- Guerrero: A small grocery store with some materials and yardage.
- Willens: Were they competing with Joeten and Manny Villagomez?
- Guerrero: Not really. Those were bigger competition and I think those two were more competing between themselves. I remember Joe's store when it first started in Chalan Kanoa. It was the first two-story store and the Villagomez store was over by where the Post Office is now located.
- Willens: What did your parents or grandparents tell you about their life under the Japanese Administration?
- Guerrero: They said it was hard. My grandfather started working with them as an interpreter, and they trained him into the judicial system at that time.
- Willens: He spoke Japanese.
- Guerrero: Yes, he spoke Japanese fluently. My grandmother very little, but my mother was very fluent with Japanese. She went to school up to Grade 4 if I am not mistaken.
- Willens: How did they learn to be fluent in Japanese when they had very limited schooling?
- Guerrero: According to my mother, it was like a mandatory language for them to speak at that time. They had to be very, very careful. My mother at that time was maybe fifteen or sixteen years old. She was born in 1929. She remembers the war very well.
- Willens: You mentioned that they regarded it as a hard time. Was it because they had difficulty in making a living?
- Guerrero: Yes, it was difficult for them because they were forced out of their house. The bakery shop was taken and most of the family earnings were impossible. Their grandfather also started a soap factory and they couldn't do that anymore like they used to before the war.
- Willens: When you speak about the war, are you talking about the actual invasion here in 1944 or are you thinking about the beginning of the war in the 1930's?
- Guerrero: Just going back to what my mother was telling us when we asked her about the story then. She said in the beginning it was okay. Their grandfather was a trader so he was traveling between here, Hong Kong, and Japan. As a matter of fact my mother's grandfather on her maternal side died in Hong Kong during that time.
- Siemer: About the Pangelinans on your father side, what business were they in?
- Guerrero: I am not to sure, Deanne, what they were in. My mom and dad were never married. They were just like a boyfriend, girlfriend type. We never really ventured into what my father's side did.
- Siemer: You all lived with your mom?
- Guerrero: We all lived with my mom. I know my grandfather held a very good position with the government. He was like an interpreter or an office worker. As a matter of fact, my father's oldest brother, Henry, was lost during the war and never found.
- Willens: Where was he located at the time?

- Guerrero: He was at that time working for the Japanese as an office boy.
- Willens: Was he working on the island of Saipan?
- Guerrero: He was working on the island of Saipan.
- Willens: He was never found?
- Guerrero: Yes, he was never found. Nobody really knew what happened to him so they just considered him missing.
- Siemer: During the war did any of your relatives work as interpreters in Guam for the Japanese?
- Guerrero: I am not sure.
- Willens: When your family was ejected from the house in Garapan, where did they go to live?
- Guerrero: Where we are now in the Chalan Kanoa area.
- Willens: Did the family have a farm?
- Guerrero: They were farming at the same time.
- Willens: What did they tell you as to what happened at the time of the invasion? For example, were they given a warning by the Japanese that there was going to be an invasion.
- Guerrero: No, not that I know of. They were not told anything. All they knew was they started hearing all these bomb sounds. My mother said there was bomb sound, whistling sound, just running through the air and then all you hear is a big explosion somewhere. She said from where they were they had to go to a cave very near to our place and to hide in there for three consecutive days without food and without water.
- Willens: And then what happened?
- Guerrero: And then eventually somebody came and told them that it was over and they had to move again from that place to a more secure place in Camp Susupe. She said that there were still gunshots and explosions going in different parts of the island. They weren't really sure if it was over or not. She said that everything came so suddenly.
- Willens: Did your family have any particular loyalties to the Japanese Administration at the time of the war?
- Guerrero: I can't answer that directly, Howard. But just my own personal view from what my mother was telling us, they had to show some respect and at the same time loyalty to the Japanese government or otherwise they would be executed. She said, that they were really tough and rough men there.
- Willens: What was their reaction when they were able to come out of their caves and go to the camp? Were they pleased with that?
- Guerrero: She said that it was a relief for them because it was hard to be without food and water for so many days and nights. Members of the family, young children with them, were dying inside the cave. They were not the only family in there. There were other families also brought together. They were all brought together to that cave.
- Willens: Were you the oldest child?
- Guerrero: I am the oldest child of Maria.
- Siemer: How many children did your mother have?
- Guerrero: Nine children, eight girls and one boy.

- Siemer: Can you identify them for us?
- Guerrero: Sure. I am the oldest and I am 45 years old. My brother James is 42 years old, my sister is 40 years old, Louise is 38 years old, Elaine is 36 years old, Jocelyn 32 years old, Carlene is 32 years old, and the twins, Bridget and Bertha, are both 30 years old.
- Siemer: Do all of them live here in Saipan?
- Guerrero: We are all here in Saipan except one of the twins, Bertha. She lives in Gresham, Oregon.
- Siemer: Tell us where you were educated?
- Guerrero: Here in Saipan.
- Siemer: What schools did you go to?
- Guerrero: I went to private school. I started out with kindergarten at Sister Remedios and eventually on to Mt. Carmel for grade school and high school. Then I took some off-campus courses with University of Guam, extension courses here in Saipan. The longest I had was three months training and that was in Honolulu, secretarial training.
- Siemer: When did you graduate from high school?
- Guerrero: In June of 1970.
- Siemer: Where did you go to work?
- Guerrero: I was a junior in high school when I started working as a store clerk for the late Senator Olympio Borja. I made 25 cents an hour. And then from there I went to work as an office clerk with the Peace Corps of Micronesia and stayed on with them for six years.
- Willens: Who was here from the Peace Corps during the period that you ran the office?
- Guerrero: Larry Cabrera and Mitch Pangelinan, they were my immediate supervisors. Of course, we had some other Peace Corps staffers from the States.
- Siemer: Did you work for them until they closed the office here?
- Guerrero: Yes, and then I moved to the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: When did you move to the Congress of Micronesia?
- Guerrero: In 1974.
- Siemer: What did you do there?
- Guerrero: I started out as a clerk typist and eventually moved up to Assistant Senate Clerk.
- Siemer: When was that?
- Guerrero: From 1974 all the way to 1977.
- Siemer: So you were here until they left as well?
- Guerrero: Yes. After I came back from three month assignment in Ponape for the transition period, I went to work for Pete Tenorio, who headed the Office of Transition Planning and Studies.
- Siemer: Pete A. Tenorio?
- Guerrero: Pete A. Tenorio. I was one of the luckiest women workers I say because I was the first one to be transferred, together with Amalia Lifoifoi, to work for them.
- Siemer: Did they take you from the staff of Congress of Micronesia?

