

INTERVIEW OF LORENZO I. GUERRERO

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Governor Lorenzo I. Guerrero has been one of the most significant political figures in the Northern Marianas for at least 20 years. Governor, thank you very much for supporting this project and making yourself available for the interview. As I told you, I typically want to begin by hearing some background information about where you were born and where you received your early years of education.
- Guerrero: Thank you very much, Howard. Thank you for coming up with the idea in interviewing our political figures, leaders in the Commonwealth. Let me just start it by responding to the questions that you just asked. I was born and raised here in Saipan. I was born on January 25, 1935.
- Willens: Were your parents both native to Saipan?
- Guerrero: Yes indeed. They were also born and raised here—they are Chamorros.
- Willens: Did you then receive your early years of education under the Japanese system?
- Guerrero: Well, that is true. I went through the elementary school up to at least the second grade level. Then, of course, the Second World War came so it left us no choice, we had to discontinue our school during the Japanese time. Of course, immediately after the war broke, it was over. We then started our education through the American system. We had some military officers as teachers first, then gradually we got some of the civilian teachers that had come to the island. I started with the elementary school in Chalan Kanoa. Then in 1949 I happened to have the opportunity to go to Guam. I took part of my elementary level in Guam. Then to the George Washington High School in Guam. Then the following year, in 1950, I came back and continued my education here with the Navy Military Dependents High School that was established here in Saipan, in Garapan right where the Dai Ichi Hotel is now.
- Willens: Was that school open to local people?
- Guerrero: Yes it open was but, only to a very selective group. There were only a few of us actually; you had to go through a recommendations process. You had to have interim examinations in order to qualify for that. So, as I said, I was very fortunate to be one of those. Like I said, not many of us had that opportunity to attend the Navy Dependent High school here in Saipan.
- Willens: Did that provide you with the equivalent of what was called a high school education?
- Guerrero: Well, it did. It gave you, you know, up to 12 grades of education. Then the military closed down the school because of the changeover of administration in 1952. The Trust Territory came in and therefore the military had to close down the school.
- Willens: 1952, when it was under Naval Administration before then and then the Trust Territory came into effect.
- Guerrero: In 1950 when I first joined the Navy Dependent High School here, that was still under military administration. But as I stated earlier, that only lasted at that time to 1951 and the school was closed down in 1952 when the Trust Territory Administration came to Saipan.

Willens: I've talked to several of our mutual friends about the Japanese years and the impact of World War II. Did the Japanese close down the schools for local children as soon as the war began or was it only when an invasion seemed to be imminent?

Guerrero: It was closed down prior to the invasion. They were pretty much prepared for the war, I guess, and they had to close down. In fact, during the time that they closed down the public elementary school, we were assigned into several different areas where the native kids here, the Chamorros or Carolinians for that matter, could go and attend school. But it was not in the public school premises, it was outside in the remote areas. For instance, in the farm areas there were certain sections that they had designated for the kids that would like to continue going to school.

Willens: Did you continue?

Guerrero: Yes, like I said, I continued my school, which was equivalent to the second grade in the Japanese time during the war. It so happened that we were located down here. If you come up toward the Puerto Rico area, coming up to Capitol Hill here, it is on your right hand side there. That's the area designated for us to go to school. So we attended. I attended.

Willens: Did your family have a farm at the time to which you could go as the war intensified?

Guerrero: Sure. Yes, we did have a farm. Let me just try to in part finish up in terms of my education. Aside from going to public school during the Japanese days, I attended also private schools. It so happened that an opportunity developed for me to go after the regular school hours. Aside from being in the public school, my parents arranged for me to attend a private school, which I did over the years. That's how I had my education in the Japanese days. As to the question whether my parents had a farm, certainly we did have a farm behind up here by the Maturana hill and the place is just called the Chalangaladi farm. After we moved from the village, of course, my parents situated us up on the farm, because at that time the war is about to start. If I correctly remember, all civilians who were in the village at the time were ordered, of course, to move and to live in their respective farms. Because of the preparations for war that they had in mind, the people had to move out from the villages. So we situated ourselves on the farm. We had a place to stay. My parents built a couple of houses. Let me just give you some history as well. It was fortunate of course that we will live together. I remember living with the priest, you know, one of the priests who is well known here in Saipan. They were all moved out also from their convent or church. So they moved up, including the nuns. They ended up living with us on our farm.

Willens: How did that come about?

Guerrero: Well, my parents were well known to them. The nuns, you know the sisters, made no difference to the priest. At that time we had Father Todgill. He is a sort of a Spanish priest, no difference to many of the nuns. Practically they were all Spanish. They knew my parents very well and finally that's where they ended. We lived together. I enjoyed my time during those days as well, because I served as an alter boy at the farm. That's where I started.

Willens: Was it the Catholic Church that provided the private school education or was it a non-religious school?

Guerrero: No, it was a non-religious group. As I mentioned it earlier, I had the opportunity to attend a private school outside of the public school. But we stayed together with the priests and the sister[s]. We assisted them, built them a place to stay, a small sort of prayer room or place for the priest to conduct masses or rosaries for that matter. Until the situation became more and more critical. Then, you know, the war started. I remember that the

priest, no different from the nuns, had to move away again, move them upward toward the mountain areas. I understand that they ended up almost here at the backside. And, of course, that's the time when the war started and bombardment started into Saipan. Most of them had to be moved. They forced them to stay away from our farm as well.

Willens: Did the Japanese require that the local people move for the safety of the local people or in order to get them out of the way of what they anticipated to be the area of combat?

Guerrero: Well, I believe that's what it was—they wanted to clear them from the area of the combat. As you know, the Garapan area was one of the heaviest, besides Susupe. They bombarded, they came right through the villages, and it was really a sad experience I must say.

Willens: I know you were young at the time, but did you form any impressions of how the Japanese forces generally treated the local people?

Guerrero: Well, I recall that it was quite inconvenient to the local people at times when they were forced into a lot of things, you know, a lot of areas. But not on the civilian side to my recollection. We had very friendly neighbors and people that really were known to my parents on the civilian side. They had a number of military people also who were situated in our farm area because it so happened that perhaps they thought it was a good hiding place and aside from it they stockpiled a lot of their own ammunition around. So overall I think the military became quite stringent and, maybe because of the situation of the war that has started, they needed more strict enforcement or things like. But it was really quite inconvenient for the people of the islands.

Willens: Well was your father politically active in the years after the war?

Guerrero: Yes. My father was not really a very active politician. He was elected as our commissioner at one time. He was a commissioner for the districts where we are. But prior to that, my father during the Japanese occupation was one of the few, about the only native-born Chamorro here in the island, who was employed by the Japanese government as an electrician. He was a well known electrician here and through him really I got a very good background and experience from my father's history. So at the time my father was elected to be the commissioner, my father was working for the central power division here, and after the war broke out he worked for the military in the same profession. He was hired to be in charge of the electricians and through that we ended up—both my father and I—he first started working for the central power division and after I got out from the school it was very unfortunate; my parents were not that rich for me to be sent off-island to further my education. I had to assist them. So I went out and looked for employment.

Willens: That was after you completed your education?

Guerrero: Well that is just after I got out from the school here in Saipan which was the Navy Dependent School.

Willens: That was about 1951?

Guerrero: Yes. That was 1951 when it was closed down.

Willens: That's when you went out to look for a job?

Guerrero: That is correct.

Willens: What kind of work did you do for the next 8 or 10 years?

Guerrero: Well, like I said, I became a power plant operator when I first started. I broke into that kind of job category. Then I got into [being] a lineman and then I was a lead man as well as a lineman. Then I was back again to power generation. When I got back to power

generation, I became involved in the operations of the power plant—both the diesel mechanic end of it as well as the switchboard on the electrical part. Through the years that I continued working, I started getting some correspondence school education. In familiarizing myself through the so-called power plant engineering and operations. So I really learned a lot about how to operate and maintain the power operation type of it. I involved myself up until 1962, when I left the power plant. I came to be one of the highest paid locals here on the island during those days.

Willens: That was a Trust Territory position?

Guerrero: Well, it became two different positions. After the Trust Territory came back, they then left again and the military was back. And then the military went out, and the Trust Territory came in. So, you know, I experienced two changes of administrations. Like I said, in the early days when I first started, the military was in. They are the administering authority, but then the Trust Territory [Interior] came in and took over. Then they went out again and the military came back. So at the time when I left the power division, I was being insistently followed by a private shipping line here to see if I would work for them. Because prior to that I had been sort of a troubleshooter for the shipping line. If they had some problem, both electrical or diesel or the mechanic part of their ships, I assisted them in fixing both the electrical and the diesel end of it. So I was convinced that in order for me to get higher pay I should perhaps work for the private shipping company.

Willens: And that is when you went to work for Saipan Shipping?

Guerrero: That is correct. Prior to leaving for the Saipan Shipping Company, of course, it so happened that I took my marine examinations by the operations officer of the military at that time. I took part of the U.S. Coast Guard requirements. Then after that, of course, after I possessed it, then I went and worked for Saipan Shipping.

Willens: Let's stop for a moment. Let me try to get your reactions to the various changes in administration that you experienced. I've heard some people speak favorably of the Naval Administration time. I would like your best recollection of how well the Navy administered the island here based on what you knew and what changes came into being when the Interior Department took over in the 1950s.

Guerrero: Well, like I said, the military administration, or the so-called Naval Administration at the time, was very well effective in my own memories. You know, in a way that means very effective in the administering authority because they do have some training programs as well.

Willens: Who does? The Navy did?

Guerrero: The Navy did. In fact, I for one was sent off-island to Guam to PWC and I had some training opportunities in the power division which was also handled by the PWC in Guam. So, you can see that at the time when the Naval Administration was administering the island here, a number of our own local people were sent off-island to get some training.

Willens: Did they provide more opportunities for local people than the Interior Department did when it was the administering authority?

Guerrero: Well, the Trust Territory government at the time had a very, very limited [budget], very limited to my recollection. Some of our young people, I guess, were sent off, probably to the PIC school in Truk.

Willens: How about the level of funding and the quality of life here? As I understand it, under the

Naval Administration, Saipan was a closed island. You had to have special permits in order to visit here and investment by outside interests was largely discouraged. Did you have any sense about the nature of the opportunities here?

Guerrero: Well, perhaps because of the strategic aspect of the island during the Naval Administration, they kind of restricted any opportunities for investment. And specifically Saipan or Tinian, because Rota, even when the military came back, was administered by the Trust Territory Administration. When the military came back, they never took Rota as well. But because of those strategic purposes, Tinian and Saipan were the most significant areas that the military needed to control any investment or any opportunities for that matter. Perhaps that's why they needed to control the entry of any people coming into the areas.

Willens: How did the local businessmen feel about that in the late 1950s and the early 1960s? Were they sympathetic with that kind of control or did they want a more open community?

Guerrero: Well, I believe that overall (in my own opinion) we wanted to have more of an open door or possibilities that our people could have in terms of business opportunities. It left them no choice but, like I said, the military enforced very strict policies on the entry of anybody to do business here other than local people. The military administration, if I recall it correctly, even at the time did of course assist at some of our earlier entrepreneurs on the island, assisted them in how to do business. I'm sure that Herman Guerrero, for instance, the late Joeten and some of the others were assisted in learning how to do business here on the island. So the opportunities in terms of extending more of an open door, or policies for outsiders to come in do business on the island, was placed very much out of control by the Naval Administration.

