

INTERVIEW OF HERMAN R. GUERRERO

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Herman R. Guerrero is a colleague from many years past and a distinguished political leader in the Northern Marianas. He served in the Saipan Municipal Council, the Congress of Micronesia, and the Commonwealth Legislature and has also been a leader in the private sector. Herman, thank you very much for being available today. We've explained a little bit about our project to you. Could we begin by asking you where and when you were born.
- Guerrero: Yes. May 6, 1939.
- Siemer: Here in Saipan?
- Guerrero: Here in Garapan in Saipan.
- Siemer: What are your parents' names?
- Guerrero: My mother is of Carolinian descent, and my father is of Chamorro descent.
- Siemer: What is your mother's name?
- Guerrero: Guadalupe.
- Siemer: And her family name?
- Guerrero: Rogolifoi.
- Siemer: And your father's name?
- Guerrero: Juan DeLeon Guerrero.
- Siemer: Were both of them born here in Saipan?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Siemer: How far back do their families go on Saipan?
- Guerrero: Oh, I can't remember. My father is related to all the DeLeon Guerreros on the island, and my mother is related to all the Rogolifois on the island and the Teregeyo. On my mother's side, her great-great-great-grandfather I think was Chief Aghurubw, who is buried out in Managaha.
- Willens: She's a direct descendant of the chief?
- Guerrero: A direct descendant, very direct, yes. My father, being a DeLeon Guerrero, has a Spanish background. His father's father is either half or one-quarter Mexican or Spanish background.
- Siemer: Did that side of the family come from Guam?
- Guerrero: Most everybody local here came from Guam.
- Willens: Was your father active in politics?
- Guerrero: He was a Commissioner back in the 1950s.
- Siemer: What village?
- Guerrero: District 4, Chalan Kanoa.

- Willens: Where were you educated?
- Guerrero: I was educated here in Saipan, and then I went to Guam and finished my high school there.
- Willens: What years were you in Guam?
- Guerrero: I graduated in Guam I think in 1958, a long time ago.
- Willens: From high school?
- Guerrero: Yes. George Washington High School.
- Willens: Did you go on to college then?
- Guerrero: Yes. I went to two years college in Guam.
- Willens: Was that called the College of Guam at the time?
- Guerrero: It was called the College of Guam, yes.
- Willens: What did you study?
- Guerrero: The general courses preparing me to go to school anywhere in the mainland or anywhere.
- Willens: Did you go on to further school, or did you come back?
- Guerrero: I won a scholarship to go to the Fiji School of Medicine.
- Willens: Did you go?
- Guerrero: I did. I passed the examination among I think ten people that took it. I think there were only three of us that passed, so I was one of them. So they sent me to Fiji School of Medicine. That's where I met my wife.
- Willens: Was Dr. Camacho in that group?
- Guerrero: He was earlier. He was sent about two years earlier.
- Willens: Dr. Palacios was . . .
- Guerrero: Dr. Palacios was a graduate of the Guam Naval Medical School. Dr. Cabrera was graduated from Fiji School of Medicine.
- Willens: How many years were you there?
- Guerrero: I was there for four years.
- Willens: You were at the Fiji School of Medicine from 1962 to 1964, and then you were a medical lab certified technician from 1964 to 1966.
- Guerrero: That's right.
- Willens: Was that back here in Saipan, or was that also in Fiji?
- Guerrero: When I graduated, I became certified and I came back here. I went with the intention of going to medical school, but when I got there after two years of pre-medical courses, it's a crash medical course.
- Siemer: It's college and medical school together?
- Guerrero: Yes, together. But it's not like American medical studies. It's just a crash course together. After two years, I found out that medicine was really not for me. I actually wanted to become a lawyer. I wanted to go to law school, but unfortunately there were no

scholarships in those days. I passed the medical scholarship for medicine, and because I had no money, I had to take that medical scholarship to go to Fiji. That's the only way I could leave the island, paid for. But actually I wanted to be a lawyer.

Willens: You don't regret that now, right?

Guerrero: Not really.

Willens: I see from your resume that the first job back here in Saipan was with the Neighborhood Opportunity Services Department with the Community Action Agency in November of 1967.

Guerrero: That's right.

Willens: Did you come back at an earlier point?

Guerrero: I came back to Saipan in 1966 from Fiji after I got married there.

Willens: What was your first job then in coming back?

Guerrero: Well, I went straight to work for the hospital as a lab technician. Truly, I didn't like what I was doing. So I decided to get out and do something else.

Willens: How did you happen to find your way into the Community Action Agency?

Guerrero: Very interesting. They were advertising a job for a community action neighborhood coordinator. Let me backtrack a little bit. They were advertising a job for Executive Director for that program. So I applied for that job. When I applied for that job, I was chosen by the Board of Directors, not because of my school or my scholastic qualifications, but maybe because they saw that here was a young man, native, who is willing to work hard, and maybe that's how I qualified. So they selected me over (I think) two people with Masters Degrees, one from Texas and one from Guam. And some other people here in Saipan that did have degrees like the late Joe Tenorio. Not Joeten, the other younger Joe Tenorio who passed away. He used to work for the court. So they selected me over these people, because they saw that I was aggressive, that I was willing to learn, that I was down to earth and liked to help the people in the community. So that's how they selected me.

Willens: What kind of projects did you get involved in with the agency?

Guerrero: First, I was trained for a good six months by having a Peace Corps volunteer working with me. Then after that, I went right into the job. This was a program funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity then, a federal program.

Siemer: Who did you report to back then?

Guerrero: I reported to what was the name of that gentleman Carlucci?

Willens: Frank Carlucci?

Guerrero: Yes, Carlucci.

Willens: Back in Washington.