- Guerrero: From the Congress of Micronesia to Pete A.'s office, the Transition office, and then on to the Northern Marianas District Legislature. That was one year before the new government took over.
- Siemer: So you arrived at the District Legislature in 1977?
- Guerrero: Yes, in April of 1977.
- Siemer: What did you do after the new legislature was elected?
- Guerrero: I stayed on.
- Siemer: What was your position?
- Guerrero: I worked as the clerk for the First Legislature. During the Second Legislature, I transferred to work for the legal office under the supervision of the late Roger St. Pierre. Then the new Chief Legal Counsel came in and his name is David Price. I stayed on with Dave through the Fourth Legislature. In the Fifth Legislature I stayed on. I worked up to the Seventh Legislature.
- Siemer: Who did you work for in Fifth?
- Guerrero: I was still a general clerk.
- Siemer: In the Sixth and Seventh?
- Guerrero: In the Sixth and Seventh, I was working with the Clerk's office.
- Willens: When did you leave the Legislature?
- Guerrero: In 1992. And then I went to work for Herman T. Guerrero.
- Willens: At the time when you graduated from high school in 1970, did you become aware of the need to make some choices about future political status?
- Guerrero: Yes. Walter Hickel came out here and that is why my son is named Walter. My oldest child is named Walter because my grandfather admired him so much.
- Willens: When the Secretary of Interior, Mr. Hickel, came out here in May of 1969, did you personally hear him speak?
- Guerrero: He spoke to the high school students, and I was a high schooler then. I was one of the, I guess, vocal students at that time. I was studying American democracy. He was speaking of a political future. What we were then would not necessarily be the case 10 to 20 years down the line. I remember exactly the question. I raised up my hand and he said, "Yes, young lady." I said, "What do you think is in store for us 10 to 20 years down the line? Can the United States government promise something?" He said, "Well, the United States government cannot make any promises. It is up to you, especially in your generation."
- Willens: Were you satisfied with that answer?
- Guerrero: So far, yes. I cherish my U.S. citizenship. I will never forget my experience when I walked into Guam Customs. One Sunday afternoon we came in as a group tour and I had to be put in a small box office with red lights running on top because they think we fugitives with a coconut passport. That was before I had my U.S. passport. It is one of the privileges that I feel anybody would be crazy to give up.
- Willens: When Secretary Hickel spoke before the Congress of Micronesia and other political leaders, he also outlined a seven-point action program dealing with equal pay for equal work for Micronesians in the TTPI government, more infrastructure, and other items that

had been a concern out here for many years. Do you have any recollection now as to what the reaction of the people was to that set of promises?

Guerrero: One of the issues he raised, is what you just said, Howard, equal pay for equal work. I think it was based on that statement that this civil lawsuit came about the class action suit that you probably are aware of that came about. Some Micronesians sued for equal pay versus American people or staffers that were sent out here to work because they think they are performing the same kind of work and they are getting lesser pay, three times less than what this American person is getting. I remember that issue very well because my mother was working for the Trust Territory government at that time. My father was also working with the Public Works Department. But my mother, especially, she was one of the chief accountants with very little educational background but with a lot of training. I really give her credit for having the incentive, the motive to go on and learn more. She became one of the Chief Accountants. And when this issue about the class action suit came about, she asked us for our opinion, and we told her back then that you know what you were getting yourself into. You know that was your rate of pay and you know how much your boss was making then. Why didn't you talk then? Why complain now? She said, "Oh, well, the leader of the group was saying that this brought up by one guy that came from Washington, D.C. who says, equal work for equal pay." I said, "Back then, this is now. You don't want to ruin your opportunity to learn or to get a good job after you leave the government." And there were a lot of people that started getting together. I know one of the people that they really looked up to and talked to about this issue was the late Jess Mafnas, the late Vice Speaker. A lot of people back then thought of him way up there. He is very vocal, and if he doesn't like you, excuse the language but he can tell you right in the face, stick it up your rear or the hell with you! That is how he is.

Willens: Do you remember approximately when that lawsuit was brought? Was it after the Covenant had been entered into?

Guerrero: No, I would say early 70's because I remember it started coming about when I was still at the Congress of Micronesia and our office was still up at Capitol Hill. The main headquarters building was down where the Governor's office is right now. So a lot of time we would be commuting back and forth because our main man, Mr. Neiman Craley, was the Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs. So we did a lot of running back and forth back then between Congress of Micronesia office to Mr. Craley's office. I was working with the Congress, and I was hearing about this lawsuit coming about.

Willens: Did your mother join the lawsuit?

Guerrero: No.

Willens: Was equal pay for equal work something that people felt strongly about?

Guerrero: They felt betrayed. I can't put it better than that. That was the consensus of the majority then. They felt betrayed because they were doing just about the same amount of work, and they were responsible for their jobs; they were being deceived with their scale of pay.

Willens: For many years during the 1960's and the early 1970's, the Trust Territory government made representations about increasing the number of Micronesian and TTPI jobs. Did the TTPI do that?

Guerrero: Yes, I believe so. For example, the late John Sablan was Deputy High Commissioner. I strongly believe then that he had landed that job with strong recommendations from American people or American staffers that were out here.

- Willens: Did you think that the people thought that they did have opportunities to be promoted to higher positions?
- Guerrero: They were promoted. I saw Jess Mafras becoming Chief of Revenue and Taxation. We had many people become directors and officers. My father became Deputy Director of Public Works then.
- Siemer: You spoke of Neiman Craley, did you know him back in those days?
- Guerrero: Yes. It was his wife who really pushed me to go for the special training on secretarial work.
- Siemer: When did you first get to know the Craleys?
- Guerrero: I was still going to school. They had this adopted son from Puerto Rico. He was my classmate. So every now and then they have Thanksgiving parties or Halloween parties and they would invite us in.
- Siemer: What was his job at that time when you first got to know him?
- Guerrero: He was already Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs. His wife was the General Clerk for the Senate.
- Siemer: How was he regarded by the local people back then?
- Guerrero: Very nice. As a matter of fact when we heard news about his wife's passing away a lot of people felt very bad, and then we had a memorial service for her. Neiman Craley had established himself in the community. He was well-respected and well loved by a lot of people here.
- Siemer: So he had good contact with the Chamorro families?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Siemer: How about on the Carolinian side?
- Guerrero: Honestly the Carolinians are very hard to get to know. A lot of time they will say they are the minority and people, Chamorros as well, looked down at them. And that is not really the case. They are the ones that really put themselves as the minorities because they find it very difficult to mingle with the community. Growing up I know that for a fact. Our house, the first house I knew since I was born until we moved to where we are right now, was right next to the Carolinian community. We were very much privileged. My grandfather was able to buy us an American swing set, and we were the only ones in that neighborhood that had a swing set. The Carolinian kids find it very offensive to come to our place or to our yard and play with us because we have the swing set. My grandfather taught us how to mingle with them. We let them come and play. We would let them see what a swing would do if you get on the seat and swing yourself back and forth or get on the slide and slide yourself down. A lot of times at village community meetings you will find all the Chamorros sitting down and there would still be spaces in the Community hall. But the Carolinians would be standing outside because they think that is not their place or they are supposed to give way. They said it is respect, and I respect them for that. I still think it is wrong.
- Siemer: Did that make it harder for people outside the immediate community like the Craleys to get to know the Carolinians?
- Guerrero: I know the Craleys know a lot of Carolinians. Dr. Palacios, for one, is half Carolinian and I know they had a relationship with Dr. Palacios.W