Willens: Going way back into the 1950s, there were expressions here on Saipan of wanting to establish some permanent relationship with the United States. When did you first become aware of the need at some point in the future to develop a new political status and get out from under the Trusteeship Agreement?

Guerrero: Well you know, the people of the Commonwealth (at that time of course we were still being called the Northern Marianas) expressed a dream in many ways that one of these days they would like to have a much closer political relationship with the United States. Back in the mid 1960s, if I remember correctly, when they first started about the unification of the Marianas, what they were saying was that they wanted to unite with Guam, because Guam for all these years had been American and [Guamanians were] American citizens and a lot of our people during the mid '60's and '70's started commuting or travelling back and forth to Guam. That kind of convinced the people of the Northern Marianas that perhaps it's timely for us to try to formulate something—that the people of the Marianas would come as one Marianas people and the only way to do it was perhaps that we have to go through the unification process. There were several attempts at the time and finally it never materialized, because every time they started moving, both the leaders from Guam and the leaders here in Saipan and the Northern Marianas were still uncertain really how successful it would be. And the people of Guam were kind of reluctant because of the past history that they have. They have some sort of animosity, I must say, an ill feeling about the people of the Northern Marianas. At one time when the Japanese invaded Guam, a number of our people were selected here by the Japanese government and sent off to Guam during the invasion of Guam by the Japanese to serve as interpreters. So when they secured Guam, a lot of our people remained to be interpreters for the Japanese Administration. Through that, there was some animosity or ill feeling among the people of Guam for the Northern Marianas people to become united with them—to unify Guam and us here in the Northern Marianas.

- Willens: What was it about Guam that seemed particularly attractive to the people of the Northern Marianas? Was it U.S. citizenship, was it the greater economic development of Guam, or were there other factors at play?
- Guerrero: Well, there must be two factors in my opinion. One, the economic condition of Guam. They were farther advanced at the time than us in the Northern Marianas and our people wanted to have that opportunity also to further their education, to stay in Guam for employment, and at the same time get better paid so they can support their family here. And the second thing is American citizenship. Many of our people, like I said, have dreams that one of these days they would like to have closer ties or become members of the American political family. That is one of the reasons because, as I recall it, through the referendum back in 1969 we voted in fact in favor—a majority was in favor for unification with Guam.
- Willens: As I understand it, both political parties shared that ultimate goal. The Territorial Party as I understand it was created in the late 1950s with Joeten and others being active players in that and the Territorial Party wanted to establish some direct relationship with the United States. Whereas the Popular Party, which went through various name changes, supported reunification with Guam. Did there come a time when you made some kind of a political allegiance with one of the two parties?
- Guerrero: Let me just say this, really I was not too ambitious at the time or had much interest in becoming a politician. But, of course, over the years (especially back in the mid 1960s) I was asked if I would consider becoming a candidate for one of the political parties. And let me just say this, the first party that was created here was a Progressive Party, then follows the Territorial, and today of course the Republican. Likewise, the so-called Popular Party became Democrats, and of course they name themselves after that through the same Democrats today.
- Willens: Which party approached you in the mid 1960s?
- Guerrero: Well, in fact I was drafted into the Progressive Party, which is today the Republican Party, and ever since the mid 1960s, I was a member of that party.
- Willens: So you have stayed a member of the same party for nearly 30 years?
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Willens: Many of your longstanding colleagues switched parties from time to time.
- Guerrero: That's correct. But I remained in the Progressive Party, Territorial and then Republican. I was trying to say this—that in 1969 when the referendum was held, that was a time when the Territorial, the Progressive Party, felt that we must try a different approach, because the people of the Northern Marianas voted in favor of unification with Guam and when they held a referendum in Guam, it was defeated. The people of Guam did not want to unify with the Northern Marianas.
- Willens: Do you have any explanation for the defeat of the referendum in Guam other than the left over resentment from World War II?
- Guerrero: Well, I believe that it was a lack of a real public education by the leaders of Guam. I believe that if they would have the opportunity to have public education and at least explain to the general public why it is important that the Marianas should unite together as a whole, at that particular time there would have been a better chance to gain support. Based on my own observation of it, I think there was a lack of public education for the people of Guam and I think that's why it was totally defeated. Like I said, they were so

proud you know, I mean let's face it, they have been American citizens all these years and we have been Trust Territory citizens, and the Northern Marianas had never been an American possession or territory or administered by the U.S. other than after the war. So really my own assessment of this thing is that there was some envy among the people of Guam also. Why are the people of the Northern Marianas trying to join us to become American citizens, while they are enjoying their political status under the Organic Act as a possession with the United States. I think that's one area. So after the failure of those so-called attempts to convince the people of Guam to unite with the Northern Marianas people, the Progressive Party took the lead, as well as finally the Democrats as well, and that's how the process of seeking another political status began.

Willens: When did you first run for the Marianas District Legislature?

Guerrero: Well, I was elected in 1971.

Willens: 1971?

Guerrero: Yes. What they did was draft me in 1968 to become a member of the Legislature at that particular time.

Willens: What do you mean they drafted you?

Guerrero: They drafted me and I was off-island. I was on the mainland. I was in San Francisco at the time and they drafted me to become a candidate.

Willens: So you ran even though you were

Guerrero: They put me on the ballot as well and I got good support. I almost made it the first time. So when I came back, of course, and the following election year, four years later, I decided that I wanted to run and I got support from many friends and families. So I ran in 1971. I got elected and I served in the Fourth Legislature, as you remember. That's the Legislature that established the Marianas Political Status Commission.

Willens: Now as I understand it, the Marianas District Legislature was created in 1963 and many of the people who had been politically active in the Saipan Council immediately ran for the District Legislature—Mr. Santos, Mr. Salas and others who were active at the time. It's my understanding that the District Legislature was largely dominated and controlled by the Popular Party during most of the 1960s and the early 1970s. Were you a minority then within the District Legislature?

Guerrero: Yes. That is very true. I was the single candidate from our Territorial Party who won that election.

Willens: You were the only one

Guerrero: Yes. I was the only one from Saipan; a couple of the others were from Rota. So we were a minority, and in fact I was the minority leader ever since that time.

Willens: Did you feel that because of the failure of reunification that the differences between the two parties so far as future political status were insignificant? Did you feel that the two parties were generally together in terms of the kind of political status they wanted to negotiate?

Guerrero: Well, because of the failure of that referendum for unification with Guam, both parties felt that it was only appropriate to start seeking alternatives for the political future of us here in the Northern Marianas. And as you recall it, the Territorial Party at that time advocated free association with the United States.

Willens: Do you recall that the Territorial Party supported a relationship like free association with the United States?

Guerrero: That's correct.

Willens: Now I understand that the Territorial Party was the party that had the most business support and the most support from the Carolinian community and that there was some reluctance within the Territorial Party to separate from the rest of Micronesia. What is your recollection of the attitude within the party for a separate status for the Marianas?

Guerrero: I knew their reluctance or the reservations that they had at the time in breaking away from the rest of Micronesia. We felt perhaps that by approaching the same political status as the rest of the Micronesians, as citizens of say, for instance, the FSM today, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshalls. They were aiming at free association status with the United States. I think that many of the Territorial leaders at that time felt that perhaps it would be the most appropriate status for us if we are going to have much closer political ties with the United States and at the same time retain independent control of both our own domestic and foreign issues to enjoy the free association with the United States, where the Democrats continued to want unification with Guam. And after we broke off from the Trust Territory, we finally decided that the only way to achieve the objective of the people's wishes was to separate ourselves from the rest of Micronesia.

Willens: By the time that decision was made, the other five districts had rejected a so-called Commonwealth Proposal and they had a negotiating committee that was looking toward free association or independence.

Guerrero: That's correct.

Willens: What were the reasons for, in your opinion, the desire of the Marianas to go independently from the other Trust Territory districts? Some people have suggested, for example, that it's a difference in their culture. Others have suggested it's a difference in the level of economic development. Others have said that the Chamorros are ambitious and too political and don't have any local customs worth preserving whereas the people of Palau and Yap have their own tribal and other customs. What do you think really were the key elements that prompted leaders in the Marianas to say we want to go our own way?

Guerrero: Well, let me just say what I think the real objective or the goal of the people of the Marianas was at the time when we finally decided that we should segregate ourselves from the rest of Micronesia and go on our own political status. There were a number of factors that were considered. Number one, the Marianas at the time was the biggest taxpayer into the coffers of the Trust Territory. Practically you know, we dominated all of the rest of the Micronesian islands as the biggest taxpayer of the whole six districts. And we felt that in order for the Marianas to advance itself economically, educationally for our children, politically and socially, the only way to do it was to break away from the rest of Micronesia. That's what we did and, of course, the other concern that, traditionally, we have our own cultures and customs that are totally different from the other Micronesians. That's one element or one factor that caused us to want to break away from the rest. That's why the people kind of maintained that they preferred to align themselves with the people of Guam, because we are same Chamorros, we are the same families in many ways, many relatives and parents of course who are originally from Guam or are originally from the Northern Marianas and living in Guam. So that was really the people's desire—that it was in the best interest of all to seek another way to achieve the political destiny of our people and that's why we created a Marianas Political Status Commission.

- Willens: Let's go back to your work for Saipan Shipping. You worked for the company for many years into the 1970s, isn't that correct?
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Willens: Could you just generally trace your progression there?
- Guerrero: Like I said, after I possessed my Mariana engineers license, I became the chief engineer. I served a couple of years on board the shipping company's vessels. I was the chief engineer for the company and then later on I was upgraded to be the port engineer, where I was in charge of all the engineering for the company both on shore and at sea or on ships. I went through that process. I also worked from time to time for the Trust Territory Administration doing some of their supervisory work for their ships. Aside from troubleshooting from time to time, I had some contracts as a contracting officer with several of their ships in the shipyard, being the port engineer. Through those years, of course, as port engineer, I was taking over also the operations of the company on both sea and on the shore. Later on I was promoted to general manager.
- Willens: You were vice president, general manager and you succeeded Pete P. Tenorio.
- Guerrero: Yes, yes. I was the manager and then I took over for Pete P. Tenorio, when he was elected to be a member of the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: So you took over that position in early 1973 because he was elected in 1972, as I recall.
- Guerrero: That's right.
- Willens: Did the Saipan Shipping Company have any competition during the 1960s?
- Guerrero: Well, during those days it was the only established local company. In the earlier days, of course, there were a couple of small shipping companies that were based in Guam, and they serviced us here in the Northern Marianas. But after Saipan Shipping was established, it was the only local company that served between Saipan, Tinian, Rota and Guam, of course and up to the Northern Islands. I believe we started getting some competition in the mid 1970s when the Transpacific line was established. But mainly for local services, it was pretty much dominated by Saipan Shipping.
- Willens: Did you work closely over the years with Joeten?
- Guerrero: Oh yes, yes. I valued Joeten's professionalism and really as a man with sincerity and commitment in how to serve his people through his career in business. Many of us, I must say, were trained by him. I highly respected the guy.
- Willens: What were his attitudes as you recall during the 1960's with respect to future political status? Did he believe that the people of the Northern Marianas were ready for more self-government and more competition?
- Guerrero: Well, I believe that Joeten at that time basically believed—not that the people were not ready—but that the people needed more time. For that reason, because he also became a member of the Political Status Commission at a later date, he preferred to have our people have a better education and better know their responsibility before they make a final decision to become a member of any political family. He had a very strong belief that he would like to see self-reliance, self-sufficiency, people have their own education, and they are ready to meet their obligations.
- Willens: How did you feel about that?