Guerrero: Back in Washington. He was the big boss for the OEO. But we had a branch representative there. His name was Weisman.

Willens: David Weisman?

Guerrero: No, not David. Pete.

Willens: Did the program have any official relationship with the District Administrator or the TTPI, or was it independent of both?

- Guerrero: No, very independent. We were sort of a quasi-government entity partly government, partly private, independent. We received our funding directly from the Office of Economic Opportunity. What we did was we tried to listen to what the people wanted, what was the need in the community, what they wanted, how could we improve their lives. We tried to do all of these things, of course with help from the OEO showing us how to go about doing this. We conducted community meetings, would listen to what they really wanted, and then we put together a program, wrote proposals and sent them to Washington. Then if they approve it, based on the Board's recommendation over here, we would get the money to fund the program. I was given funding to develop housing programs. I was given funding to develop youth programs.
- Willens: To build houses actually?
- Guerrero: To actually build houses, but not money to buy materials and whatever. I got money to hire consultants, trainers to train people in the community how to build houses. That's the kind of money I got.
- Willens: What would you say were the two or three most significant needs in the community when you were working with the agency?
- Guerrero: In those days?
- Willens: Yes.
- Guerrero: The housing system and legal services.
- Willens: Was there a neighborhood legal services program at the time?
- Guerrero: No. I started one.
- Willens: Did you? Were you instrumental in starting the Micronesian Legal Services out here?
- Guerrero: Yes, I was. I was right in the center of it.
- Willens: Were you on the Board then initially?
- Guerrero: I was the initiator, a member of the Board and its President for a good six or seven years, until I entered politics.
- Willens: So you would say that housing and legal services were among the principal needs in the community at the time?
- Guerrero: At the time, yes.
- Willens: I notice from what you've said already and your resume that you basically were away from the island for about ten years, with your high school education and your medical school.
- Guerrero: That's right.
- Willens: When you came back to the Marianas in 1966 or thereabouts, what was your assessment of the way in which the Trust Territory was running the place?
- Guerrero: Before I left, I was involved in politics already.
- Willens: You were?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: Had you affiliated with a party?
- Guerrero: I was a very strong member of the Popular Party, which is now the Democratic Party. I was the original youth member. At that time I was young, of course.

- Willens: When it was formed?
- Guerrero: When it was formed, yes.
- Willens: Do you remember exactly when it was formed? Sometime in the late 1950s, or maybe a little earlier.
- Guerrero: Actually a little bit earlier.
- Willens: Was it?
- Guerrero: It was in the 1950s. When we got organized, we formed the party. I don't know exactly the date, but it was sometime in the 1950s, yes.
- Siemer: Had your father been active in politics as well?
- Guerrero: He was not active, per se, where you go off and really campaign, but he knew who to contact and what people to talk to and things like that. But he didn't go out, run around and organize people. He had his own way of organizing people to get together. He was not identified as one of the leaders within the party, but he was identified as one of the leaders in the District 4 community. That's why he got elected to be the Commissioner.
- Siemer: What about your mother's family on the Carolinian side? Were they active politically back then?
- Guerrero: Yes. The late Dr. Kaipat was my first cousin. He was very active in the Republican Party. In those days, you had Dr. Kaipat and the late Elias Sablan. With support from those people, you had it made. If they were on your side, then you were very strong politically in the Carolinian community. At the beginning of the political system in Saipan, when it was organized formally, I was the only person with Carolinian blood in the Popular Party. Everybody else, all my family including my brother Pete (who was the Speaker of the House) were all members of the Republican Party. I was the only Democrat.
- Willens: How did that come about? They must have put a lot of family pressure on you.
- Guerrero: They did. But one thing that I give credit to my mother and father for is that they never pressured me about going to the Republican Party. They just left me alone.
- Willens: What persuaded you to select the Democratic Party or the Popular Party in the 1950s rather than the Territorial Party?
- Guerrero: I guess it was the way I saw things done. In those days, the people who I worked with were more down to earth. They were working for the poor, so to speak. They had this people-to-people relationship. Whereas the Republican Party or Territorial Party at that time, they were all business-minded people.
- Willens: Territorial Party?
- Guerrero: Yes, Territorial Party. They were all business-minded people. And the Democratic Party had more down-to-earth kind of people.
- Willens: Had the Territorial Party been formed before the Popular Party got organized with you as the first youth member?
- Guerrero: I think it was formed simultaneously.
- Willens: Just about simultaneously?
- Guerrero: Yes. So that's why I stayed in the Popular Party. As we continued to grow, as time progressed, then I began to pull in some Carolinian members into the party. So I like

to feel that I am responsible for pulling in some of the Carolinian members into the Democratic Party.

Willens: One of the differences between the parties related to their different aspirations with respect to an affiliation with the United States.

Guerrero: That's right.

Willens: Did you have a view like the Popular Party that it would be better to reintegrate with Guam rather than have a direct relationship with the United States?

Guerrero: No. I felt at the time, and I think I still feel, that we cannot unite or integrate with Guam politically.

Willens: Why did you feel that way?

Guerrero: Well, just attitude, the people's attitude. The Guamanians sort of think that they are on the upper echelon of the ladder, and we're down here. That's how they look at us. So with that attitude, there's no way for us to try to get together. I feel that because I went to school in Guam, and I feel the difference in the people's attitude. If you're from Saipan or Micronesia, you're down there. The Guamanians think that they're up here. It's basically the attitude.

Willens: I asked about whether you had any views in 1966, in the late 1960s, when you came back after being away. I gather you stayed active in politics when you came back.

Guerrero: Yes, I did. When I came back, I was elected to the Municipal Council. I think that was in late 1966 or 1967. Then by virtue of my position as an elected official and being a member of the youth organization (still a member of the youth at that time), we started pushing for a close affiliation with the United States. We wanted to get out of the Trust Territory.