- Willens: The High Commissioner in those days, Mr. Johnston, did he have much of a relationship with the Carolinian people?
- Guerrero: Mr. Johnston was not very popular. I am sorry.
- Willens: I would be interested in hearing your recollection of why it was that he was not popular?
- Guerrero: I really don't know, Howard. I just know that he is not very popular. You mention High Commissioner Johnston and you see all those eyes just glaring up and some of them are getting additional redness. I know it is not that good. I was young but the general consensus at that time was he thinks that people should just look up to him and not say no to him. We are supposed to cater to his demands.
- Siemer: Not disagree and not question what he has done?
- Guerrero: Yes, not question him. I remember High Commissioner Goding who was very popular. Deputy High Commissioner Benitez was popular, too. People like him and they think he likes to come out and mingle with the people. The most or the best liked High Commissioners was Janet McCoy.
- Willens: Janet McCoy in the late 70's?
- Guerrero: It was later in the 70's, but a lot of people were very moved and very touched when she was leaving. There were a lot of people at the turnover ceremony up at Capitol Hill. You could see a lot of them weeping because I could see napkins being passed out. I was there.
- Willens: Did you affiliate with a political party early on in your career?
- Guerrero: Yes, very early because my grandfather from my mother's side was one of the families of the Republican Party. Back then it was known as the Territorial Party.
- Willens: So did you affiliate with the Territorial Party?
- Guerrero: Yes. The only time my parents would cross voting would be when Ed Pangelinan was running for Washington Rep. They would just cross over to vote Ed in and everybody else even if you were a donkey or a mule running under the Territorial Party, they would vote for you. They felt it was a straight down party belief.
- Willens: Then Eddie came back to the Republican Party?
- Guerrero: Yes, he came back to the Republican Party. A lot of times he was really persuaded by family members. Eddie is my grandfather's youngest sister's son.
- Siemer: He is a cousin?
- Guerrero: He is an uncle to me. He is a cousin to my mother. I am related to Eddie both ways, from his mother's side and his father's side. His father is related to my father and his mother is my auntie from my grandfather's side.
- Willens: In 1969 there was a referendum here in Saipan and also in Guam as to whether to integrate Guam and Northern Marianas. Did you have a view on that subject?
- Guerrero: From my grandfather's group, you know the Republican Party, they think integration with Guam was stupid. Because he said if we want to be connected we should go direct. I learned a lot about that because they would have leadership meetings at the house and they would come and talk. I would be sitting in one of the halls and listening. They would say, "If we want to be really associated with the United States, why can't we go direct? Why go through Guam when Guam doesn't even care for us?" You know, those men would say, "They don't give a damn." They are firm in what they think.

- Willens: Who were some of the leaders that you remember coming to the house?
- Guerrero: There was the late Juan Sablan, former Judge Ada, my grandfather, and there was Dr. Palacios, who was still Territorial then, Dr. Kaipat from the Carolinian group, and late Judge Benavente. These people are old, they are really looked up to. Back then, if these six people say, you bow down for 24 hours, everybody would bow down then. If they say, we think you are a candidate for this seat in the Municipal Council, then you get to be a candidate. If you do a good job, you stay on and if you don't do a job believe me they will kick you out even before your term is up. That is how it was then. It started getting more bitter and more wild I say because of the newer ideas younger members come in with. I remember, especially one time, Eddie decided to run for public office and he got on the wrong side of the street and here we are on the other side of the street. My grandfather felt very, very offended. Even the leaders of the Territorial Party then, they think it very offensive to my grandfather. Being the oldest, on Eddie's mother side, he should listen and go back to the elders. I guess Eddie has a more modern way of thinking. But eventually my grandfather was so secretive about it. I know they cheated when they voted because I found out later. It was very hard back then. They can be throwing rocks during campaign hours. You may be my brother and I am your sister and I can campaign against you right up there. You would be looking at me, and that is how it is.
- Willens: Do you have a recollection as to why Ed Pangelinan ran on the Popular Party ticket for the Congress of Micronesia rather than the Territorial Party?
- Guerrero: I honestly can't say why, maybe because the Popular Party back then was more led by younger members than the older people. There were more younger men in the leadership. I know he was a good friend of Joe Cruz, the late Joe Cruz. And Joe Cruz back then was very influential.
- Willens: What is your recollection of Joe Cruz?
- Guerrero: I am sorry, Howard, I have no respect for the guy at all. He may have done some good, but he could have done better. I respect him as a leader of the Commonwealth then and probably paving the way for Commonwealth status. A lot of times he would come up and say this when that is not actually what he wants to say. A lot of times I would hear them argue, especially in the Legislature because he was a member then. He would say, "I agree with you" but then he turns around and stabs that person right in the back. He knows how I felt about him because I asked him one time and questioned him: "You may think I am stupid, but I know what is going in there. I hear you say I support you and then all of a sudden you turn around and be bargaining in the back asking for the other people that are more vocal to vote against. So it dies on the floor. If you don't like it say so. You don't like it, you don't want it period." And then one time there was a confrontation between him, Pedro R. [Guerrero] and Herman Q [Guerrero]. I am sorry, I left out one guy, the Mayor of Tinian right now. They almost threw soft drink cans among themselves. It was over a simple amendment to their budget bill.
- Willens: When would that had been?
- Guerrero: In late 1977.
- Siemer: Going back to the time right after the plebiscite in Guam, the Territorial Party had to deal with the idea in the Congress of Micronesia that all of Micronesia should stay together. What were their views back then about the other areas of Micronesia?
- Guerrero: I know one of the biggest fears was the Marianas was a small portion compared to the other Micronesian entities. And they were afraid that power would never come to the Northern

Marianas area and the power would stay with the other Micronesian entities. They tried to make sure that they put the right people in the Congress, people who are vocal, people who can fight for the rights of the Northern Marianas people. The fear was we were really outnumbered, which is true. They could all get together and here we are just a handful compared to a basket full. So it was one of the major issues that they were very concerned with. Both parties here in the Northern Marianas were fighting to make sure that they put in the right person to represent the Northern Marianas people. I don't know. As a staffer during the Congress of Micronesia times, I think we were equally represented. The other Micronesian entities were very cooperative. They listened to our needs and concerns with open arms and open ears. Of course, there were times that they argued and battled on the floor, but it doesn't only happen to the Northern Marianas. They fought over Yap, you know, why do you want so much money when you only have 1,300 people. And then here comes Palau. They say, we have this many people and we need this much. Of course, the quarrel was among the six districts. It wasn't only a concern for the Northern Marianas. And I could hear it on their platforms when they go on their campaigns.

Willens: There were occasions when Dr. Palacios, who served in the Congress of Micronesia, made some speeches in support of a unified Micronesia. Was he at odds with the majority in the Territorial Party at the time?

Guerrero: Yes. I don't know how far true it was, Howard. I was still young. But, of course, I was interested in what would happen in the future. Like our elders would always say, don't think of yourself now but let's think of the many generations to come. It sort of opened up our eyes and ears to listen to what goes on. I am not too sure which one of them said it in one of their meetings, but they said maybe he was very much giving in to the Micronesian entities because of his blood line. He was half Carolinian and, of course, he has sisters who came somewhere from Chu'uk. It was in one of the [legislative] battles about the Chu'uk Islands, which one I am not too sure. That was associated with him. And the same thing went with Dr. Kaipat.

Willens: Did you have the understanding at the time that the Carolinian leadership as a group wanted to stay with the rest of Micronesia?

Guerrero: Yes. It was their decisions that maybe it would be best to stay with the rest of Micronesian entities rather than seceding from the Micronesia group and moving on with their own political status.

Willens: In 1969, the Congress of Micronesia Future Status Commission issued a long report in which they recommended to the Congress of Micronesia that the Micronesians pursue a relationship known as "free association" with the United States or in the alternative independence. Dr. Palacios and Benjamin Manglona served on that Commission. Do you have any recollection as to what the reaction was in the Northern Marianas to that report?

Guerrero: No, Howard, I am sorry I don't. I was a student then. If I am not mistaken it is called Future Political Status Commission for the Congress of Micronesia.