- Guerrero: Well, like I said, I felt strongly and very good about Joeten. I think many of my age or slightly older than me felt the same.
- Willens: Do you think that people of that generation, a little bit older than you are, thought that maybe things went too rapidly here and that the people may have made a decision too soon with respect to future political status?
- Guerrero: Yes. I must say yes. I have to admit that many of our local people of that age felt that we should be given more ample time. But as you know, timing is of the essence and it's so critical that the people, after we separated from the Trust Territory Administration, have to make the choice, whether you want to make the move today or not.
- Willens: That's exactly the point, isn't it? One of the arguments that I've heard on that issue is that the Trust Territory government wasn't really providing the people with the educational opportunities, the training, the opportunities in government during the 1960s and so some of the people who argued for separate status said why should we stay with the Trust Territory under these circumstances? What was your impression of the performance of the Trust Territory government during the 1960s after the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations came into office and tried to put more funds here in the Trust Territory and generally do a better job? Did that work?
- Guerrero: Well, I believe that the Trust Territory Administration operated here really under limited funding at the time. There was less opportunity because most of the people hired to supervise us were expatriates, you know, although many of our own local people were well qualified. When I say well qualified, that's been proven. Our people became managers or supervisors or whatever within the departments. To me the Trust Territory Administration was reluctantly giving the opportunities that we had afterwards.
- Willens: Why were they reluctant?
- Guerrero: Like I said, number one is perhaps because of the limited funding that was being provided by OTIA for the Trust Territory. You had six districts to split the pie, and whoever had more population at the time got more. But like you said, there should have been more education and training to give our people the opportunities—given the opportunities for our young people to be sent abroad for educations by the Administering Authority.
- Willens: That seems to be one thing that the United States did pretty well, provide money for high school students to go back to the mainland for college. Is that right?
- Guerrero: Well, later on yes. But you had to apply for educational assistance. During those days, if you wanted to further your education, you had to sign some sort of an agreement that upon your return you would work for the government. You know, basically to repay the assistance that you had been granted.
- Willens: The issue of two pay levels, one for the expatriates and one for the local people, was a source of controversy for many years in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. You personally had many close friends working for the Trust Territory government, isn't that correct?
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Willens: You were in private life but you worked for them occasionally on contract for selected tasks. Did you come to know any of the high commissioners or high level expatriates on a personal basis?
- Guerrero: Oh yes, a number of them, including assistant high commissioners. But going back to those issues, they brought that issue of discriminatory pay level before the court. The biggest joke on it is that Secretary of the Interior Hickel came out here at that time and he

started saying that equal pay, you know, for equal work. But that never materialized. Our people have had the same responsibility or same work as the expatriates, and many of our people were not really given the same pay. I for one was discriminated against even from the military days and the Trust Territory days. I was placed in as a foreman, a position in the power plant that was one of the highest paid within my department in public works at that time. And I was barely making one dollar an hour. And I was the one who was operating the whole island power here, and troubleshooting and doing all that while my supervisors at the plant, I must say, were making GS-13 or GS-15. I don't know how much money they were making. So you can see it, you know. I also did indoctrinate many of the military, in other words, provide job training, when the military was here, in the operations of the plant, after I had familiarized myself with the job over the years and with my experience as foreman of the plant.

Willens: Did things improve within the Trust Territory government, say from 1965 into the early 1970s? Was there any improvement that you could see?

Guerrero: They did improve and, like I said, it could have been greater, much more improvement, of course, if they really had given more opportunity to the local people.

Willens: How about the infrastructure in terms of power and water? I've read many materials suggesting that these had been underinvested in for many years and it affected the quality of life here and the potential to develop Saipan as a tourist destination.

Guerrero: Well, I could only speak for here. For us here in the CNMI, really there was very little improvement in the infrastructures. As you can see, over the years after we became a Commonwealth many of the dilapidated infrastructures needed to be replaced from time to time as the money was available. And there was no plan whatsoever for the population growth and the needs of the island in terms of economic opportunity or self-sufficiency.

Willens: But you had a District Administrator, Mr. Ada, and you had a district planning office, and the Trust Territory government had many plans and studies. What do you think was the difficulty—simply lack of funds or lack of leadership or some other lack?

Guerrero: Let me say this. Number one was perhaps a lack of leadership and better plans for the future needs of the islands and the perspective of how we are going to achieve the economic sufficiency of our islands. So one lack was in the planning for a way to meet the future goals and the needs of a growing population. And number two, of course, we just did not have sufficient funding to do the infrastructure at that time. But the whole problem really of the Trust Territory was that we had six districts to administer and over the six districts they had to split the pie in different ways, how much money goes to that district, how much money goes to us here. What they should have done really was to plan based on the real needs of the people, immediate needs and future needs. In my opinion, perhaps maybe they had the plans but there was no way that they implemented them correctly. And that's exactly what happened. Many of the dilapidated systems that we have to go back and replace today, or say over the years in the Commonwealth status, could have been planned and done correctly, build the infrastructures that were needed at least for the future growth of the population of the islands and the expectations of achieving self-sufficiency through some economic enhancement. So this is really where, in my opinion, many of the things should have been done during the Trust Territory Administration.

Willens: During the 1960s and the early 1970s many officials from the Interior Department and members of Congress came to visit the Trust Territory. Do you have any recollection of meeting individual members of Congress or Interior Department officials who came out here to examine the situation?

- Guerrero: Well, I recall that a number of them came. Especially during the early 1970s when I was a member of the District Legislature. I remember a number of prominent Congressman, Senators who came to the island, different high commissioners who served under the different Interior Secretaries.
- Willens: You mentioned Secretary Hickel earlier. He came out here in 1969 shortly after the Nixon Administration was elected and he made a statement in May of 1969 indicating publicly for the first time that the United States was ready to really embrace the Trust Territory and make Micronesia a part of the United States. Did that kind of statement have any credibility here?
- Guerrero: Well, like you know, we experienced many of those who come and make public statements and then they leave. But there's no follow-up to fulfill their commitments or whatever promises were made. So, like I said, what's his name, Senator Hollings, was out here that I remember. In fact, I still have a memory of him and a couple of them when they came out here with another Congressman. I suppose there were a couple of Congressmen that came over in the early 1970s that I know of. In fact, I knew one of them very well.
- Willens: I know Congressmen Burton and Foley came out in early 1974, but you may be thinking of something earlier.
- Guerrero: That was much earlier. This is back in 1972 when a couple of the congressmen, one of the congressmen or both I believe are not here today. They are deceased. One of them got into a plane accident and he died, I believe. The other one was very well known in Guam—one of the Congressmen who visited Guam quite often.
- Willens: Speaking of Guam for the moment, do you remember ever dealing with a politician there named Richard Taitano who became Deputy High Commissioner at some point?
- Guerrero: Yes. I know Dick Taitano.
- Willens: I had the opportunity to interview him a few weeks ago. He's suffering from an illness but is quite alert. He described his experience of being the first Chamorro invited back to Washington to be head of the Office of Territorial Affairs in the early 1960s. He recalls that his views were not well received by many of the bureaucrats back in Washington. One of the big issues back in Washington in the 1960s was whether the Micronesians generally, and the Northern Marianas in particular, were ready for self-government or whether the Trust Territory ought to stay in place for another 10 or 15 years. The Interior Department took the view that the development should go slowly. The State Department was concerned about United Nations reactions and was urging that there be more substantial United States effort to improve the quality of life here and perhaps look toward a plebiscite as early as 1967 or 1968 at which time the people would be given a chance to vote throughout Micronesia to become part of the United States. Now just reflect with me for a minute, suppose that plebiscite had been held in 1967 or 1968 throughout Micronesia. Do you think that the people would have voted to become affiliated permanently with the United States?
- Guerrero: Micronesia as a whole?
- Willens: Yes.
- Guerrero: I don't think the rest of Micronesia really was ready to vote then. Like I said, we broke off from them because we want to advance both economically and politically. At that time, I believe Micronesians rather wanted to become more bound together in terms of any political destiny. So, I doubt very much that at the time of the plebiscite the Micronesian people would have voted for a much closer relationship with the United States.

- Willens: Dr. Palacios was a very active member of the Congress of Micronesia Future Status Commission. It was established in 1967. It issued two reports, one in 1969. It laid out free association as the objective. Did you work closely with Dr. Palacios from time to time?
- Guerrero: Well yes. Dr. Palacios, I respected him, as a senior politician in our island. Certainly I associated myself with him closer. His record as my compadre. I know him very well and he was a very competent leader of our island as well. I highly respect him.
- Willens: You decided never to run for the Congress of Micronesia, I gather. Or did you run at one point?
- Guerrero: No. I decided not to because, like I said, the Congress of Micronesia was a full time job at the time. I was working for the Saipan Shipping Company and at that time the District Legislature was only part time. You attend only sessions during a called-for session and that's how we all worked, other than the presiding officer who was at that time Ben Santos.
- Willens: There has been a good deal written about the Congress of Micronesia and whether it played a role in trying to unify the six districts of Micronesia. Do you think that the Congress served a unifying role within Micronesia?
- Guerrero: Well I believe that was the key to the establishment of the Congress of Micronesia, basically to unite all the six districts. Later on, of course, as you can recall it, each of these districts had a different view of their future political destiny. The rest of the FSM would like to stick together. Palau would want to break off following the so-called tradition of the Marianas, and you can see it now. Palau was another non-aggressive district at the time and [showed] no deference to the Marshalls.
- Willens: Do you think that the other five districts would have stayed together if the Marianas had not negotiated separately?
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Willens: You believe that?
- Guerrero: I believe that. I believe that it would have bound together as a whole, you know, as a whole government together in Micronesia. Perhaps, who knows? There was one time that late Senator Fong would like to see the whole Micronesia become part of the State of Hawaii.
- Willens: When the Popular Party and the Territorial Party both decided to go forward with their separate course, the Legislature in which you participated created the Marianas Political Status Commission. Do you recall any debate of significance about creating that Commission either in terms of its size or its function?
- Guerrero: Well, I don't recall any debate on the issue of the size of the Political Status Commission that was created by the Legislature, other than perhaps it was a strong voice of representation and that's how it followed to add more members to the Political Status Commission.
- Willens: I don't understand. The legislation as finally approved by the Legislature created a 15-person Commission and required participation from each of the political parties, from the business community and from the Carolinian community as well. Was that an important aspect of the Commission so far as you were concerned?
- Guerrero: Well, that's what I am saying. The representation of each of these ethnic groups are no different from at-large. It was established that way and no difference from the business community. So we felt strongly that we must have a wide representation from the different

groups, ethnic groups of people, at the same time from the Chamorros at-large and the Carolinians no difference from the business community. So to me it wasn't important really. The creation of that Commission and its representation was widely established and represented.