Willens: What was your assessment of the Trust Territory in those days?

Guerrero: From that point on, and up to the time when I joined the Congress of Micronesia, I noticed that we were footing most of the bills. In other words, the Marianas generated more revenue than the rest of the Micronesian districts. We generated more revenue, and when it came to splitting the pie, out of this big chunk we got only a very small amount. Then this goes back to our government. We could not survive, could not live on that. Most of our money was being used in the other districts. I noticed that up to the time I became a member of the Congress of Micronesia, and then that became very, very clear.

Willens: Had you been to the other districts before you became a member of the Congress of Micronesia?

Guerrero: Yes. And I saw the differences also, because I was a member of the Micronesian Legal Services and also elected as the President of what we called the Micronesian Community Action Directors Organization, MCADO. I think I was the first leader for that organization.

Willens: That was an organization of the directors of the Community Action Program in each of the six districts?

Guerrero: In each of the six districts.

Willens: So you would get together periodically?

Guerrero: That's right. We met in different parts of Micronesia.

Siemer: What were the traditional leader systems like in the other districts?

- Guerrero: They had their own chiefs within their own districts. They had their own leader within their own communities. They called themselves chiefs, or they had their own words for chiefs. Not necessarily elected. But these were people who had been recognized in the community, and maybe from clan to clan, so they kind of followed that tradition.
- Siemer: Was the system different here in Saipan?
- Guerrero: In the Carolinian community it was like that. You come from a clan, a chieftain clan, this was respected.
- Siemer: So there is a traditional leader in the clan who is respected because of his heritage position, not any elected position?
- Guerrero: That's right. Not elected. But on the Chamorro side it's not like that. It is through election.
- Willens: More representative o . . .
- Guerrero: The Chamorros too seemed to have their traditional leaders in those days, but then in terms of being modernized, in terms of being more advanced, they were the first ones to be more advanced than the Carolinians or the rest of Micronesia. So they adopted this Western style of electing their leaders.
- Willens: When you went to the other districts in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, did you find much dissatisfaction in those districts with the Trust Territory and a desire to have a new political status?
- Guerrero: Yes, and that is one of the reasons why the Office of Economic Opportunity was very instrumental in those days. There was a lot of dissatisfaction. This was not felt properly by the people per se, you know, by the average local Mary or Jose or Juan. But as our students came back from abroad and from Guam especially, and we got educated, we got to see different things. And that's when things began to change, especially when you have this big power, like a Trust Territory over you, and you cannot do certain things, because they implement their laws and their policies. And we used to say wait a minute, you know, I used to be able to go from here to there. Now I cannot do that. There are so many restrictions. So that's when, when we started coming back from school, that we began to realize that, wait a minute, this is not right. This ran counter to our way of doing things.
- Siemer: Back in those days were there relatively more students who went out to school from the Marianas than there were from the other Districts?
- Guerrero: Simply because of our close proximity with Guam.
- Siemer: So you had more people who were educated and had a view as to the Trust Territory?
- Guerrero: That's right, in the Marianas especially. But we did have the Micronesian leaders. These people traveled abroad. Not as much as they travel now, but like to Guam and Hawaii. Some of them went to Hawaii for whatever reason they could get. I mean travel was restricted, but mostly to Guam, and we'd see things. Guam is different, you know. Then we got educated about democracy, about this, about that, and we'd come back and say wait a minute, this isn't democracy.
- Willens: How about economic development? In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, were you personally in favor of more economic development in the Northern Marianas?
- Guerrero: Yes, I was.
- Willens: Did you think that the people generally favored economic development?

- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: Why?
- Guerrero: Well, like I said, by that time there were more of us, people of my age and Ben Santos' age, and people like that. They were educated in Guam. And their experience changed our perception of the world. We related this education and all these things to the way we lived on the island. And we'd say, you know, something is not clicking properly. There were some businessmen on the island already, and we saw new things coming in. We'd watch movies, television (there wasn't much television in those days; we'd watch movies). We'd see this, and we'd read books. Then we'd say if these people can live like this, why can't we. How come they can go to the toilet inside their own house, whereas in those days we had to go out maybe 20 feet, 30 feet out from the house to go to the restroom, you know, modern conveniences and things like that. So we believed then that times were changing, so we had to change with them.
- Willens: In some of the other districts, economic development seemed to be a threat to local patterns and tribal traditions.
- Guerrero: It was.
- Willens: Did you see that when you traveled around?
- Guerrero: Yes. It was in a way a threat to the way they ran things.
- Willens: Why would it be a threat?
- Guerrero: Because once you develop, if you are a chief or one of the leaders in that particular district, you wouldn't be able to move quite as freely then. They could sense that coming. You would be dealing with lots of restrictions, you know, in what you do. You wouldn't be quite free to do what you used to do in the past. So in that sense, it was a threat. But it is very hard to block economic development, very hard, because we were being educated. If you don't advocate education, if we were left alone and we had no connection with the outside world to begin with, we wouldn't care about any of these things.
- Siemer: But when people see something better, they have a natural desire to better themselves.
- Guerrero: Exactly. And that was a threat to the leaders of those communities in those days, because they felt that they were not going to go anywhere once we kept moving up the ladder, once we've changed. The lifestyle would change. So that's basically it.
- Willens: Were you here in May of 1969 when Secretary Hickel came out to make a speech to the people in the Congress and the people generally on Saipan about U.S. policy?
- Guerrero: 1969. Yes, I think I was.
- Willens: For the first time he made a statement that the U.S. wanted to enter into discussions with the Micronesians about their future status.
- Guerrero: Yes, yes.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of meeting him or listening to him?
- Guerrero: I don't recall meeting with him personally. But in my position as a member of the Municipal Council, I know that we met with several representatives from the United States and from the United Nations, and we talked about our political future. One of the questions that kept coming up was whether we really wanted to change the Trust Territory and become a member of the U.S. political family. That was one of the major questions that kept coming up.