Willens: As a result of the Secretary Hickel's visit and the report, the Congress of Micronesia did send a delegation to Washington. In late 1969 and early 1970, there were two rounds of negotiations. At some time the United States delegation offered what was called a commonwealth proposal to the Micronesians for their consideration, and the Congress of Micronesian delegation turned it down. Do you have any recollection about that?

Guerrero: If I am not mistaken the late President Lazarus Salii was a member of that.

- Willens: He was a member of the delegation, and he subsequently became head of what was called, the Future Status Committee of the Congress of Micronesia. Do you remember any discussion here in the Northern Marianas as to this commonwealth proposal and whether it should have been adopted by the Micronesians?
- Guerrero: I don't, I am sorry.
- Willens: Let's turn to the Peace Corps if we might just for a brief period of time. You began working for them before you graduated from high school?
- Guerrero: I started in December of 1968 and I left there in 1973 to go work for the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: Approximately how many volunteers, if you can recall, were part of the Northern Marianas Peace Corps group?
- Guerrero: I can't remember the figure exactly, Howard. But I know under Group I we had about 100 plus volunteers.
- Siemer: Did the Peace Corps office here administer all of Micronesia?
- Guerrero: All of Micronesia. There was one main office called Peace Corps Micronesia and then there is Peace Corps Marianas. Peace Corps Micronesia is where Larry Cabrera was and that was where I was working. Peace Corps Marianas is the office which Mitch Pangelinan ran. And, of course, if they need support staff they would pull us out to go work with them. Most of the training was done in Key West, Florida. My father, John Pangelinan, was one of their language instructors. That was for Phase III. There was Phase I through Phase VII.
- Siemer: Phase I started in 1965?
- Guerrero: Yes, in Key West.
- Siemer: And so you came in at Phase II?
- Guerrero: Yes, Phase II. No, I am sorry Phase III. I was with Phase III all the way to Phase VII. At first they were spreading them out over a year's time and then they started coming every six months. So the biggest phases we had, if I am not mistaken, were V and VI. That was when we had the bulk of volunteers down in San Antonio at the school campus.
- Willens: What did the volunteers do principally here in the Northern Marianas?
- Guerrero: Most of them were teachers and nurses, you know medical staffers. There were a couple of engineers. One was a civil engineer, who I remember so well. His name is Allen Bluestone and the other one was John Robertson. He is an African-American. Both worked with my father at Public Works. And, of course, they were part of Phase III. And two ladies, Gerri, I forgot Gerri's last name, but her first name is Geraldine. And the other was Lydia, she is now Lydia Castro. She got married to one of the local guys. We took them into our house and we sponsored them. A lot of them would find sponsors. They were helpful. They tried their best, of course. In those days, the hippie style was popular. They would come in with long hair and jewelry, you know, loose shirts and baggy pants. It is the style now but back then people here think it is really crazy and creepy. Why did the President send these people out here? They are trashy, they are showing bad influence. They started grooming up and then the community started to accept them.
- Willens: Did the Northern Marianas citizens think it was appropriate to have Peace Corps volunteers here?

Guerrero: Some think yes, some think no. Some say it is a welcome opportunity and the others say there is no room for them. To me back then I said, yes, especially when it came to the educational situation. A lot of the teachers we had back then were just on-site training teachers. They went to what was called the Micronesian Occupational Center (“MOC”). A lot of them were not able to go to the Micronesian Community College because they had to pay a fee. But with the Micronesian Occupational Center, you meet a certain criteria and you eligible to go. The government will pay for it. They were not really well-educated teachers. They come back and teach you what they can or what they read the book. The teachers they had back then, local teachers, they would say two and two is four. But why two and two is four, they don’t know that. I remember very well, the Lieutenant Governor now, Jesus Borja, was always asking why. Back in school he was two years ahead of me but believe me, he had questions. The nuns were our teachers and they are well-educated. They came with degrees. For example, in physics they would teach the first of gravity and you come up and say “Why?” They would say “Because it is.” And you would say, “Why?” They would say, “Because it says it in the book.” Jesus would say, “Prove it to me, why.” The teachers had the hardest time with the lab. We were very happy when Jesus graduated. But if it was our local teachers, they would just say “You pay attention and just believe it because it is stated in the book.” When the Peace Corps teachers came in, I had four of them for my teachers. I had one for speech and drama, one for office skills, for shorthand, who left us in first quarter because her parents died in car crash. She didn’t feel like going on. I had one for American Literature and the other was my instructor for math trigonometry and calculus. They were very good. I know especially in the public school system, the public education it was free and a lot of students would go there. Only the very fortunate ones made it to private schools for the higher curriculum or a higher learning. But in the public school sector it was a great help to them.

Siemer: What about when you worked for the Congress of Micronesia, were there Peace Corps or ex-Peace Corps people there?

Guerrero: Not ex-Peace Corps. There were Peace Corps volunteers. Mike White was one of them. Mike White came out of the Peace Corps. It was February, Mike White and several attorneys were out here.

Siemer: What did you observe about their impact on the Congress of Micronesia?

Guerrero: I guess they came out as law interns. They were fresh out of college. They really worked hard. Don Parkinson for one, I worked with him at Congress of Micronesia. But Mike White, especially, he was good. Even now Mike is a hardworking person. Back then he worked very closely with Olympio Borja. He was a hardworking person. He would sit and research and stay on and stay on until God knows what time. There were a lot of them that were out here. I believe Mike’s group started out with maybe four or five interns and then another batch would come in.

Willens: Were there any instances where Peace Corps volunteers or Peace Corps lawyers made public statements criticizing the Trust Territory government?

Guerrero: Not that I know of, unless maybe I was unaware of them.

Willens: Near the end of the Peace Corps program in the Northern Marianas, there was a report suggesting that many of the volunteers were dissatisfied with the situation here in the Northern Marianas, especially as it looked as though it was going to become part of the United States. Do you have any recollection of discussion along those lines?

Guerrero: No.

- Willens: In 1971, while you were working for the Peace Corps, there was a very dramatic event here in Saipan when the Congress of Micronesia building was burned down by an alleged arsonist. Were you on the island at the time?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: How did you first hear about this event?
- Guerrero: I didn't hear that night it happened. I heard about the next day at work, and Linda said they suspected this particular group. I know for sure that one of the groups that were suspected then were Peace Corps volunteers because they think that they are anti-American. They thought they are disloyal, not respecting what the United States is trying to pass down to us. I could almost respect your people back then trying to go through, trying to salvage what they could. Mr. Brown was the Chief of Administrative Services for Peace Corps of Micronesia back then. He found out that we took a Peace Corps office car and went up to Congress of Micronesia site to take a look at what was burned down. We all got in trouble and we didn't get paid for two days.
- Willens: Was he afraid you would be accused?
- Guerrero: We would be accused because we didn't know what was then the accusation about him and he already knew that a group of volunteers, the Peace Corps volunteers, were being associated with the burning of the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: Did you think the people in the community knew in fact who did it?
- Guerrero: I know some people who pointed fingers. One, for a fact, was saying that it was the Republican Party's representatives in Congress then because they did not agree to what was going on. Mostly there was a budget fight and political status fight. They just wanted to burn down everything that they could. Fortunately, there were extra copies being stored in another building that they didn't destroy.
- Willens: Then there was another occasion on which I guess Herman Q. Guerrero and others marched up to the Congress of Micronesia.
- Guerrero: They burned the Trust Territory flag and I think, if I am not mistaken, the Code.
- Willens: Were you there at that time?
- Guerrero: Yes, because somebody leaked the news out that there was going to be a burning of the Trust Territory flag, the Trust Territory Code, and even the Holy Bible they swear [the oath of office] on. So out of curiosity they let us go and we were hiding up on the hillside where the parking is going up to the Governor's office before you make the turn for the regular parking. We were watching what was going on.
- Willens: What was the reaction of the leadership of the Congress of Micronesia?
- Guerrero: It was crazy. I guess to them it was a crazy move by the people here. I know our local leaders were not very happy especially people in their position on the opposite party.
- Willens: In the Territorial Party?
- Guerrero: Yes, in the Territorial Party. They really think it was stupid and demeaning to the people in the Marianas because people we put into office were the ones who led the protest march. I think one went to Johnston's house.
- Willens: Did he make any statement in response to the demonstration?
- Guerrero: Not that I remember, Howard. I was more curious to see what was being burned.