Willens: Do you think that the Commission generally had widespread public support?

Guerrero: Yes, yes.

Willens: Do you have any recollection of the first time you met Ambassador Williams?

Guerrero: Well, yes I do.

Willens: When was that?

Guerrero: If I am not mistaken, I believe I met Ambassador Williams of course

Willens: Was it before the negotiations began or after?

Guerrero: That was even before.

Willens: Let me help you. He was appointed in March of 1971 but he came out here in April of 1972 after he had agreed at a Micronesian negotiating session to accept the request of the Northern Marianas for separate negotiations. Then he visited here and I think may have had a meeting with the District Legislature or business community or various groups.

Guerrero: Well, I think that was the first time that I recall meeting him, when he had a group of leadership meetings that he called for. I believe you are correct, Howard, it was sometime in 1972. But, like I said, before even the start up of the negotiations that was the opportunity that I have time to meet with him briefly and just be introduced.

Willens: Here is a list of the members of the Commission who were first appointed. Could you, only if you feel comfortable, just give me a few sentences that would describe each of those people in your opinion based on your experience and your judgment of their capability, their integrity, their representative nature, their general qualifications? Ben Santos, for example, had been active in politics for 10 or 15 years by this time.

Guerrero: Right. Well, I knew Ben Santos because when I first got into the Fourth Legislature he was our speaker. I knew Felipe Salas because he was a vice speaker at the time as well.

Willens: Now you were a member of the minority party. Did they treat you well?

Guerrero: I don't think I should say that they didn't treat me well. They treated me fairly. Knowing most all of them, in fact I knew speaker Ben Santos because I was the one who pushed him to become a legislator in the early days.

Willens: Did you?

Guerrero: Yes, because I was very close to him. We are friends, we lived together, next door neighbors for months. We grew up together in our community. He was one of my closest friends, along with Joe Cabrera. Both were teachers at the time and that's how we acquainted ourselves.

Willens: I notice that many of the political leaders in the Northern Marianas began as teachers.

Guerrero: Yes.

Willens: Why do you think that was?

Guerrero: Well, because they were educators, they had an education background. People looked at them as a group of people who we should tap to be part of our leaders. So, going back,

- Eddie Pangelinan, I knew him very well. Not because he is my cousin, but I knew him when he just came back here and worked as a lawyer.
- Willens: Did you know him when he was growing up here on the island?
- Guerrero: Oh yes, yes. I know Eddie Pangelinan very well.
- Willens: Did you anticipate that he might be selected to be a chairman of the Commission?
- Guerrero: Yes. Aside being a member of the Congress of Micronesia. But you know, Herman Q., my Lieutenant Governor today, Benjamin Manglona, I have known him many years. We were all together in the political arena.
- Willens: Herman Q. Guerrero had been active in the Congress of Micronesia for many years and was instrumental with Eddie in working out this relationship with the United States that produced the negotiations. Herman I gather is in Hawaii now. Have you maintained any contact with him?
- Guerrero: No, not at all.
- Willens: How do you recall him? Would you recall him as a very active individual, very articulate, or was he more passive?
- Guerrero: Well, he was a very active and articulate person during the early days. Perhaps later on, after he got out from politics or stayed away from politics, he was not very active. But during the early days he was. Like I said, my Lieutenant Governor, Benjamin Manglona, we worked together from the Fifth Legislature all the way through.
- Willens: You and he?
- Guerrero: And Lieutenant Governor, right. People here that know of, I know Herman but not as well as I know the Lieutenant Governor.
- Willens: Which Herman, Herman Manglona?
- Guerrero: Herman Manglona from Tinian. We sat together as members of the District Legislature. Ben and Danny Muna, and especially Danny Muna, he was my colleague as well.
- Willens: In the District Legislature?
- Guerrero: Fourth Legislature.
- Willens: He gets described as colorful from time to time.
- Guerrero: Did you recall perhaps that I had an argument with him over the so-called endorsing resolution?
- Willens: No. What do you remember about that?
- Guerrero: Well, you know I was a member of the minority. I submitted my so-called minority opinion about endorsing the Covenant resolution. As I said, I argued on the basis that a few of us had pointed out (as you may recall it), during the hearing that we had with members of the Commission and the negotiators of the political status even before we were asked to endorse a resolution. I had several points that I pointed out at that time. I believe you were one of those who sat up on the podium, not on the podium but where the speaker's bench is, and you people were explaining to us about the provisions of the Covenant. I raised several issues at that particular time and of the issues that we raised, you know, one of them most recently has just been resolved, the others are perhaps still pending.
- Willens: Which issues do you remember raising?

- Guerrero: One is for instance the tax without representation. Taxes that we have to adopt like the federal tax, the IRC [Internal Revenue Code] would be applicable to us here in the CNMI. Another was the minimum wage -- why it was not applicable to us at the time. For various reasons, of course, the negotiators felt that it should not apply. Other provisions, like for instance the plenary power of the U.S. Congress. Some of the provisions were still unclear. If I'm not mistaken, Howard, I think I still have my records that show about nine points I raised during that particular debate.
- Willens: Do you think you could find the piece of paper that listed the nine points?
- Guerrero: Well, I think I would have to go back really because I have a good memory of my files in most recent arguments over this issue. On one of the issues, such as the Inspector General, about the Territorial Clause issue. I think that's one of those points that we raised. I still may have to go back and try to find my footnote on it. I think I can do it.
- Willens: Well that would be great. How about Felix Rabauliman? Do you know Felix?
- Guerrero: Felix Rabauliman, I know him very well. The late Olympia Borja, I knew him very well. Like for instance, Felix and Joeten. You know, I see three here who were really key figures from the Territorial Party.
- Willens: They would be Joeten, Felix Rabauliman and who?
- Guerrero: Benjamin T. Manglona.
- Willens: How about Dr. Palacios?
- Guerrero: Palacios at that time was with the Democrats.
- Willens: Was he? I forgot that.
- Guerrero: He was with the Democrats. No deference to Olympio Borja.
- Willens: Senator Borja had a practice of changing from time to time but he was, as I recall, a very outspoken person. During the negotiations, there was an effort made by the Commission's leadership, Pangelinan and Santos, to file reports with the District Legislature. There were also various public education efforts made in terms of village meetings. Did you have the sense as a member of the Legislature that you were being kept informed in general terms as to what the Commission was doing?
- Guerrero: Well, I must say, not really. In other words, in terms of the progress, every time that you people concluded a report, we were not being well informed or explained by the members who were members of the Marianas Political Status Commission other than when it was practically ready to be completed. And at that time we were given a very limited time to go through all of the voluminous reports and for us to go one by one on it. And the political education part of it, Howard, I was a member of the Committee. I was a member of the political committee when I was in the Fourth Legislature. I was elected to be one of those members of the so-called political committee that had to go out and explain it to our people. So in the process of that, we did go out village to village and to different ethnic groups of people. But the time frame was so short really.
- Willens: The time frame between the District Legislature approving the Covenant and the actual plebiscite was relatively short, four months or so.
- Guerrero: Relatively short for political education. We even had to go to Guam because we have people in Guam from the Marianas.

- Willens: After the negotiations opened formally in December of 1972 and there was a very brief two day ceremonial session, the next round was in May of 1973 and that's when many of the political issues were discussed and many position papers were exchanged. The Commission decided to make public all of the position papers by way of submitting a report to the District Legislature, which accompanied its request for funding. The United States delegation was very upset that the Commission made all these materials public, because the *Pacific Daily News* picked the stuff up within three weeks or so and had a whole series of articles about the issues raised. So the materials were there, but I should think that as a member of the District Legislature you had enough to read without wanting to spend your time on another couple of hundred pages of position papers. Is that correct?
- Guerrero: That is true and it's, like I said, not easy to digest that. Perhaps maybe even the negotiators themselves were not really versed of all the provisions and important issues that should be addressed. Many of the reports were just given to them, no deference to us, and for us to digest that report in a short period of time, it's practically impossible.
- Willens: What you would have preferred was more personal reporting by members of the Commission themselves or consultants to explain orally exactly what was going on and respond to your questions at the time.
- Guerrero: Yes. That would have been much more appropriate and perhaps we would have had much better knowledge in terms of what do they mean in each of these word-by-word [analyses], you know.
- Willens: It's true. The negotiations took a little bit more than two years, although that seemed like a very long time to those of us that were actively engaged in them. There certainly are those who think that it proceeded very rapidly. Particularly when you compare it with the Micronesian negotiations and the fact that Palau has only recently finally affirmed or ratified its own compact. In May of 1973, Ambassador Williams outlined for the first time the United States' desire to have all of Tinian for military use and then to lease back one-third. What was your reaction as you recall it to the U.S. request for very substantial land on Tinian for military purposes?
- Guerrero: Well, my recollection, of course, like I said earlier, is that for strategic purposes the military needs the land in Tinian because some of the infrastructure was readily available such as the runway in the north field and other areas there. And that is very important because of the situation around the globe and especially in Asia. Some of the Communist countries were very unstable at the time and for that purpose the United States Defense Department needed more land. Perhaps that was one of the key issues that they wanted to retain two-thirds of Tinian.
- Willens: As they originally presented it though, it was for all of Tinian. It was characterized by the Commission and by others as being too much and unreasonable. Did you have that reaction or were you generally prepared to try to reach some accommodation if it could be done?
- Guerrero: Well, I think that, because of the defense need for national security and the advantage for us here, we needed to make some concession and give to the people of Tinian whatever land that was not be needed for military purposes. Finally that compromise was reached and that's why two-thirds went to the military and one-third remains for the people of Tinian.

- Willens: Originally the United States contemplated relocating the village of San Jose and then subsequently their studies and surveys suggested that that was no longer necessary. Many of the people on Tinian were disappointed as a result of that. Others were pleased because they had opposed relocation. What role did you think the opinion of the Tinian residents should have on the negotiations? There were some who said Tinian should vote on this and if the Tinian residents didn't want to give two-thirds of their island, then the Commission should not agree to it.
- Guerrero: Well let me just say this. Many of the arguments you raised came from one of our friends, Joe Cruz, and his colleagues of course, claiming that the people of Tinian were so important in the negotiating history because they sacrificed their land for the political status of the CNMI. And perhaps it's true in a way, but like I said I think we all sacrificed at the same time for our political destiny. I believe that the military could have developed Tinian as intended perhaps maybe at lesser [quarrel than] today.
- Willens: Lesser what?
- Guerrero: [Quarrel] by the people. In other words, more concerns and other sentiments over the lease back of Tinian. What I am saying is that the expectations of the people, the community in Tinian, that perhaps they were sacrificed to an extent, okay fine, two-thirds is fine provided that the military would use it for the installations of the military and in return would economically benefit the people. That never came true. This is one area today that we trying to convince the United States, especially the DOD, that if the military no longer needs the land in Tinian that we want to exercise the lease back terms we have in the technical agreement and try to develop it both for private or commercial.
- Willens: The United States certainly emphasized the economic, social, educational and medical benefits that would flow to the people of Tinian if there was a substantial military base there as they said would be done. When do you remember being first made aware of the fact that the United States was not, in fact, going to build the base on Tinian?
- Guerrero: Well, I believe that we started confirming this about 1978 when we began to implement the political status of the Commonwealth.
- Willens: My recollection is that there was a five year period within the United States had to obtain funding for the base or otherwise the option could not be exercised. Do you have any recollection of conversations in which you participated as to whether Defense was going to take advantage of the option?
- Guerrero: Well, back in 1978, when I was elected senator in the first bicameral legislature and was elected President of the Senate, I recall that I visited on occasion the Defense Department. At that time we discussed about the military installation on Tinian and some of our concern over whether the military will continue its flying exercises over that area. Ever since that time, we would continue to ask for federal funding for building a control tower here in Saipan. Ever since that particular time, I can sense that they might defer action on how the military would develop Tinian. At one time they said they were going to assist us on the funding, perhaps through the DOD funds in order to build the control tower here in Saipan because of the military exercises that would continue. Then we found out later on that Defense had no plan for doing so or funding the control tower for Saipan International Airport. In other words, you could feel that there was some reluctance of the DOD to develop Tinian as was planned. The other thing was that we continued to seek initial funding to improve the breakwater in Tinian.
- Willens: In the harbor?