- Willens: And you would answer how?
- Guerrero: We answered yes, because we had traveled to Hawaii and to other places. We traveled to the United States. There was no formal study made, but in our individual travels we would get together and compare the government of the United States, the government of Russia, the government of Japan, the government of Taiwan. We'd read newspapers. Then we'd sit down among ourselves and we debated. We figured out that if we're going to change our political status, we didn't want communism, we wanted democracy. The country that has the strongest democratic process in the world is the United States. We knew that.
- Willens: Dr. Palacios was a member of the Future Status Political Commission of the Congress of Micronesia. It issued a report in 1969 and recommended either free association or, in the alternative, independence. Did you ever discuss status issues with Dr. Palacios?
- Guerrero: No, I never did sit down personally with Dr. Palacios, but we did discuss among ourselves in group sessions.
- Willens: He seemed to think that all Micronesia ought to try to stay together. At least he thought that way to begin with. Do you recall whether that was a strong sentiment in the Northern Marianas to try to stay with the other districts?
- Guerrero: No, it was a very normal desire on the part of Dr. Palacios to do that. But I knew for a fact that we could not stay together with the rest of Micronesia, because of our experience with them during the Trust Territory days. So that was pushed aside. The Republican Party sort of wanted to advocate that route free association. The Popular Party advocated becoming part of the U.S.
- Willens: Do you think that the businessmen on the island who were in the Territorial Party at the time were concerned about competition that might come in from the mainland or from Japan?
- Guerrero: That was one of the reasons why they tried to block the movement. because they wanted to monopolize business in the Marianas.
- Willens: In 1972 the United States finally agreed to separate negotiations with the Marianas, and a Marianas Political Status Commission was created. Were you interested in being a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission?
- Guerrero: That was in 1972, right?
- Willens: Yes.
- Guerrero: I was interested, but I didn't want to have so many activities, because I was then pretty active with the Community Action Agency programs. My hands were full. So therefore I was involved in many meetings, but I was not a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission.
- Willens: Who were the members of the Commission that you were the closest with? Just to refresh your recollection, Eddie Pangelinan was the Chairman, Ben Santos. Danny Muna.
- Guerrero: All of them. I knew all of them very closely. They were in my party.
- Willens: Felix Rabauliman was designated by the Carolinian Association to serve as a representative of that community. Did you know Felix well?
- Guerrero: I knew him very well. We went to Florida together. He was a Peace Corps language and cultural trainer. I was also. Back in 1967, 1968.

- Willens: What is your recollection about Felix's views about political status?
- Guerrero: Felix was quite a humble person. Basically he was not one to ruffle feathers, to step on people's toes. He was more of a follower than a leader in those days.
- Willens: When it came down to it, most of the people in the Carolinian community had reservations about the Covenant.
- Guerrero: Because they were almost all like Felix. The Carolinians are very humble people. They follow. They don't lead. You find very few leaders in the Carolinians. They were told that this was the best for them. In those days, the only Carolinian I might say that was not with them in that decision was me, because I was in the Popular Party. But you had Dr. Kaipat, you had Felix, you had Elias Sablan. These were the people that the Carolinians deferred to their leaders. But some of these leaders themselves were followers. Some fellows might get mad at what I'm going to say, but they were being led by some of the Chamorro leaders in that party in those days.
- Willens: Specifically the businessmen?
- Guerrero: The businessmen, yes.
- Willens: Because you knew so many members of the Marianas Political Status Commission, did you keep generally informed of what the issues were during the negotiations?
- Guerrero: Yes, because while they were up there, I was down here. We were kind of working together. And I was more or less in touch with the people. They were also in touch with the people. But I was pretty active in that movement.
- Willens: Did the Commission make an effort to keep the people informed during the negotiations as to what they were doing?
- Guerrero: Yes. There was public education that was implemented at community meetings. At almost every gathering on the island, they'd talk about it.
- Siemer: There were often statements back in those days, particularly after the Covenant was signed, that the people didn't have enough time to think about this.
- Guerrero: No. They had more than ample time.
- Siemer: In fact, people were thinking about it as it was going along. You and others were talking about it all during the period that it was being negotiated, weren't you?
- Guerrero: We were talking about it during the period when it was negotiated and before that. Because we already knew what we wanted, and we'd been discussing this with the members of our community.
- Willens: Was the idea of U.S. citizenship an important objective for you and the other leaders?
- Guerrero: In those days, yes, it was important. You cannot make an informed decision unless you put things together in front of you and you weigh them. So we saw this. We compared people who have U.S. citizenship versus people who have no U.S. citizenship. First, we look at the most powerful nation in the world that's the United States. Now we found that lots of people in the world wanted to be part of the United States, to become U.S. citizens. It happened to us. Whenever we went to Guam, we had to line up like aliens, and we were aliens, and it took time to process our papers. If you're U.S. citizens, you just go straight through. You could see this. It was very obvious. If you were U.S., you would just zoom through the immigration line. If you were not, you would stand in that long line and wait for a long time.