Siemer: After the Future Political Status Commission dealt with the United States for awhile, the United States agreed to separate negotiations with the Marianas, and the Political Status Commission was appointed here. What do you remember about the politics of the appointment of the members of the Political Status Commission back in those days?

Guerrero: I knew that question was coming. Honestly, my own personal view from the people that were talking, especially the party leaders, they were not very pleased when Joe Cruz became a member. They surely believed that Joe Cruz is a two-tongue person. The same principle applied to Ben Camacho.

Siemer: From Saipan.

Guerrero: They really looked up to Benjamin Manglona because they think Benjamin was more honest, and in his presentation of himself he was very truthful in presenting his position. They felt that the representation from Rota was good, although there were kind of these reservations about Joe Cruz and Ben Camacho.

Siemer: What about Jose Tenorio, Joeten, who was on the Commission and who represented the business community. Did people think it was appropriate to have businessman on the Commission?

Guerrero: They think they should have a business representative because of the economically developmental future, economic developments to the islands. Although people respected and looked up to Joeten, they still think that he's very much a self-centered person. People back then would prefer to see Villagomez represent the business community. Although Joeten was very open to the public or very giving. If you can't afford to buy it then, he can open a small account for you and keep it running. But in the end if you can't pay for it, you know, you owe \$150 to his store, you better give him your land in return. I eventually asked my grandfather one time why was he one of the people that was strongly against having Joeten on the Political Status Commission. He said, "I just don't trust him." As much as he may be saying he wants to help the community, he has not really helped the community because he has tried to be very possessive of what you own if you can't pay a small line of credit with his stores. And he said if it [Joeten's business] is expanded and especially with the small business community we won't be able to give opportunity to smaller mom and pop stores.

Siemer: How did people feel about the very young people, like Eddie Pangelinan, who were on the Commission?

Guerrero: I know they liked young people being in there, although they would like to balance it out, older people with younger people mingling in the Commission. But back then they had high respect for Eddie because his mother was one of the church leaders. For example, like there is a death in the family, we have this customary 18 nights of rosary. It would be Eddie's mom leading the people in prayers for that rosary. There is one rosary at 4 o'clock and she would be in that house singing the prayers and then on to the next house until God knows what time at night. She is practically on the road doing church work. Eddie has good prospects with the people because of his mother. But not with his father. Eddie's father was not really liked in the community. But he has earned respect and a place in the community mostly because of his mother's work of mercy I should say.

Siemer: Once the U.S. delegation arrived here and people saw the Ambassador and understood who these people were on the U.S. side, was there any sense in the community that the U.S. was a better negotiating team or had more ability than the local side?

- Guerrero: You know Oscar Rasa. He was one of the vocal anti-American movers then. I don't know what his title was then, but I remember Secretary James Joseph.
- Willens: Secretary of Interior for awhile.
- Guerrero: He was one of the people that came out here for I guess a Political Status Commission meeting or whatever. There was I think it was a village, an island like meeting. I am trying to remember who stood up and said, "Are we are going to be prejudiced with Americans because here they send out a black American as one of their representatives?" And a subsequent question came up like "I guess the United States has opened its doors and there is no more of this racial discrimination or inferiority catering towards small ethnic groups and being prejudiced to a small ethnic group. They are probably willing to cater to us and listen to our position and guide us towards our political move." I remember I was sitting right next to my uncle then. It was a well-attended meeting. Of course, here comes Oscar, young and people think he's really sharp mind because he was attending school off-island and, of course, his brother Alfonso was very popular among teenagers because he is a macho guy. They would come up and start bringing up ideas, feeding people, "But if we do this, you want to do this, you are going to lose this." They might as well really sit down and work it out. I remember bringing up to Oscar when he was Speaker of the Legislature, "But you weren't really interested back then to become a member of the American political family." He told me flat out, "Shut up". Because Oscar back then was very influential, and he was really campaigning hard, especially on election day for the plebiscite. You know for the political status.
- Siemer: He campaigned against?
- Guerrero: He campaigned against. My godmother, God rest her soul, I fought with her for almost one year. We weren't even on speaking terms because she strongly believes in Oscar. She was Oscar's babysitter then, you know. She said, "No, but Oscar came back, he is well-educated, he knows what is going on." And I said, "Yes, but Oscar thinks differently." He hears Eddie Pangelinan talking about this one, and, of course, I brought up Joe Cruz. And even something changed him. Oscar already infiltrated their minds then.
- Siemer: Was Oscar urging that the U.S. was too difficult for the Commission to deal with?
- Guerrero: Actually in a sense he was trying to say then that the United States is trying to tell us "You do this and we will give this in return." Instead of us telling the United States that this is what we want and what can you give in return. Benjamin Manglona was one of the strong campaigners in favor of the Covenant. Also the former Mayor of Tinian, James Mendiola's father, Felipe Mendiola. They were all trying to campaign and tell the people that this good for us. Deep down what I think Oscar was trying to do with this group was to really put out everything in the open. I know back then they go out and campaign, but they don't really give us all the details. They say, "This is what they say and this is what they are going to give us if in return we give them this," especially when it came to the land leases for Tinian.
- Siemer: When you say that they went out and campaigned, the Political Status Commission tried to explain but they couldn't convey all the details of the Covenant?
- Guerrero: No, they are not really revealing everything in the Covenant.
- Siemer: What about the fact that the Marianas Political Status Commission and the leadership retained a U.S. lawyer to represent them? Did that cause people concern here?
- Guerrero: No, not that I know of.