- Guerrero: In the harbor.
- Willens: The United States had undertaken to rehabilitate the harbor, as I recall.
- Guerrero: They were supposed to rehabilitate or to improve the breakwater. The breakwater today is pretty dangerous. What if that thing were to totally break off?
- Willens: You mean that nothing has been done on that up to this time?
- Guerrero: Nothing has been done. And to my recollection, during those years there were initially at that time about some \$6,000 were tried to be earmarked or authorized, or maybe the DOD had reserved that amount of money to rehabilitate or improve the breakwater. Nothing ever came through. We have been following up on that ever since 1978, 1979, 1980 when I got out. Then when I came back I again [made efforts] through my own initiative and my own interest in trying to find out whatever happened about the plan that they had. So then you could see it, that the military over time was losing interest in developing Tinian as was their plan.
- Willens: In the late stages of the negotiations, Ambassador Williams more or less told the Marianas Political Status Commission that there were no immediate plans to construct the multi-service facility that had been previously described. One result of that was to increase by a relatively small amount, \$500,000, the amount of an annual commitment for financial assistance from \$13.5 million to \$14 million in constant dollars. There was considerable disappointment at that time because the Commission and the public generally felt that developing a base there would have some very substantial economic and other benefits to the Commonwealth. Was that your view at the time?
- Guerrero: Yes, certainly. Like I said, we told them that's part of what was negotiated for that purpose and the people could see that there would be some benefits to them. Of course, I'm sure it's not different from our negotiators agreeing that two-thirds of Tinian would be released to the military. One important memory that I have is that they were supposed to build the infrastructure as needed for the island—schools, hospitals. Many of those promises that were mentioned and would be benefits to the local community have never been done. I know that the situation today is totally different from the past and the cutback that the Defense Department would like to see, the administrations that would like to see cutback on unnecessary development and try to control better use of the fund. I think the people are still expecting, especially the people of Tinian, some sort of benefits in return. In my own opinion if you ask me the question what the military should do today, I think the best way to do it is to really release the land.
- Willens: In its entirety?
- Guerrero: In its entirety.
- Willens: Has that been raised in the discussions with them?
- Guerrero: Because of the provisions of the Covenant and the technical agreement that we have, we only have the language there that, if the Defense Department no longer needs the land for military uses, you have the provision for the lease back to the CNMI government again. And that's exactly what we want to do first. We want to exercise that lease back. But as you can see, we have started out very effectively; we have been following up on how we can proceed with the lease back provision, so hopefully the military and the Defense Department will agree to our proposal.
- Willens: Who has the initiative on the subject now? Has the Marianas made its proposal to the Defense Department?

- Guerrero: That's correct. I have established a committee here, the CMAC—the civilian and military advisory committee. Through consultations we have been negotiating on the lease back. We were successful here in Saipan on the Tanapag part of it, because initially they only negotiated for a lease back for ten years but after I got into my administration I convinced them that ten years is too short. We cannot develop or convince anybody to develop. So at least initially they agreed that we lease it back for 30 years; and then we could renew it again. Likewise, I would like to see a successful lease back term in Tinian so we can develop it for both private and commercial development, a resort that eventually would bring some economic advantage to the people of Tinian or the Commonwealth as a whole.
- Willens: One of the important issues relating to Tinian during the negotiations was whether the Northern Marianas would agree to sell the land to the United States rather than lease it. The Commission took a very strong position that it would agree only to a lease and the United States delegation took a very strong position that it wanted to purchase the land. Ultimately, as everyone thought they would, the United States delegation compromised on that point and the Marianas Political Status Commission compromised on other points. Do you think the difference between purchase and lease is truly an important one in this community?
- Guerrero: Oh yes. There's no question about that. I think that if we sold the land to meet the needs of the military, the value of that land would be impacted should the people like to buy back. No question about it. I think we have the technical agreement in terms of just leasing that land that the military needs. I think it's very important and I think that's why the decision was made to lease it rather than sell it. And we can have the option of leasing back again.
- Willens: The other issue that was deferred until the very last moment was the question of price. There were many exchanges between the negotiating parties as to how you determine the value of land on Tinian when most of it's been public land or military retention land and there is really no fair market value. There has been some criticism in the years since that the approximately 20 million dollars that was obtained by the Northern Marianas was far too little and that the Commission and the Northern Marianas should have held out for substantially more money. For your information, the internal United States government documents that I've seen indicate that Ambassador Williams had negotiating authority to go up to about \$20 or \$21 million. So the Commission and the U.S. delegation ended up right at the top of his negotiating instructions, but we didn't push him, perhaps some would say, far enough. What is your sense of the fairness of the price?
- Guerrero: Well, let me say this, Howard. The appraised value at the time of Tinian land, in my opinion, was too little. In other words, it was undervalued. For several reasons, I would say that it was undervalued. Tinian was very important to the Defense Department and the United States of America. It had a symbolic meaning for the struggles that they went through in World War II and all the hostilities that we experienced. The people thought of Tinian by referring to the Enola Gay history and the experience in Japan that finally forced the Japanese to surrender—all because of Tinian in the first place. That's why I am saying that the value of Tinian was undervalued. We should have taken a very strong position to increase the value of the land of Tinian, because for us to develop back, or whatever reason that we need to develop Tinian, is going to be substantially a big amount of money. Yet we have not discovered what's really left in those atomic beds at this time. Whether it's environmentally sound and safe, who knows? And there are two pits there, and two atomic bombs were lifted out of Tinian. Everything was just covered by dirt and

- sealed, who knows like I said. The other thing is, if you have to develop commercially from that particular time over the years, I am sure that the value of the land in Tinian would increase.
- Willens: That's certainly true.
- Guerrero: You know it would not decrease, so it means economically that it will be more advantageous to the CNMI people if we develop that into a commercial development. Perhaps today, who knows what kind of resorts, or mega-resorts, or farm land for that matter?
- Willens: Well there has been land available for development even over the past ten years, isn't that correct?
- Guerrero: In Tinian, yes. But that was only one-third of Tinian, and the more valuable land was taken by the military. The most western part or northwestern part of Tinian is the most valuable land for any developers. So those are factors that were not seriously taken into consideration at the time. I think we should have an independent examination from other U.S. companies or associated companies. We should take an independent appraisal from outside—when I say “from outside” I mean a non-U.S. company—and try to find from other appraisers and try to compare the value really over the years you know and escalate it.
- Willens: How about the Ken Jones ranch? That has continued operation, has it not?
- Guerrero: Well, yes it has, but not to the extent as was originally planned for. Today, I think it's a cattle ranch and the dairy has been closed down. The cattle ranch is still there and of course they are doing some farming and all that, experimentation on the hydroponic thing. But the dairy farm was lost.
- Willens: Why was that, because of the military base?
- Guerrero: Those are factors and then the USDA restrictions and all their requirements. It was going to be quite expensive, and I think those are the biggest factors. You know Ken Jones came in and tried to develop the cattle ranch in the anticipation that the military would perhaps come in and he would be part supplier to the needs of the military. So things never materialized.
- Willens: When you became part of a group to help provide political education, did you work closely with Commissioner Canham during the public education that preceded the plebiscite in 1975? Were you part of the political education program?
- Guerrero: Yes, I was.
- Willens: You were a member of the committee?
- Guerrero: Yes, I was a member of the committee and certainly we worked closely with Commissioner Canham.
- Willens: Who were the principal opponents to the Covenant and what were their most important criticisms? I know Oscar Rasa for one was an active opponent in the Carolinian community.
- Guerrero: There were several members, not only Oscar, from the Carolinian side of it. You can see from the history that some of these people were even boycotting meetings or ceremonies for that purpose. But like I said, it would have been much better and more appropriate really if they would have given more time. Political education was very important; the people must understand where they are heading with their political destiny and what obligations and responsibilities they have. And not just only to say, “Well okay, we are American citizens.” To become an American citizen is not only because of the citizenship.

I mean you have obligations to know more about citizenship and, at the same time, what are the responsibilities of being citizens of that political family. I think those were the missing elements. People were very convinced that becoming American citizens and having a much closer political family meant that they would get the so-called coupon and other benefits.

Willens: What do you think they failed to understand? What kind of responsibilities do you think they were being asked to assume that they may not have been aware of?

Guerrero: Like I said, they failed to understand many of the responsibilities. For example, that as responsible citizens you must pay taxes. You must understand why you are one of those American citizens but you are not going to receive the U.S. minimum wage. You must understand your responsibilities to support your government. You must understand that there are certain limitations on the assistance that you can receive from the federal government or federal programs.

Willens: Do you think that might have been accomplished if there had been two or three additional months of political education?

Guerrero: I would say that really it could have been, if the negotiation history takes about four years or three and one half years, I guess. You know it could be much better if they gave at least 120 days. One hundred twenty days so the people would have a much better understanding. Or 190 days for that matter.

Willens: There were some opponents of the Covenant who said that they were supportive of the idea of commonwealth but they thought that the Covenant should be renegotiated to provide more favorable terms. I don't remember any of the specifics that they singled out. Was that a real line of criticism or do you think that was a line that was taken by people who were basically opposed to any form of close relationship with the United States?

Guerrero: Well, I feel that those were important factors of the negotiation. That's one area that up to now, although we have the [Covenant Section] 902 consultations, yet there are many things here that we have not resolved. We should have had more time really and try to word it in a way to the extent of what would happen in the event that we have not reached mutually agreeable terms with the United States of interpretations of all of the sections. Rather than taking it to the U.S. federal courts again, I think that we should perhaps have to go into the International Court of Justice. Go through the international court rather than into the Ninth Circuit or the Supreme Court of the United States. So there are provisions that I think could have been more favorable to the self-government issue and concerns over the so-called general interpretation of the provisions of the Covenant.

Willens: At the time you were asked to review the Covenant in the District Legislature, it had economic terms that provided for multi-year level of support of \$14 million in constant 1975 dollars—\$4 million for CIP, \$8.5 million for government operations, and \$1.5 million for economic development. That looked like it was substantially more than the Marianas district had received under Trust Territory Administration, but still fell short of what many thought was needed particularly in terms of CIP. Do you recall having any reaction at the time to the financial terms of the Covenant?