- Willens: We read the journals of the Congress of Micronesia recently from the late 1960s and the early 1970s, and many of the leaders from the other districts would say that they did not want to be Americans, they wanted to be Micronesians, they wanted to have their own laws and their own passports. What do you think accounted for that different view that they had?
- Guerrero: Was that sentiment in those days, or you're seeing that sentiment now?
- Willens: Well, no, back in those days in the late 1960s and the early 1970s when they would make speeches on the floor of the Congress. And you may have heard some of this later on when you became a member of the Congress. But we saw these frequent statements that they didn't want to be Americans, they wanted to be Micronesians and run their own country. I just wonder what your thought is about that difference of view?
- Guerrero: I think maybe it has something to do with the fact that they were used to running their own affairs ever since the beginning of time in their area. And by 1970, late 1960s, 1970, people were traveling abroad, were more educated, were listening to radios and watching TVs, and were up to date on current affairs, politics, and they were aware of what was happening the United States you know, the blacks vs. the whites and those kinds of things. So that had something to do with that. As a matter of fact, when the Covenant was being discussed, there was a lot of information disseminated and even debates about how the blacks were being treated in the United States, how the Chicanos were being treated, how if you're not white you're going to be treated in the U.S. And we fought back and we said well, the United States is a freedom-loving country. So sure, there are those problems; you find them anywhere in the world that has blacks and whites. But the United States is trying their best to maintain that democracy, that freedom, for the people. And we believe in the system. It is the system that we believe in. We may not believe in the people, but we believe in the system that they made up. So that's how we thought. But I know Oscar Rasa was very, very instrumental, very vocal against the Covenant. And his brother as well.
- Willens: Actually I was just going to come to that. In 1974 you were elected to the Congress of Micronesia along with Joe Mafnas and Oscar Rasa, and as I recall you were the only member of the Popular Party who got elected I think by a few votes as I recall.
- Guerrero: Yes. I beat Teno by four votes.
- Willens: By four votes. But you don't remind him of that now.
- Guerrero: No. He knows that. Every time he sees me, he's reminded.
- Siemer: What made you decide to run at that point?
- Guerrero: I was very active in the Community Action Program, and I liked what I was doing.
- Siemer: So you were still with OEO at that time?
- Guerrero: I was still with OEO, and I was instrumental in the creation of the Micronesian Legal Services. Very instrumental in the Head Start Program. I went to Washington, D.C. and lobbied with the U.S. Congress not to kill the Head Start Program in Micronesia, because they were going to kill it. So I went there. When I went there, I met now Senator Daniel Akaka. But Mr. Akaka was then a staff member of Governor Burns. So he was sent to Washington to lobby to save Head Start in Hawaii, and I was sent to save Head Start in Micronesia. And Danny and I met, so we went for one purpose, one common goal. We happened to stay in the same hotel. So we became fast friends. He and I went together and lobbied the whole Congress.
- Willens: You were successful?

- Guerrero: Very successful. Let me just backtrack a little bit. Mrs. Patsy Mink was the representative of Hawaii. Danny and I went in and we talked about getting her support to help us in Micronesia and Hawaii. And after that we got out, and then Danny said, "Herman, one day I'll be sitting in that office." Then we started walking away. Then I stopped, looked back and said, "Danny, you know, it's going to come true." He said, "Ah, wishful thinking." That's what he said, "Wishful thinking." Whoa! I think two years later he was elected and replaced Patsy Mink.
- Willens: Where is he now?
- Guerrero: He's in the U.S. Senate.
- Siemer: How was Patsy Mink in those days? Was she supportive of your efforts here in Micronesia?
- Guerrero: Yes. Almost all the Hawaiian delegation were supportive.
- Siemer: But you didn't run in 1970 and you didn't run in 1972. What was it in 1974 that made you decide to run for the Congress of Micronesia?
- Guerrero: I thought I was doing a good job on the whole thing, and then they were looking for somebody to beat Teno, because Teno was a very powerful guy. He was already serving as a member of the Congress. The Popular Party was looking for a candidate. So they came to me and said, "We want you to run." I said, "Whoa." I wanted to run, but not just yet, because I was doing good. I liked what I was doing. They said, "The only person that can beat Teno is you." I said, "Geez, this guy's got money and big families and his wife is related to me. What chance do I have against him? My wife is not from here, she doesn't know anybody." But my group was very sure that I was the only one who could beat Teno. I said, "Fine, let me think it over." So I gave it a good thought, maybe one month. Then after that, I said, "What the hell, I've been in this program for so many years, maybe now it is a good time for me to get out and really try to push for some of the things that I wanted. I'll push for this program. I'll give money to the Micronesian Legal Services, I'll give money to this, and I'll give money to the municipal government, I'll give money to the small communities." That was in my mind. I said, "I'll go for it.: And I talked to my father, and he said, "Go for it, son." And I talked to my mother, and she said, "You know, all the Carolinians are Territorial. They are not with us. (My mother is a Carolinian.) They are not with us. The only people that will work for you are me and my sisters, but not the rest. Even your cousin Dr. Kaipat is not with us. Even all your close relatives, they are very strong, they are not with us." I said, "Momma, I'll take my chances."
- Siemer: You are related to Pete P. Tenorio's wife?
- Guerrero: Yes, to his wife Sophie.
- Siemer: Sophie, right.
- Guerrero: Sophie's grandmother is my grandmother's first cousin.
- Siemer: She's your third cousin then?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: There was some thought at the time that the Popular Party candidates other than you, specifically Herman Q. Guerrero and Eddie Pangelinan, were beaten in 1974 because the Territorial Party said that the status negotiations were going too fast and should be slowed down. Is it your recollection that political status was an issue at that election?