- Siemer: As the Political Status Commission went along and as the American delegations came and went, how did people feel about the information that they were getting from the Commission about what was going on?
- Guerrero: You know where the major confusion really was, Deanne, with the [Section] 902 negotiations and that all those works. A lot of the people then were getting older, of course, younger back then, but they were moving up in the generation level. Like the younger ones would now call them the “stewing chickens.” That is the terminology for like Benjamin Manglona and that age group.
- Siemer: That he was a very tough old bird?
- Guerrero: The way that Benjamin would go to the United States and negotiate 902 or they would come out here. A lot of people think maybe back then they really didn’t do their negotiations right and that was why Benjamin was going back again, because he was part of the Political Status Commission. Of course, those who understood what the situation was tried to interpret it differently. They think that we still were not able to get our message across and in return the United States was misreading what we really want. In my personal opinion, talking with people and seeing how they react, the blame was really on our leaders and not the United States part. That was one of the reasons why Benjamin started losing credibility with the people because of their misunderstanding on the positions on 902 renegotiation phases. And not being able to sign the First Constitution, walking out in the Third [Constitutional Convention]. He still thinks we are in the late 1960’s, early 1970’s.
- Willens: As we get older we do tend to go back to those earlier years.
- Guerrero: But I don’t think that he was a person that was willing to change. He is sitting here, seeing the left wall and you know the answer is on the right wall. He is still saying that it is on the left wall. He is not going change. That is how he is.
- Willens: Let me mention a few members of the Commission that you may have recollection about. The Vice Chairman was Ben Santos. What was your assessment of Ben Santos in those days?
- Guerrero: Ben Santos in those days was respected and people looked up to him. I don’t know where he failed. I don’t what he did, but people started losing confidence and trust in Ben. And that was his eventual fallout from political office. I mean from one of the top vote-getters to almost the last person [in number of votes] and him never making it to elected office again.
- Willens: Did he ever run for office under the new Commonwealth government?
- Guerrero: He did.
- Willens: What did he run for?
- Guerrero: He was in the Northern Marianas District Legislature before the First Commonwealth Legislature came in. And he admitted his intention to run, but he didn’t even make it into the party lineup.
- Willens: So the party would not support him as a candidate for the First Commonwealth Legislature?
- Guerrero: Even now, people regard Ben as a very self-interested person. Knowing him personally and my association with him, especially with church work, I am sorry I don’t respect him anymore. He said he wanted to donate this much for the church and do this much work.

Then he turned around and sent a bill to the church. We were caught by surprise, and I began to find out why people are feeling not friendly towards him. He doesn't hold a strong position in the community nowadays.

- Willens: Let me venture another name that happens to be someone you worked with for awhile, that is Mitch Pangelinan. What was the community assessment of him at the time?
- Guerrero: Mitch has done a lot of good for the people, Howard. Whether he is in political office or as a social or civic duty, a lot of people still have high respect for Mitch. You know a lot of times they will ask him for his opinion. Most recently they questioned his motive on why is he one of the strong supporters for Lieutenant Governor Borja rather than the Governor. Is it because of personal differences or anything to that effect.
- Siemer: He is one of the four who voted against the proposal doing away with the primary?
- Guerrero: Yes. He said when Froilan first announced that he is not seeking a second term, the Governor didn't admit that it was Mitch who first advised him that he announced his intention too early. He said, something may happen down the line I think it is too early for you to make that decision. And, of course, that is where the commotion started coming on too strong between Mitch and the Governor.
- Siemer: Back in the Peace Corps days, was Mitch a strong member of the Democratic Party?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Siemer: And was he working with the Party committee and things like that?
- Guerrero: Yes, he was one of those young leaders of the Party then.
- Siemer: Was he a hard worker trying to get out the vote and do things like that?
- Guerrero: Yes. He goes house-to-house and talks to people. Even now, people will listen to him. If Mitch goes to you, and you may have your mind made up, Mitch can come to you and say, if you work with this person, this person can do this and do that. That person's mind can change. The only problem that really is hurting him right now with his credibility is his wife's association with drugs. She is very heavy into drugs. That caused him a lot of pain and problems within their family circle. I still see him around. I know he comes to the house and honk a horn and says, "Joe, let's go to the CC [Democratic Central Committee] meeting," and they get in the car and go. They were supporting Jesus, but unfortunately they lost.
- Willens: Let me mention another name, Oly Borja, who had a long history in the Commonwealth politics.
- Guerrero: The longest term in Commonwealth politics; he was swinging back and forth like the gate.
- Willens: He was a member of the Territorial Party leadership?
- Guerrero: Yes, he started out with the Territorial Party leadership and then he eventually he started feeling sour. He felt his name was becoming very sour in the Territorial arena so he moved on to the Popular side. When his name started becoming sour again, no more sweetness, he moved back to the Territorial Party.
- Willens: He ran with Joeten to be the first Lieutenant Governor. Why do you think that ticket lost in 1977?
- Guerrero: Of course, it was our first election for Governor and everybody is very interested. We go listen to the political campaigns, one campaign for the Republican Party and then go to

hear the Democratic Party. They could have won. They lost by a mere 170 some votes, I think. They could have won. It just that I guess those 100 plus people felt that if Joe Tenorio wins, it would be for his own self-interest. Especially with Joeten.

Willens: Because they were businessmen?

Guerrero: The people fear him. Even now his son-in-law, Senate President Sablan running with [Pedro P.] Tenorio, that is becoming a very strong talk among the community.

Siemer: Is he Annie Tenorio's husband?

Guerrero: Yes.

Siemer: And Annie runs the Joeten's businesses.

Guerrero: Yes, and they are very much in control. They run. You listen.

Willens: So you think there may be some echoes in the community that go back to the same concerns people had in 1977.

Guerrero: Yes.

Siemer: Back in those days when the Covenant was being discussed in the community before the Commission actually voted on it, when negotiations were still going on, what was it that began to turn the Carolinians against the idea of the Covenant?

Guerrero: The Carolinians really think of themselves as the minority. And they felt that if we really proceed or go ahead with this political status that we are trying to get from the United States that we would really shut them out. That is when they really started claiming that Managaha was their island because Chief Aghurubw was buried there.

Siemer: How do spell the Chief's name?

Guerrero: I believe it is spelled Aghurubw.

Siemer: We have trouble with Carolinian spellings.

Guerrero: Even myself, but I am pretty sure. I am 99.9% sure that is how it is spelled. But that is how they felt. I don't know if you noticed but even back then when they started claiming land belonging to one particular clan they said, this clan owns this part of Saipan, this clan owns this portion here, this parcel. If you notice, most of the Carolinians are located on the beach side. A lot of the Chamorros are in the inner areas or the back side of the cliffs. The claim then was that they were the first settlers here in the Northern Marianas. When they first came, whoever was the ruler then said, you own as much land as far as your eyes can see. And because they were the first settlers, and they come in as fisherman and mariners, they claimed the beach areas.

Siemer: When the Chamorros came later to homestead, they claimed the inland areas?

Guerrero: Yes, the inland areas.

Siemer: When the community was in the final process of deciding to vote for or against this Covenant, do you recall any reaction about whether they should go ahead and do it or whether they should take longer to discuss it?

Guerrero: No, they felt that they should go ahead and vote against it. They felt that the question put on the ballot was misleading.

Siemer: The Carolinians did?