Guerrero: Well, you term it exactly correctly, that we had been receiving much lower than what we received from the previous administrations of the Trust Territory. If you compare the amount of millions of dollars under the Covenant arrangement, yes we did have an advantage over that because of more dollars, more millions of dollars have been pumped into the Commonwealth. But we failed to recognize one thing. At the time when we

became a Commonwealth, a self-governing government, we failed to address really the interim and the future requirements of, for instance, infrastructure funding. We are talking about receiving so many million dollars, 14, 15 up to 20 some million dollars. But the cost of the projects should have been addressed on the escalating stages of how much we should be receiving, or say maybe we should have a lump sum amount of funding being put under escrow. For so many years that the Commonwealth could not touch it, until such time that these funds would be multiplied over the years and we see the total funding required to develop the infrastructure of CNMI.

Willens: There was a unique effort at transitional planning. There was a two year program of transitional planning with an Office of Transitional Plans and Studies that Pete A. Tenorio was the director of for a while. The goal was to develop plans for physical planning and economic social planning, legal planning. I have heard that some of the plans were relatively well done but that virtually none of them were implemented by the first Commonwealth Administration. Do you know what the facts are on that subject?

Guerrero: Perhaps it's true that it has never been implemented. Maybe for good reasons. When you call for a plan to be implemented, you know that there are so many millions of dollars that you got to have. I believe that the U.S. Congress, in my opinion, failed to appropriate sufficient funds to implement those plans.

Willens: I don't understand that. I mean the United States government eventually did honor the commitment in the Covenant to provide the multi-year support and to appropriate money for that. Was it a political problem here in the Commonwealth or was there not enough money to implement all the things that had to be done?

Guerrero: Like I said, number one key factor there is the money. Number two, of course, you mentioned political factors. At that time, the Administration was Democrat and whereby the Legislature was Territorial—Republican today. I don't think the plans had really been adopted by the Administration. By the Legislature as well. They never were adopted. The plans were shoved on the shelf, you know, and that's where they went. Perhaps they only implemented it piece-by-piece. But many of those things could have been really approved during the transition government. You know, what needs to be done immediately.

Willens: You think decisions could have been made during the transitional government before the first Commonwealth government

Guerrero: That is true.

Willens: . . . and put into motion, implemented. Don't you think that the political leaders who would then be elected under the new Commonwealth Constitution would have objected to such decisions?

Guerrero: But you have to understand that the OTSP was mandated by the U.S. Congress. To develop that plan and that's exactly what it was. So, in order to carry out that mandate and to accomplish the objective of that plan, I believe the transitional government should have initially put that into motion and get that thing implemented before the constitutional government was in place. You see what I'm saying. And that's why I'm saying that there was some lack of funding at the time to initially proceed with the plan. The other thing is that the plan may have become obsolete as the growth increased, which we found in many cases. We had to either alter it, or ignore it and come up with a new plan because the plan may be obsolete. Those perhaps are the key issues. Number one, they didn't adopt the plan as it was prepared by the OTSP, to proceed with the implementation. But

it could have been done in much better time by having the transitional government start the implementation stages.

Willens: One aspect of the capital improvements project funding was that a specified amount (\$500,000) had to be spent each year in Rota and in Tinian. This was designed in part to win the support of those communities for the Covenant and also to address some of the unmet needs in those two islands. Did you feel as a political leader on Saipan that Tinian and Rota deserved some kind of special attention because of past deficiencies there?

Guerrero: Oh yes. Certainly I felt that these people also should be given more funds as they can justify [the need] because of the so-called lack of development in many areas. But hopefully, of course, as you can see it, I must say that during my Administration over the four years we kind of concentrated on a lot of infrastructure development.

Willens: On all three islands?

Guerrero: On basically the three islands. But specifically here in Saipan, because this is the economic driving engine of the Commonwealth. We had to support it and hopefully by nurturing it and supporting it, we could generate more funds so at least we can assist the needs of the other islands. And this is really where our plan was, aside from their share from the Covenant funds. The other thing is that when they talk about the Covenant funds, as you can see the argument will continue because the provisions of the Covenant are not clear as to how many multiple years of government funding will continue. So, those are the issues that I was referring to earlier.

Siemer: Some of the pieces that I've been looking at are about what the District Legislature did with the Constitutional Convention and Howard told me you were in the District Legislature in 1971?

Guerrero: 1972 and that's the Fourth. I was also on the Fifth, part of the Fifth Legislature and that's up to 1977.

Siemer: Which was the Legislature that was elected during the Constitutional Convention?

Guerrero: Yes, in 1976, as you might recall it, and that was the Fifth Legislature of which I was a member.

Siemer: So it's the Fourth Legislature that was in place in 1975?

Guerrero: Yes, you are correct, because we were elected in 1975 for the Fifth Legislature, which started in 1976.

Siemer: 1975 was the changeover from the Marianas District Legislature to the Northern Mariana Islands Legislature?

Guerrero: Well, we were all along the Northern Marianas Legislature, District Legislature we were called since the early mid-1960s I believe.

Siemer: Then it was in March of 1976 after the Covenant was approved when the Congressmen and Senators from the Congress of Micronesia joined you in the Marianas Legislature?

Guerrero: That's correct, yes.

Siemer: In 1975, the Legislature passed a constitutional convention bill right at the end of the year, do you remember that? And District Administrator Ada vetoed it.

Guerrero: I do not recall really a veto of District Administrator Ada at the time. Other than I recall that the election procedures for the Constitutional Convention delegates were legally adopted and we had in fact the elections in 1976.

- Siemer: Do you recall the discussion when the question of how to elect the delegates to the Constitutional Convention first came up? There was a discussion about reserving seats for Carolinian delegates, do you recall that?
- Guerrero: Oh yes, certainly.
- Siemer: At that time were the Carolinian voters equally split between the two parties?
- Guerrero: Well, it is very hard to say whether it's equal, because there's some people all their life had been a member of the Democratic Party as well as the Territorial Party. But I would say a vast majority of the Carolinians were in the Territorial Party.
- Siemer: At that time?
- Guerrero: At that time, yes.
- Siemer: When the constitutional convention bill first came up in the Legislature, did the Popular Party members of the Legislature view this as a political way to continue their power in the Legislature?
- Guerrero: Well, although the bill provided for non-partisan delegates because we were firming up the constitutional law of our lands, you could see that what happened is that both political parties did come up with their own delegates for the Constitutional Convention. I would say that both sides were in hope of having control of the future in the political arena in our islands. I feel I could see that it is no different from the Republican or Territorial Party at the time and the Popular Party at the time were sort of vying for more control over the political aspirations of our islands.
- Siemer: Because the Constitutional Convention would have the power to do redistricting on the island if it decided it wanted to. One of the questions that is reflected in the legislative debate about the constitutional convention bill is whether the delegates should be elected at-large or whether they should be elected by district. You and Oscar Rasa consistently suggested that they be elected by district, it appears. What was the specific problem with electing the delegates at-large?
- Guerrero: Well, one of the basic reasons we supported election by district rather than at-large is because of the minority, mainly in the Carolinian community. We have had a sad experience over the many years of election here on the island when they hardly got elected.
- Siemer: Those were all at-large?
- Guerrero: Yes. During the at-large. You were elected to the District Legislature at-large at that time. That's one of the reasons that we preferred that delegates to the Constitutional Convention be elected from respective districts, so at least we have a possible chance that some of this Carolinian minority, in the ethnic groups of our community, would be elected into this Constitutional Convention.
- Siemer: The Popular Party wouldn't go along?
- Guerrero: Well, they would prefer to go with at-large election, because they felt that at that particular time from all the past experience that the majority elected at-large would be from the Popular Party.
- Siemer: But the Territorial Party had been doing better. In 1974 you elected most of the Congress of Micronesia [representatives from the Northern Marianas]. In 1976 you won the Saipan Municipal Council.

- Guerrero: Right. At the time, I must say, the voters were becoming much less on a party line basis than perhaps going on the quality of the candidates. And that's how this thing broke apart.
- Siemer: In 1976 after the Covenant was approved, the constitutional convention bill came back to the Legislature and was introduced again. At that point, there was another discussion about at-large versus district representation. When the bill passed, this time Resident Commissioner Canham vetoed it and he said he didn't think that the representation for the Carolinians was fair. Do you recall anything about the vetoes by Canham?
- Guerrero: Really, I must admit that perhaps if I reviewed some of my papers which I still have, maybe I could find some of the reasoning for that concern. Perhaps maybe some of my footnotes of our own concerns that we have, but I think the Resident Commissioner at the time had a very valid reason—that the ethnic minority representation is one that we must try to protect or at least secure so they can be well represented.
- Siemer: Part of the problem also seemed to be that the relative representation among Saipan, Rota and Tinian was pretty far away from a one man-one vote rule. One of the early proposals was 25 delegates for Saipan, 8 for Rota, 5 for Tinian, 1 for the Northern Islands. That gave Rota and Tinian a very large percentage of the delegates, but they didn't have a very large percentage of the population. Were the Saipan representatives from the Popular and Territorial Parties concerned about that large representation from Rota and Tinian?
- Guerrero: Well, I believe it was thoroughly discussed. As you can see, the number of delegates from Tinian and Rota reflected the population there at the time because Rota had more population. If I am not mistaken, during those days it was less than 800 people in Tinian versus a thousand some in Rota. So I think the difference in the number of delegates between the two islands were pretty much discussed among all the parties involved in the Legislature.
- Siemer: The Saipan representatives didn't feel uncomfortable with that large Rota and Tinian number?
- Guerrero: No. I know that there was some concern raised by especially the opposition party, but then we came to agreement that perhaps the composition of the delegates was fairly and adequately represented.
- Siemer: After Canham vetoed the first bill, the Legislature passed it again with almost the same representation. This time there was a little addition that said that the three highest Carolinian vote-getters were going to be elected. Canham vetoed that one too. Do you recall when you were in the Legislature the problem with the Canham vetos?
- Guerrero: Going back to the question, Deanne, that you just asked. I have no second thoughts whatsoever that again he would veto it. We thought what we came back with at least reflected the wishes of the majority of the Legislature, and we were hoping that he would try his best to approve it. So you know, I have no second thoughts it might be possible for him to veto that legislation.
- Siemer: How did the communication work between Canham and the Legislature back then?
- Guerrero: Well it was fairly well communicated. Let me just say this. I was one of those members of the Legislature at the time continuously arguing that Frank Ada, the previous District Administrator, be placed in the Office of the Resident Commissioner as his assistant. So at least we could have continuity in terms of relationship and communication with the Legislature as well. So, we had a pretty sound relationship and well advised from time to time.