- Guerrero: I think it was. Yes, you're right. I remember that. The opposition put up a strong position. Not really because it was moving fast, it was Eddie himself who was moving fast. We noticed that he was taking frequent travel most of the time, was on island and then he was off again to Washington because he was moving fast. Maybe those trips were necessary, but he was not conveying to the people why he had to move so fast. And there was a sentiment that maybe something was afoot, because how come this seems to be moving so fast. I remember that.
- Willens: Other people have emphasized that Oscar Rasa was a very effective campaigner and might have been elected irrespective of the status issue. Did you find him an effective campaigner?
- Guerrero: Oscar?
- Willens: Yes.
- Guerrero: Yes. He was very effective. He was a down-to-earth guy. He would come into people's homes and would eat on their tables without being invited. But that's okay. That's our culture. We appreciate that. You bring yourself down to their level, and he could do that.
- Siemer: But Oscar was also very intelligent.
- Guerrero: Very intelligent.
- Siemer: How did he get on the other side of the Covenant, or why did he become opposed to it?
- Guerrero: I really don't know. Sometimes I question why. I really don't know.
- Siemer: I wonder if he became opposed to it because he campaigned that way and then felt that he had to stay on opposed to it?
- Guerrero: Well, number one, he was very educated and he was one of those guys who read lots of materials about political status in different parts of the world. But at the same time, I know that he knew that this was the best way.
- Siemer: And it's curious that he not only wound up on the other side of the issue but campaigned hard against the Covenant.
- Guerrero: He campaigned hard against the Covenant. Maybe he was only campaigning against that and believed that other leaders were looking at him, so he probably decided well not to give way. But ironically he was one of the first few leaders that took advantage of it and went to the States and stayed there.
- Willens: Did you play any role in the public education program after the Covenant was signed and before it was voted on by the people? You were then in the Congress of Micronesia. Did you play any role back here in the Marianas with respect to the vote?
- Guerrero: I would be called to meetings, community meetings and leadership meetings and whatnot, and I would explain my position to the people. And of course, my position was in favor of it. And I would say to the people why I personally would like to become part of the American political family. I would tell them that I'm not painting a rosy picture, I'm not saying that everybody will become rich, but at least you have an opportunity to develop yourself. And if you're lazy, you're lazy. You can't make it. If you're not lazy, then this is an opportunity for everyone. If you don't want to work, then forget it, this is not for you. But if you want to work, you are physically able to work, you want to learn, you want to advance yourself, this is it.

- Willens: Did you think that the fact that the Northern Marianas would become a part of the American system would help economic development?
- Guerrero: Yes. There's no question about it. Because the commercial people in the world were looking at the United States as a stable country in terms of its government structure. So when they see an island such as ours here, a place outside the mainland USA that belongs to the United States, protected by U.S. laws and everything, they want to invest there. And especially if they know that the U.S. has a policy conducive to business establishment. So they come.
- Willens: You happened to be in the Congress of Micronesia for two years when the Covenant was signed and it was approved by the U.S. Congress. Do you recall any reactions from the other Micronesian leaders that were expressed in the Congress about the fact that the Northern Marianas had succeeded in going its separate way?
- Guerrero: Well, all they said was that we wish you Godspeed, good luck. And some of them expressed the sentiment that they would like to become what we are, but they wanted to move at a much slower pace and study the situation first. They felt that we had the upper hand in this kind of status over Guam. They felt that we had learned from the Guamanians, and that's how we formed our government this way. And that's true in a sense. We learned from Guam, their past mistakes, whatever. So they wanted to learn from us. So they said we'd like to do that but we want to be a little more cautious. They wanted to be part of the United States. I knew that. That was the sentiment expressed. But they wanted to watch us, how we are faring in our new relationship with the U.S.
- Willens: Did you hear that expression from people in the Marshalls like Amata Kabua or from leaders in Palau like Salii?
- Guerrero: Salii, yes, the late Salii.
- Siemer: They'd have an opportunity to see if the United States treated you well?
- Guerrero: Exactly.
- Siemer: Just before the Covenant was signed, Benjamin Manglona and the Rota delegation came in with a demand that there be in the Covenant a requirement of a bicameral legislature and that Rota get equal representation in the upper house. Do you remember back then thinking about that or being concerned that might cause a problem in the Commonwealth's new government?
- Guerrero: Yes, I remember that very well. I lobbied against that. I lobbied hard against that. But unfortunately our leaders were not that strong. That's one of the reasons why people thought this wasn't going to move a little faster. Because of that.
- Siemer: What did you think would happen in Rota if Benjamin's demand was rejected? Would they vote for the Covenant anyway?
- Guerrero: There was a fear that they might not.
- Siemer: But that wasn't very realistic, was it? People in Rota also wanted U.S. citizenship.
- Guerrero: They wanted U.S. citizenship. The leaders and businessmen were just playing with the people. That's what I didn't like.
- Siemer: Once the Covenant was approved, then the question about a Constitutional Convention went to the District Legislature, and there were a number of bills enacted there as to how the representation for the Constitutional Convention should be arranged. One of the issues that came up at that time was the representation for the Carolinian community.