- Guerrero: The Carolinians did, and some Chamorros. You know, especially Oscar's group, the younger leaders or the leaders of the younger group.
- Siemer: Oscar began to focus his campaign against the Covenant on renegotiating some points and getting a better deal. What was the reaction of your grandfather, and others that he knew, to whether they could get a better deal or not?
- Guerrero: They just ruled them out completely. Oscar was one of those rowdy boys on the island. Wherever there is a riot, you know, I associate it with him because he always got into fights. There was a basketball game, I remember. The Peace Corps volunteers and the Peace Corps directors they have their own team. If this Peace Corps team plays with Oscar's team it guarantees there is a fight on the basketball court. So wherever Oscar is there, there is a fight. The party leaders from both the Territorial and Popular side just don't really think his concerns or his preaching are meaningful at all. They think it's worthless. Unfortunately, my grandfather from my mother's side didn't make it into the deliberations of the political status. But my grandfather from my father's side got in. He is a very small old man and he knows what he is talking about. He became one of the party leaders with, of course, Dr. Palacios and Dr. Kaipat. Their minds were set. This is what we want; this is how we are going to do it. After the Commission's time, when we already in Commonwealth status, they started to relating some of our problems to the negotiations or some of the disagreements that transpired during the negotiations. Especially with Joe Cruz. Those ideas came from Oscar. How far true it is, I don't know. But that did surface, especially during the First Commonwealth Legislature term. It was strongly discussed among them.
- Willens: When you were working with the Congress of Micronesia, and the separate negotiations with the Marianas were coming to conclusion, what was your understanding as to whether the Congress of Micronesia opposed the Northern Marianas having its own separate relationship with the United States?
- Guerrero: I personally asked the late President Salii. I am very close with him. I know him very well, and I asked him how he felt about it. He said he respected our position, but he would have felt better if the whole Micronesian entity would come in and discuss their political status with the United States. At least try to come in as a group. He felt that it was kind of early to secede from the group. I believe that was the general consensus of most of the Congress of Micronesia members then.
- Willens: Based upon your experience, did you think that the six districts of the Trust Territory could find a common ground on which to stay together?
- Guerrero: No. I could see they that they argued among themselves even for minor things, Howard. Just think from \$100 to want to increase another \$1.00. It difficult because like you know Marshalls would like to have one of their own. Amata Kabua was very adamant at that time. You want to negotiate political status then you should embark on it by yourself as a separate entity. I remember him stating that.
- Willens: For yourself, what do you mean?
- Guerrero: You yourself as a group as an island, separate island, negotiating for the Northern Marianas.
- Willens: You think he supported separate negotiations.
- Guerrero: He believes separate negotiations would be best.
- Siemer: How many of the areas in Micronesia had you been to back then by 1975?

Guerrero: I didn't travel with the Peace Corps. I traveled with the Congress of Micronesia. I went to Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Palau. The only one I didn't see was Kosrae. I saw all the districts.

Siemer: Yap and the Marshalls?

Guerrero: Yap and the Marshalls too. I got scared when I got to the Marshalls because there was a tropical storm coming and it was a flat island. I thought the water would just come from one end and just wipe us out on the other, and I don't know how to swim.

Willens: We were talking recently about the advantages to having a mountain.

Guerrero: I had the scariest day of my life that night. I couldn't even sleep. I kept waking up, everybody would wake up because I thought the water was coming in from one side to the other to wipe us out.

Willens: Some people who are asked to comment about the Micronesian districts staying together emphasize different languages and cultures. What was your experience?

Guerrero: The pride of the Northern Marianas people. It was that pride. I don't have to hide it. The majority of the Northern Marianas, the Chamorros especially, they are very proud and they think cultural differences, dialects, and their standard of living is far above in comparison. You know, comparing our way to those of the other Micronesian entities. We are fortunate because we are more Americanized. We have more American influence on our way of living and people were able to upgrade their standard of living because we have good advantages, to commute by ship to Guam or to other big ports. It is very easy by ship, by plane. But in those places [in the other districts], it is very difficult. Airports for one in those days were very undeveloped. You're liable to be in shock, you think you are going to end up on the other side of the cliff. You have to brace yourself when you travel there then. I almost lost Joelle on the plane because I didn't know I was pregnant and I was traveling. Of course, it was our last day because I had to move to the District Legislature and here we are traveling and I said, "Brace yourself," and she said, "Why?" "We may end up on the other side of the cliff." By the time we landed over there, I could see the water. You know they were undeveloped then. I think right now they are developing with time. And give or take, they are not as fortunate as we are because the Northern Marianas people, both Chamorros and Carolinians, are really proud people. We are very competitive. The other Micronesian islands are not that way. If you have a big store and Howard has a small mom and pop store so what if I can help you, I will help you. That is how I interpret their way of living and that is how I saw it when I was over there.

Willens: I thought that the Palauans and the Marshallese had acquired some reputation for being very competitive.

Guerrero: Competitive to each other, even here. Even as Representatives or Senators in the Congress of Micronesia. I saw that.

Willens: What kind of issues would come up?

Guerrero: Especially when they talk about dividing the money among the six Micronesian entities. Lazarus Salii would come up. I really respect that guy. I mean he can come up and he would just scribble down notes and start addressing the issue. Those people also really compete in terms of how they represent their people. They even compete in the way they dress, Howard. If you wear white pants today, I will make sure I wear white pants tomorrow. If you have a relationship with the legal staff, they will make sure that the legal staff will come to their office tomorrow and spend all day with them and you don't have the privilege of meeting with them later on.

- Willens: Some of the members of the Congress of Micronesia, especially those from Chuuk, made speeches in support of independence for Micronesia. The names that come to mind are Mr. Nakayama and Mr. Amaraich. Did you have any sense at the time as to whether they thought independence was a realistic option?
- Guerrero: I really didn't care back then. My personal opinion was if that is what they want, give it to them. But I know Tosiwo Nakayama served a long time as President and even with this position he was very well respected among his peers. He is a very soft spoken, he doesn't blow out as much like the showoffs, chauvinist men from Saipan, Tinian and Rota. Sometimes they don't make sense. Why they can speak from 9:00 in the morning until 9:00 tonight and you still don't know what they want. Not like Nakayama who would just get up there and say it in ten words and everybody understood and respected him for that. Maybe that is one of the reasons why the Northern Marianas never made it up to the President's chair.
- Willens: In the Congress of Micronesia?
- Guerrero: Yes. You know, out of respect, I voted for them. I guess I would just listen to my grandfather. He would say, you vote for so-and-so. I had vote for that person or otherwise I would be trouble. By the way when you go in and vote, Howard, you are voting over here and I am voting right next to you. So you mark number 1, I might have to mark number 1. I don't have a choice.
- Siemer: During the campaign before the plebiscite on the Covenant, there were a number of people who said that the people did not have enough time and that they weren't ready to vote. In your view was there any basis for that?
- Guerrero: I would not say the older people think we don't have time or there were not enough bases covered. Mostly these are the younger more educated bracket that were very concerned about what was going on. Even if you give all the time that they want, they will never be satisfied. No matter how good a document you present to them, they will not be satisfied. They will go over the document with a fine tooth comb. They will even find a comma not in place even if it is suppose to be there. That is how they are. I know some of them were saying back then that we didn't have enough time. They are not happy with what was going on. But they are really enjoying the Commonwealth status right now.
- Siemer: Did you meet Erwin Canham when he came out as Plebiscite Commissioner?
- Guerrero: Yes, I did. And when he became the Resident Commissioner, I took over his office for a day. I put in an essay about why I wanted to replace him as the Commissioner for day.
- Siemer: How was he received by local people when he came out here?
- Guerrero: I know he was not very popular with the people. Mr. Canham was one of those soft spoken persons. He is not very vocal. He talks to people he knows well. He is interested in meeting new people. He tries to be very sociable, but he is not really an outgoing person. I would say very reserved.
- Siemer: Do you recall that after Canham got his list of registered voters there were a number of challenges to people who were on that list. Do you remember who was making those challenges and what they were concerned about?
- Guerrero: No, I don't. I do remember about the challenges.
- Siemer: After the plebiscite was over and the Covenant was sent off to Washington for approval, a number of bills were introduced in the Legislature about the Constitutional Convention.

Mr. Canham vetoed a couple of those bills and appeared before the Legislature to explain what his concerns were. What do you recall about that?

Guerrero: I did not sit in on the presentation of Mr. Canham or even see what the concerns were. When he came and presented the concerns and what would be nice to have on the bills to be presented, the members deliberated on it and sent a revised bill to him for his signature. I know he was well received in the Legislature, although there was always, of course, a small fraction group that would go against it.