- Siemer: Did Canham's office keep you advised as to what they wanted and what they were doing?
- Guerrero: Well I was not one of the so-called leadership of the Legislature. I was a minority.
- Siemer: You were the leader of the minority though.
- Guerrero: I was a minority leader. But as you know, traditionally the leadership within the ruling party would control most of those things. So, it's between the speaker—no different than with the president of course when we changed the title from speaker to president.
- Siemer: It would have been between Canham's office and Ben Santos?
- Guerrero: Yes, Ben Santos and former Senator Herman Guerrero in the Fifth Legislature was elected to be the President of the District Legislature. I must say between themselves though.
- Siemer: After Canham vetoed the constitutional convention bill for a second time, you legislators came right back with the same formula again. The third time around your Territorial Party representatives joined with the Popular Party and you had something like 14 of you introduced the bill in order to make it as solid as you could. How many of you were there in the Legislature at that time?
- Guerrero: I think if I am not mistaken we are totaling about 15 members.
- Siemer: And how many Territorial?
- Guerrero: Let me see, let me take it back; because I think we had more than 15 members because of the Congress of Micronesia at the time.
- Siemer: Those people came back.
- Guerrero: Yes, they came down to the Legislature.
- Siemer: Five of them?
- Guerrero: I was one of the first from the Fourth Legislature, where I was a single minority, and then we had five plus two from Rota. Yes, we were about seven members.
- Siemer: Was Rota a strong Territorial area at that time?
- Guerrero: Yes, it was.
- Siemer: How about Tinian?
- Guerrero: Tinian was not. It's come and go.
- Siemer: The last time around you proposed the same number, same election at-large but this time you proposed to give the Resident Commissioner the power to appoint two Carolinians if nobody was elected. That one he did not veto. And I wondered if in the interim there had been some discussions with Canham about what he would accept.
- Guerrero: Yes, basically because we just wanted to have guaranteed representation by the ethnic minority, which was at that time the Carolinian population—practically about 2,000 plus of them. That's why we wanted the Resident Commissioner to have that opportunity to appoint. I believe everyone was convinced that that would be a right choice to do so.
- Siemer: Seems like a good compromise.
- Guerrero: Everyone supported it including the Resident Commissioner himself, by giving that guarantee in a provision of the bill that should no one be elected then he would have the authority to appoint additional members. The election did not turn out that way; the Carolinian community was very well represented.

Siemer: While you were in the Legislature back at that time did you have any contact with the U.S. Marianas Joint Commission?

Guerrero: What you are saying is the Marianas Political Commission?

Siemer: No, there was an interim body that was set up and every once in a while I ask people whether they had anything to do with it because I'm looking to see if it ever did anything. And I can't find that it ever did actually do anything, but that was the reason for my question.

Guerrero: I would say that I don't have much recollection of any meetings or any discussions or contact with these people other than the OTSP at the time. We had much contact with OTSP, because I personally knew them and we were looking forward to the product of their mandates, the Office of the Transition Team, which would come before the Legislature for our adoption.

Siemer: They were also going to fund the Constitutional Convention and help you with staffing?

Guerrero: That's correct, yes.

Siemer: When the Territorial Party started to get organized for the Constitutional Convention, to select the people who could run as delegates, the *Marianas Variety* reported that you had a nominating committee. Do you recall how the delegates got selected?

Guerrero: From the Territorial Party?

Siemer: From the Territorial Party, that's right.

Guerrero: Well, yes. It's always been the policy of the Territorial Party that we have a candidates committee that normally scrutinizes the names of the candidates. Then we have a so-called credential reviewing committee that everyone who has been selected from the nominating committee would have to be scrutinized by a special committee of the party.

Siemer: Who appointed those parties?

Guerrero: Well normally the chairman of the party.

Siemer: That was you at the time?

Guerrero: I was the chairman at the time. Yes, I have to admit it. So we did select all the best candidates that we have and we came out very successfully.

Siemer: You were very successful in that election. There was one person that I had a question about whether he was a Carolinian candidate. His name is Alonzo Igisomar.

Guerrero: Yes, Alonzo Igisomar. He is a Carolinian.

Siemer: So you had six Carolinian candidates?

Guerrero: From the Territorial Party at that time.

Siemer: Felix Rabauliman.

Guerrero: Yes.

Siemer: Abel Olapai.

Guerrero: Right.

Siemer: Luis Limis.

Guerrero: And Ben Fitial. Pete Igitol.

Siemer: And Igisomar.

- Guerrero: Yes, I think you're right.
- Siemer: So you had six of them and you got three of them elected?
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Siemer: Which was beyond even what the Resident Commissioner demanded. Then you had a number of brand new people that you ran that year for the Constitutional Convention. And I just wanted to ask you about some of them, because sometimes it's hard for me to tell whether somebody had run before or not because you know who won but you don't know who ran. How about Silvio Ada?
- Guerrero: The late Silvio Ada, I believe yes.
- Siemer: He had run before?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Siemer: How about Jose Rios?
- Guerrero: Yes. For the council though.
- Siemer: How about Jesus Pangelinan? Jesus B. Pangelinan?
- Guerrero: No.
- Siemer: How about Nicholas Santos, Nicholas B. Santos?
- Guerrero: I think he did run as a candidate. And then we had to hire him as our staff and Nick worked for us.
- Siemer: That's right, he ran as a delegate and lost.
- Guerrero: But then he became a staff of the Convention.
- Siemer: And Vicente Attao, he told me hadn't run before. How about Thomas Aldan?
- Guerrero: No, no.
- Siemer: How about Jesus Lizama?
- Guerrero: Jesus Lizama, are you referring to the engineer?
- Siemer: Jesus T. Lizama?
- Guerrero: Yes, he had not been a candidate.
- Siemer: How about Herman T. Palacios?
- Guerrero: Herman T. Palacios, you are talking about the candidates....
- Siemer: Back then, correct.
- Guerrero: No, no, no.
- Siemer: And how about Francisco Castro? Francisco Camacho Castro?
- Guerrero: Yes, he was a candidate before.
- Siemer: In your judgment, was it a risk running people for the Constitutional Convention who had never run before?
- Guerrero: Well, we didn't necessarily view it that way. Like I said, we felt that some of those people that we selected either possess the education or perhaps the background with good family ties and that's how we selected our candidates. We selected strong candidates based on those qualifications.

- Siemer: What happened in the process after the nominating committee and the credentials committee looked at people, then what happened?
- Guerrero: Well, then of course the party would sanction, in other words would approve the candidates. And normally the leaders of the party would make those recommendations to the other members, that these are the party candidates, and they by acclamation normally approve them.
- Siemer: You had a big party convention at the time?
- Guerrero: Yes, normally we called a party members meeting.
- Siemer: You were selecting your people to run for the Legislature at the same time, right?
- Guerrero: Not at the same time, because that came in after one year later.
- Siemer: Well, that's right. But there was an election to the Legislature that occurred right in the middle of the Constitutional Conventions.
- Guerrero: Well that's in 1977 when we have an elected our members to become a Commonwealth Legislature.
- Siemer: Right, for the Commonwealth Legislature. But there was an election for the Legislature right in the middle of the Constitutional Convention as well.
- Guerrero: Well, that was the Fifth Legislature though, which started our term in 1976. So it's pretty much candidates that are going to run for the Legislature became also the candidates of the Convention. And some of us, of course, we were candidates as well to be the members of the Fifth District Legislature.
- Siemer: Then there was a lottery to select the position on the ballot and you turned out number one.
- Guerrero: That is correct. I allowed the Assistant Commissioner, at that time Francisco Ada, to pull my slot and he did come out with number one.
- Siemer: Did the other candidates also pick their own slot?
- Guerrero: Right. In fact some of the others allowed somebody else to pick for them as well. So that's how the process went.
- Siemer: Felipe Atalig told me that he was so delighted to get number 44 because he was going to campaign on the Vicks Formula 44.
- Guerrero: Formula 44, that's what it is.
- Siemer: Then once the Territorial Party won that election with such a large majority, how did you organize for the Convention?
- Guerrero: We organized it among ourselves after we had gotten a majority. We met with all the elected delegates, with the party officials as well, and then we decided among ourselves how we can organize it and elect our officers of the Convention. By acclamation again I was selected to be president of the Convention, followed by a first vice [president] from Rota, second vice [president], on down to the committee chairmanships.
- Siemer: Who picked the committee chairs?
- Guerrero: Well, the committee chairs were picked by us after we got elected in as the officers of the Convention. Then we immediately had to caucus among ourselves and we selected the chairmen. As the elected officials, we selected our chairs of the committees.

- Siemer: Was there a particular reason why you wanted Mafnas as the head of the Government Institutions Committee?
- Guerrero: Well, yes. Former Senator Mafnas had a background in public administration, was an ex-director of public safety, and he has also extensive government experience. So we firmly believed that he had the ability to be the chairman of the governmental committee.
- Siemer: How about Felipe Atalig, what was your thinking in picking him to be the chairman of the Personal Rights Committee?
- Guerrero: Well, first of all, as you may recall, the late Dr. Palacios was one of the officers of the Convention. But we entrust him also to be the chairman of the committee—the committee that was pretty much chaired by Felipe because Felipe was the assistant. In other words, he was vice chairman of the committee and then he took the role as of the chairmanship. We selected him based on his willingness to work with Dr. Palacios and to be part of that committee.
- Siemer: He had recently switched into your party, hadn't he?
- Guerrero: I do not know exactly.
- Siemer: I have a hard time keeping track of people who switch back and forth.
- Guerrero: On several occasions he was our candidate. Later on he got out. So some people have that kind of habit I must say. The late Olympio Borja, and with deference to former Dr. Palacios, they were at one time in the Democrats and then he came into be a Republican or Territorial. And the late Olympio Borja, of course, switched parties as well. You know, they wanted to be seasonal politicians perhaps.
- Siemer: How about Ben Fitial, why did you pick him to be chairman of the Finance Committee?
- Guerrero: Ben was working for the Trust Territory at the time. He had a finance background. He was with the planning and budget office. He was a budget officer. I felt very strongly with that kind of background Ben could be a good chairman. He turned out to be a very good chairman.
- Siemer: What I remember about Ben the most was he had an excellent sense of humor.
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Siemer: I worked with the committee on which Dr. Palacios was chairman and Dr. Palacios had very many strong views about things. He is very eloquent about his views. I remember him very well.
- Guerrero: Right. He was very, like you said, very eloquent and very knowledgeable, and he always thought about the culture. He always thought about the traditions that we have and the future of our kids. On the issue of Article 12, he very strongly believed that we must preserve the land for our future generations.
- Siemer: He was the author of many of the [proposed] definitions of Northern Marianas descent. One of them I remember trying to talk him out of required someone to have lived here in 1900. And I kept saying, Dr. Palacios, we'll never find anyone who lived here in 1900. But you're right, he was very strong about preserving the culture and preserving assets for the people.
- Guerrero: Very true, very true.
- Siemer: How about the delegates? How did the delegates themselves get assigned to committees once you had picked chairmen?