- Do you remember that debate about whether the Carolinian community should get guaranteed seats in the Constitutional Convention?
- Guerrero: I remember that.
- Siemer: You wrote a very tough letter to the Legislature about that.
- Guerrero: Yes. I think that had something to do with the creation of the Office of the Carolinian Affairs?
- Siemer: It was before that, actually. You wrote some letters about that, too, but it was before that. It was a question about whether Carolinians could get elected in an island-wide election. If you had a Constitutional Convention and everybody was elected island-wide, maybe no Carolinians would be elected.
- Guerrero: I was afraid of that. If a Carolinian is going to be made to be elected on an at-large basis, then we stand no chance. But if we are going to give Carolinians a representative within their precinct, then I am recommending that, because that way we are guaranteed representation in the Congress. It is very hard now because the Carolinians are moving about. How do we say that you as a Carolinian born and residing in San Antonio have your district in District 4. It's hard to see that we can do that, because they're all moving about. It's a headache.
- Willens: But Carolinians have been elected at-large.
- Guerrero: That's right.
- Willens: Have they not?
- Guerrero: Well, they have. So let me backtrack a little bit. I noticed that in the Constitutional Convention.
- Willens: The last one?
- Guerrero: Yes. Then I said maybe times have changed now. Maybe time has taken care of my concern. I always felt that one day the Chamorros and the Carolinians will work together in harmony and just call ourselves just one people. We can say you belong to the Chamorro people, and Chamorro means Carolinians and Chamorros. But still some people cannot quite accept that. Naturally we cannot say you're a Carolinian and you're a Chamorro and for you to accept the fact that you would be Carolinian, no, a Chamorro will not accept that. A Carolinian may accept Chamorro; a Chamorro may not accept Carolinian. And that's a fact. But maybe we might say you are Chamolinian. Now Chamolinian may be a little bit strange to you, but still some people will be biased. That applies to a person like me, because I'm half a Chamorro/Carolinian, Chamolinian. And when I was in the Senate, I wanted to introduce a bill to call everybody a Marianian. But that didn't materialize.
- Siemer: When Ben Fitial, Pete Igitol, and Luis Limes were elected as Constitutional Convention delegates, did the Carolinian community feel satisfied about that?
- Guerrero: Yes, they were. Now I think that there may be a chance for the Carolinians to be elected at large, because they go by party system. The Carolinians are known now to have been voting for either Republican or Democrat. So even that has something to do with the fact that other ethnic groups are beginning to think that hey, these guys are not bad at all. They're not just all for themselves. So maybe a Carolinian can stand up and run, because even a Democrat would vote for a Carolinian Republican candidate. Things have changed. I noticed that.

- Siemer: What did you think about the Office of Carolinian Affairs when that came up in the Constitutional Convention?
- Guerrero: I was really against that.
- Siemer: Why was that?
- Guerrero: I was against that because number one, in my mind that was a way of continuing to remind the Carolinians and Chamorros that they are completely different. You know, it's a constant reminder that there are ethnic groups of people on Saipan. And to have that office all by itself taking care of Carolinian affairs where we have a government that is supposed to take care of everybody else under the sun, I don't like it.
- Siemer: The Constitutional Convention delegates Ben Fitial and Luis Limes and Pete Igitol agreed with you. None of them thought that that was a terrific idea. Where did that come from in the Carolinian community? Who was the person who was pushing that?
- Guerrero: You mean they agreed with my position that there should not be a Carolinian Affairs Office?
- Siemer: The Office of Carolinian Affairs came up very late in the day in the Constitutional Convention, and it was after the mid-point of the Convention after the public hearings. And there was a letter that came in from the United Carolinian Association. But who was it that was really pushing that in the Carolinian community, if you know?
- Guerrero: I think it was the late Abel Olopai and the late Dr. Kaipat also. These are the people that I know. But I'm surprised that Rabauliman was against it.
- Siemer: Yes, but he wasn't in the Constitutional Convention. He was in the Political Status Commission, but he ran and lost for the Constitutional Convention.
- Guerrero: That's right.
- Siemer: So it was Ben Fitial and Pete Igitol and Luis Limes.
- Guerrero: I'm surprised. But at any rate, one of the reasons also is that if the Carolinians would have their own office to take care of their affairs, then I want that office to be as strong as the mayor, not purely a representative of the Governor, because that's what the office is all about now. There is no power. My position would be if there is such an office then I want it to have some clout also.
- Willens: What would that mean? Would that mean money to distribute or jobs to provide or what?
- Guerrero: Exactly. The Carolinian Affairs Office should be like the boss of the Carolinians (so to speak) under the Governor's umbrella. But it should have money for its operations. The Governor should not say who he wants to place in that office. The Carolinians themselves should be able to say this is the person we want, not the Governor. This is now basically an appointed office.
- Siemer: How do you think it's worked out?
- Guerrero: It's not working out. I'd like to change that office if I can one day, change it and give it more clout. I tried to do that in this Constitutional Convention, and I thought there was a way to do it, but unfortunately again some of our Carolinian leaders didn't follow through on my recommendation. That was not only my recommendation. I may have been the person to open up the subject, but there were a lot of people that were agreeing with me. But they didn't follow through. That's why I say most of our Carolinians are followers.

- Siemer: Back in the first Constitutional Convention, you came to the Constitutional Convention sessions several times. What were the other issues that you were worried about back then when you actually came to the Constitutional Convention to talk to delegates?
- Guerrero: That's one of the issues that I was worried about. I just wanted to make sure that we did not just create an office for political expediency, so to speak.
- Siemer: Were you worried about districting and how the district lines would be drawn?
- Guerrero: I was worried about that also. I was worried primarily about how the Carolinians would be affected vote-wise.
- Siemer: As it finally worked out, was it favorable to the Carolinian vote?
- Guerrero: In those days, yes, it was.
- Siemer: So it was after that that Carolinians began to move into other districts?
- Guerrero: It was after that, yes. You are correct. But it did work out okay. That's one of the reasons why I was there, to make sure that this thing happened.
- Willens: I notice that you were Co-Chairman for the Commission on Transition for a year before the Commonwealth elected its own first government. Did you think the transition program produced some useful work?
- Guerrero: I was the Co-Chairman. The late [Erwin] Canham was the other Co-Chairman on the U.S. side. Pete Tenorio was the Executive Director at that time. There was supposed to be a consultant to put all these transitional matters together. It did help in making sure that we got phased in properly. Maybe everything didn't happen the way we wanted it to, but we did see a little problem when our government began back in 1978.
- Willens: That's my question then. Were any of these studies or plans implemented by the first Administration of the Commonwealth?
- Guerrero: I cannot recall everything. I can't remember whether we did have that consultant report that was made. I think that was by Nathan [Associates].
- Willens: Well, there were several. Howard Mantel and others probably did studies.
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: You did run for the first Commonwealth Legislature then and were elected.
- Guerrero: Yes, I was elected. That's part of the transition work, I think.
- Willens: What is your recollection today about the transition to self-government under the Commonwealth Constitution? You had a Democratic Governor elected and a very strong Republican Legislature. What accounted for that division of view among the voters in that 1977 election?
- Guerrero: The impressions that were built by the politicians, by the elected officials, were these. There are two political parties, strong political parties, and they found out that when one political party gets all the seats, controls everything, then they control the lives of the people. They control economic development, they control your life. So therefore the people said well, let's wise up a little bit now and maybe give one branch to one party and give the other branch to the other party. So maybe that accounts for this. But again, that has a problem, because sometimes then you get nothing but confrontation.
- Willens: Is that what happened?
- Guerrero: That's what's happening.