Siemer: But he was well received because he was viewed as trying to do his job.

Guerrero: Yes, trying to do his job and as someone who was honest enough in trying to help the local people. If I am not mistaken I think it was Pete Guerrero who said, "He is just trying to Americanize us." In such a fashion, relating to American style. Of course, Pete always was one of those people who don't normally see things even if they are correct. He still thinks it wrong. He is stubborn.

Siemer: How did you become associated with the First Con-Con?

Guerrero: I was working for Pete A. Tenorio. I believe it was only like a month and half from the time I transferred from being a Congress of Micronesia staffer to his office when the Convention came about. So I was doing a lot of errands back and forth from our office to the Legislature and back. Sometimes I sit in and listen to their deliberations during their Legislature sessions. The bill for the Constitutional Convention was signed by Mr. Canham and they were trying to get staffers to work for the Constitutional Convention. Of course, the big problem is always the money. They don't have enough money and there is not much money to give to the Constitutional Convention. So Pete A. decided to send me down as one of the staffers for OTSP. That is how I came aboard.

Siemer: Whom did you work with?

Guerrero: At first I worked with Juan F. Boyer, the administrative officer. I was the support staff, the clerical pool supervisor. Connie Togawa was there and, of course, both of you as Chief Counsel for the Convention.

Siemer: Were you there during any of the pre-Convention discussions in the Territorial Party or the Popular Party about who should be assigned to what committee or any of those things?

Guerrero: No.

Siemer: During the Convention time, did the staff work with any of the leadership on problems that came up during the Convention?

Guerrero: I know Pete A. was most of the time trying to work with them. Sometimes there's big disagreements among the members in a committee and Pete A. thinks he can use his influence over a drink or two in a bar. There was a small bar at the hotel where most of the committees were trying to iron out their differences. But a lot of times one group is smarter or stronger than the others. How they came about resolving their differences sometimes puzzle to me.

Siemer: How did the typing pool actually work? You got the tapes from the Convention.

Guerrero: We got the tapes from the Convention or drafts to work with. The Committee reports where we need to backup the legal team. If I'm not mistaken, the secretary you brought was Jackie [Nufrio]. She will call us down on the intercom and ask for our help and we will come in and help. Most of the times we were there working through the night. In

the early morning hours we worked with the copy machines that break down every 15 minutes. We have take a big sign and cool it off so we can make copies and I set all the papers down in the hallway.

Siemer: That was quite a lot of work wasn't it?

Guerrero: But challenging, and I think we all came out as a happy team. Except, of course, for a few small delegates that walked out and think that they could come up with a better document.

Siemer: Were you surprised by that?

Guerrero: No.

Siemer: Had you heard about it?

Guerrero: We heard about it. And as a matter of fact I even brought it up to Pete A. and said, "I heard about this particular group being led by Benjamin that they aren't satisfied with the document and they won't show up for the signing of it." They still think I should talk to them and remind them about the signing ceremony in Mt. Carmel auditorium.

Siemer: So you did that?

Guerrero: Yes. I did that and they said they would try to make themselves available, but they were 99.9% sure they won't come.

Siemer: And they didn't.

Guerrero: And they didn't. The person who asked me to pass on to Pete A. that they definitely weren't coming was Joe Mafnas. He said, "Don't waste time, don't waste people's time, let's just go ahead with the ceremony. There is no need to wait on them because they aren't showing."

Siemer: Did you work at all on the Public Education Program after the Convention?

Guerrero: Just as a support staff.

Siemer: You went back to OTSP?

Guerrero: Yes. I helped finish up all the transcripts, the verbatim transcripts of the daily journals.

Willens: What was your general impression of the work that was done by OTSP in terms of social, economical and physical planning for the future Commonwealth. Did you receive those reports that being generated by consultants?

Guerrero: No. I was mostly assigned to the Legislative area. It was like a transitional move between Congress of Micronesia to the District Legislature's level for one island rather than the six islands of Micronesia.

Willens: Did you have any recollection of the work that Howard Mantel did for OTSP?

Guerrero: I did some typing work for Howard, his findings on the economic infrastructure for the Commonwealth. Just basically typing up his reports.

Willens: Do you know whether any of the reports that were generated by OTSP were implemented by the new Commonwealth government?

Guerrero: Maybe one or two, I am not too sure, Howard.

Willens: One of the names I have not mentioned is someone who served on the Commission very briefly. That was Manny Sablan. He subsequently went into the first government, I believe, as head of the Planning Bureau. What was your assessment of him?

- Guerrero: He was head of the Planning and Economic Development.
- Willens: What did you know about Manny Sablan?
- Guerrero: I know him from way, way back. I met Manny when he came back from college. I was already at the Congress of Micronesia. But as time goes on I have less regard for him. He is not what he really is, Howard.
- Willens: He worked for Pete A. Tenorio, did he not?
- Guerrero: He worked for Pete A. Tenorio, and I know they had their differences. They don't see eye-to-eye. He was heading the Economic section and Infrastructure Development. During their meetings I could hear them across the room that they had their disagreements or differences. Pete Atalig, now one of the Associate Justices, tried to make peace between the two of them.
- Siemer: Pete Atalig worked there too, didn't he?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: What happened when Governor Camacho got elected? Did Manny A. Sablan go into that Administration?
- Guerrero: Yes. Manny's family, and its very common knowledge here, they manage to find their way into whoever is in office. They are very manipulative people. Manny's sister is Congresswoman Ana Teregeyo. Like most recently, Howard, there is this big issue with World Corporation. Manny is the Chief Executive Officer for that particular company here. They are doing the resurfacing of the roads from Capitol Hill down to their project and crossroads to San Vicente. Some portions of the road affect private properties. He has been making promises to a lot of people. This one particular family said they really need to know where they stand because he kept saying the company will take care of this, the government is not involved with this. Only to find out that he's dealing at a very minimal figure and he has a percentage coming to his pocket. They don't see him as a trustworthy person.
- Siemer: Let me just finish up your family history. When did you get married?
- Guerrero: I got married in 1971.
- Siemer: What is your husband's name?
- Guerrero: Jose Guerrero.
- Siemer: How many children do you have?
- Guerrero: I have five.
- Siemer: Can you identify them for us?
- Guerrero: Sure. There is Walter is 27 years old, Joelle is 19 years old, Rosalyn is 15 years old, Lupe is 13 years old and Alatma is 5 years old.
- Siemer: What is Walter doing now?
- Guerrero: Walter handles some of the family business in catering and selling fast food that we prepare daily.
- Siemer: Joelle is still in school?
- Guerrero: Joelle is in school part-time and is also with the Army Reserve. The others are still in

school. Lupe is in Junior High and Rosalyn is in Marianas High School. Alarma is in kindergarten.

Willens: Usually we want to ask our interviewees whether they have anything they would like to say for the record about their views about the Commonwealth and the experience of the last 20 years.

Guerrero: So far, Howard, from the inception of the Commonwealth government to this date we have had a lot of ups and downs. This is just normal like an everyday life, today you are healthy, tomorrow you are sick. So it is the same in the government. The government is just like a human body. You feed it today and it is good tomorrow. Maybe you forgot to put water in the boiler or the wild pig games starting heating you up and, of course, it's going down. So it takes time. I believe in the United States. No matter how high up there you get, you are always trying to make it the best. But there is always a challenge. We are living in a challenging time challenging for our government and challenging for our own selves.

Willens: Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts with us.