- Willens: Back then? Is that what happened in 1978 and 1979?
- Guerrero: Yes. That's what happened, yes. I was the only Democrat elected.
- Willens: To the Senate?
- Guerrero: To the Senate. There were four of us, sorry. But we were a minority. And that's what happened in that election. And the Lower House was controlled by the Democrats. In the Senate we were a minority; the House was Democratic.
- Willens: The House was Republican to begin with, but then after two years it switched to the Democrats.
- Guerrero: Exactly, yes. That's right.
- Willens: And we heard something about the gambling issue being a factor. Do you have any recollection of the gambling issue coming up in the Camacho Administration?
- Guerrero: Yes. The gambling issue was initiated primarily by Oscar Rasa. He was very instrumental in trying to push that. So maybe that's why the Democrats came in the second time around.
- Siemer: At some point you were successful in getting a chunk of the Carolinian community to come over to the Democratic Party. Was it back in that first Administration?
- Guerrero: Yes. It was halfway through the Camacho Administration, yes.
- Siemer: How did that happen? What was the issue that prompted some Carolinians to come over to the Democratic Party?
- Guerrero: Purely economic. Some Carolinians were beginning at that time to think and believe that they were being used politically by the other party to advance their cause. Many of them believed that that was what was happening. Of course I was instrumental in making sure that they believed that, because it was the truth.
- Willens: You've participated in the Commonwealth political system for many, many years, and I know you're still active as a consultant these days. Can you give us your judgment about how you think it's worked out the relationship between the United States and the Commonwealth government.
- Guerrero: We would like to believe, or at least I'd like to believe, that life is easy. But it is not, you know. A relationship is easy, but it is not. There are certain things that need to be done by both sides. We have problems in our relationship with the United States in this present format. We have problems, but these are problems that could be ironed out. And this is to be expected really. For instance, the CNMI Administration, beginning from let's say Carlos [Camacho] and especially during the Tenorio Administration (he had it for eight years), most of the agreements that were spelled out in the Covenant were not followed through on.
- Willens: By whom?
- Guerrero: By us, by the Administration at that time. In terms of certain reporting that needs to be done on our side. There were certain conditions that I know that we needed to do, and we did have a certain time limit, and that was not properly followed through. The U.S. Congress also began to enact laws without consulting with us. The Covenant stipulates that any major legislation that involves the CNMI, that we should be consulted on that. Many times they said go ahead and do it. So this kind of thing has some kind of impact on our relationship. For instance, this minimum wage business and the alien labor business

this could have been resolved a long time ago. I did introduce bills in the Senate when I was there during Teno's Administration to take care of the immigration situation, to take care of the minimum wage. And if my bills had gone through back then, we would be probably up to equal now or with the U.S. minimum wage, and the Covenant would be running smooth and nice. We would be up to where we are expected to be, but they never passed my bill.

Willens: Did you want to slow down the influx of alien laborers?

Guerrero: No, we wanted to regulate the influx of alien laborers. We want to increase the minimum wage gradually, on a very gradual basis. But unfortunately, in the Teno Administration it didn't happen that way. The gate was wide open. Casinos started from Carlos Camacho's Administration, but it carried on through and became more open during Teno's Administration. Licenses for any non-U.S. citizen businessman were available. So we see lots of Koreans and Filipinos and other nations coming into Saipan, purchasing \$50 license, putting up their business, and bringing their families. These are all problems. So it runs counter to the way we should implement things to exercise control the influx of people coming in. It runs wild. So you have an Administration, let's say eight years of that kind of Administration, where there was no control. When Larry came in, it was very hard for him to control. We tried. We tried to control it. But the people were so used to living that way, running the government that way, doing things that way, that when a person tried to do some controlling, tried to reform, they tried to impeach him. And that's the reason why Larry was almost impeached, because of that.

Willens: You've identified some of the problems. What would you say have been some of the successes?

Guerrero: In those days?

Willens: No, over the last 20 years.

Guerrero: Oh. Well, some of the successes are that we get to travel quite frequently to the United States, mainly for students and people that choose to live in the U.S. They go there. They stay there. We are not restricted any more. We can do business there. Our perception of the United States, of the world, is much bigger, much better now. Business is open. And maybe the economic development in Saipan is too fast, but we do have this kind of development hotels and what have you. We receive federal grants now to help us with our infrastructure. This was not available in the olden days. We are quite free to go and educate ourselves anywhere in the world, as long as we are within the U.S.-approved areas, so to speak. I guess we can even go to Russia now, right?

Willens: You certainly can.

Siemer: They probably need you there.

Guerrero: So we are kind of free. That's how I should put it. Free. But with this freedom also we have problems.

Willens: Well, as you said, no one ever said it was going to be easy.

Guerrero: No, it's not going to be easy. But I like it better, because it is challenging.

Willens: Maybe that's a good note on which to end. Thank you very much, sir.

Guerrero: Thank you, too.