- Guerrero: Well, in order to determine the members of the committees, what we did was ask the delegates, including the Democrat candidates, to give us the committees on which they wanted to serve. That's how we set up the composition of the committees.
- Siemer: Could you accommodate most people about where they wanted to serve?
- Guerrero: Well, yes, I was flexible enough about that—where they wanted to serve. But the Convention during those days was so busy and serving in a number of committees may not be in the best interests of a member, because of the scheduling of the committee work in all four committees that were working very hard.
- Siemer: That's right. You finally decided as I recall that no one could be a member of two committees except your Procedures Committee. You had a Procedures Committee but you just ended all of that debate by saying nobody can be a member of two committees.
- Guerrero: Either you want to be a member in one committee and attend its meetings or not. I think we finally decided that's the only way to speed up the progress of the delegates and try to come up with a product.
- Siemer: How about the Rota and Tinian delegates? How did you split them up into the three committees?
- Guerrero: Well, there was no difference. We wanted to make sure that they were represented on all three committees.
- Siemer: And you made sure there was one Carolinian on each of the committees?
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Siemer: At one point, I think you appointed Ray Villagomez as a vice chairman of the Personal Rights Committee and he turned it down. And then you tried to get Felix Ayuyu to take it and he turned it down. Then you finally said, "Ah well, all right." And then you were faced with a big complaint from the Popular Party that you had appointed all your own people.
- Guerrero: Well, as you said Deanne, the now Justice Villagomez was very knowledgeable. He was one of the local attorneys at that time. He wanted the Personal Rights Committee of course. He was very much interested in working with the committee, so I thought, with his willingness to work and his being a very aggressive, local attorney, that the committee (with you people) could come up with a much better product and at the same time would have a better compromise from their own Popular Party group at the time. But they felt that they did not want to be responsible for whatever the committee would come out with. They felt that they would prefer to debate it on the floor. And I think you can see that in the number of arguments that were presented. But nevertheless, we went ahead and you recall that I appointed all our people into both vice [chairman] positions. But it was a chance given to them also at least to serve on that committee.
- Siemer: Then one of the things you did was to appoint a number of Popular Party people to chair the Committee of the Whole on different occasions.
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Siemer: And you tried to spread that around to the Rota and Tinian people as well. Did that work out well? I remember there were some moments when the Committee of the Whole seemed to kind of totally stop because the chairman wasn't sure what to do.
- Guerrero: Well, as you recall it, we only have one lady—Maggie Camacho at the time. She's the only [female] member of our delegation in the Convention. I felt that by giving them that

opportunity to chair at least a Committee of the Whole discussion, I felt that it's equally important because they could also gain experience in how to handle the Committee of the Whole discussion and present back to the plenary sessions whatever the Committee of the Whole adopted. And I think that was good. I thought that it would be a good gesture in order to try to have all the delegates work together as a whole. Rather than trying to split them, you know, by having our majority delegates conduct the Committee of the Whole discussions. So that's why I came up with the idea that perhaps it would give a good gesture to let the other group chair and have recorded in our verbatim journals that a number of them were chairing the sessions.

Siemer: People seem to like that a lot.

Guerrero: Yes, yes.

Siemer: There were some subjects though where it seemed that you picked a particular person for the Committee of the Whole because it was going to be a difficult debate. For example, you picked Ray Villagomez when the local government debate came to the floor and you picked David Maritita when the legislative debate came to the floor. Were there some times when you looked at the issue and decided who you thought would be best?

Guerrero: Well, it is true. I thought that a person's chairing the Committee of the Whole discussion should have some sort of experience with whatever the issue would be. As you can see, we had different topics for discussion. It was very important that the chairman chair that discussion must have some background in the issues that would come up in the Committee of the Whole discussions.

Siemer: Some of those debates were pretty tough.

Guerrero: It was very tough.

Siemer: Some of the proposals were really quite detailed too. Keeping track of the two-thirds of the votes cast, two-thirds of the people present, two-thirds of the

Guerrero: That's right, that's true.

Siemer: In your view, that mechanism of the Committee of the Whole worked fairly well for you?

Guerrero: Oh yes. I think that was an appropriate process for any delegate, that they should go into that for discussion purposes and get a concurrence from the delegates themselves. If you don't go with a Committee of the Whole discussion, then it's pretty much limited in the time of debate and the issues by the rules of procedure that they would have to follow.

Siemer: You put in quite a substantial number of delegate proposals. You signed 17 of them. Do you remember any of them?

Guerrero: I believe that my recollection may not be at this time be correct.

Siemer: I brought them because I wanted to show you some of them, is that all right?

Guerrero: Yes. I'd be more than happy to see them.

Siemer: Why don't we do this. I'll turn this around this way. These are all numbered in the upper left hand corner and the first one is number 73. So it's up here somewhere else. Let's see if we can find it. Maybe you can find it from over there.

Guerrero: Seventy three, yes, yes.

Willens: It's entitled proposal regarding natural resources.

- Guerrero: Yes, yes. Certainly there's a number on it.
- Siemer: Do you remember that particular one?
- Guerrero: I can remember this particular one here because basically what we were saying is that we wanted long range planning required for the development of our islands and it's so important. Like I said, either I would be the key author of many of these delegate proposals or be the co-author of it.
- Siemer: Take a look at 74.
- Guerrero: Seventy four.
- Siemer: This deals with the statute of limitations with respect to land and that was really quite a difficult and legalistic subject. You were concerned at the time that the Constitution deal with that problem.
- Guerrero: Well, I was sure that in my opinion we should try to have this particular provision, because once we placed it in the Constitution that should be the law to follow.
- Siemer: Were you concerned about leaving a subject like this to the Legislature?
- Guerrero: Well, by having the Legislature deal with it, maybe I would say they would do good. But for me, from time to time the statutes are amended and who knows what's going to happen next year, or after the elections every time that we have a new Legislature? But by having in the Constitution something that is important, there is less chance that it will be amended.
- Siemer: Take a look at 98.
- Guerrero: Ninety eight. Yes, this is between myself and my friend, Luis.
- Siemer: You did a number of these with Mr. Limes.
- Guerrero: Right.
- Siemer: Had you known him for a long time?
- Guerrero: Yes, I knew him. In fact, we grew up together. Yes, this is to create an office of ombudsman.
- Siemer: What happened to that proposal?
- Guerrero: Well, I tried hard really to convince the delegates. They were not quite convinced of course that this particular office should be created under the government. And I still think that it's an important office.
- Siemer: You have something like it though with your special assistants. You had something like that with the Executive Assistant for Carolinian Affairs.
- Guerrero: But these are not functions of the ombudsman, other than you know indigenous affairs, Carolinian affairs, women's affairs. Those are very specific, but an ombudsman office would be responsible in overseeing any legitimate complaints that need to have attention.
- Siemer: Take a look at the next one, 99. There you were concerned with the Micronesia Claims Act. This is a subject that was near and dear to Mr. Limes's heart. I've interviewed Mr. Limes who said that occasionally when he had a delegate proposal he would come to you to make sure it was all right and get you to sign.

- Guerrero: Yes, yes. We had a number of other delegates, but like I said, we had a very selective group among ourselves. We came in and I shared my views and no difference with Luis himself or Ben Fitial for that matter. And you can see that Oscar Rasa, Joe Mafnas and other delegates like the late Dr. Palacios, would always come and see us and try to get support for it. But Luis, Ben and I, or Oscar for that matter, were so close and were sharing our thoughts as well.
- Siemer: Had you worked closely with Ben before the Convention?
- Guerrero: Oh yes, yes, yes.
- Siemer: Take a look at 100 and 101 and 102. You and Mr. Limes were busy.
- Guerrero: Right. It's exactly what happened. Over the years we had created our Supreme Court, our Superior Court.
- Siemer: Were you concerned at the time that you put in number 100 that that would not happen, that the Government Institutions Committee was going to go off in some other direction?
- Guerrero: Well, it takes us time. It takes us time to create this. Over the years that we have the implementation of the Commonwealth government here in the CNMI, we felt that our Constitution as allowed in the Covenant should have a certain provision that would come into effect and be implemented. We didn't have any Constitution so again, it follows.
- Siemer: It was a unique opportunity to make sure that things were done right.
- Guerrero: That's right, that is correct, yes.
- Siemer: Look at 101 and 102. 102 was a resolution with respect to the Chamorro language.
- Guerrero: Yes. I'm glad that the bilingual [education] today exists. They are educating our kids, speaking in Chamorro. We finally we had some of the bilingual dictionaries both in Chamorro as well as Carolinian. So, this is very useful today.
- Siemer: Take a look at, if you would, at number 106.
- Guerrero: 106?
- Siemer: 106.
- Guerrero: We also have this proposal here in 103 with the conflict of interest.
- Siemer: You were very successful with that. You weren't very successful with preventing them but you were very successful in getting the language in.
- Guerrero: You said 106?
- Siemer: 106.
- Guerrero: Okay.
- Siemer: That one has to do with a provision that ten percent of the work force be Carolinians. Did you think at the time that was practical, that it could be done?
- Guerrero: It could have been very practical and be done. Only ten percent. At the time when we had a small government work force. We could have managed to have ten percent easily be employed from the Carolinian community.
- Siemer: This caused a fairly substantial rash of comments by some of the Saipan delegates who were opposed to this sort of thing. It also caused a good deal of comment with respect to the Executive Assistant for Carolinian Affairs when that came up. There seemed to be a

core of Saipan delegates who were opposed to this. Was there an effort among the Popular Party and Territorial Party delegates from Saipan to reach accommodation with respect to this?

Guerrero: I didn't see much from the Democrats (or the Popular Party at the time) to accommodate these people other than more sympathy. In other words, it's for the Territorial Party to deal with the Carolinian community. It's a sad experience. Let me say this, over many years, very few of them had the good experience in government. The first constitutional government that we had, very few of the Carolinians were employed.

Siemer: When you are talking employed, you are talking about the staff level as well as governor appointments.

Guerrero: Precisely. Other than the Carolinian Affairs Assistant because of the Constitutional Convention, which left no choice but for the Governor to appoint an accepted member from the Carolinian community.

Siemer: There were some other places where you were required to appoint Carolinians, for example the Public Land Corporation.

Guerrero: Well, just a board member.

Siemer: Right.

Guerrero: Just to sit in as a board member, but not necessarily for employment. In other words, employment possibilities were very slim for them at the time. I don't mean that it's because of their race, but maybe because of some resistance or perhaps discrimination.

Siemer: That was a very tough debate in the Convention. There were, as I recall, a number of delegates were just adamantly opposed to any special treatment for Carolinians. They argued that would advertise to people that there was a discrimination problem here and they didn't want anything in the Constitution that said that. There were many speeches given on this.

Guerrero: I remember that it was a pretty heated one. I think the argument was that they just didn't want to establish that there was (or would be) any discrimination. But my thinking at the time was that it's not because of that, it is that we want to reserve and guarantee this opportunity to the minority. Because only we Chamorros and Carolinians are descended from the Marianas, no others. So that's the only way that we've got to protect them, and I insisted that we should put it in the Constitution so these people can be protected.

Siemer: Like the set aside for Rota or the set aside for Tinian guaranteeing a particular number of seats.

Guerrero: That's where the so-called balance of representation came from in the upper house, the Senate. Otherwise we could have had a unicameral legislature as we did before, but they had a sad experience.

Siemer: Take a look at number 141.

Guerrero: Those citizens in the Commonwealth who are Chamorros or Carolinians shall have the right to refuse to join the United States Armed Forces.

Siemer: Why did you want to do that?

Guerrero: Well, some of our people feared that if they become American citizens, their kids would have to join the armed forces. Whether you like it or not, you are going to be drafted. This was one of the fears that we had here and by talking to some of our elderly people,

they felt concern about their kids at the time they reach the age where they are ready to be drafted. Another thing I recall is that we were supposed to have a so-called American national status. This is something that we felt would give our young people the right to refuse to join the armed forces.

Siemer: I don't remember that this one ever came up for debate. Did you bring it up someplace for debate?

Guerrero: Well this came out in the committee. Just the committee and I think the committee decided that it may not be necessary to go on and debate these things.

Siemer: Let me go to the actual Convention itself and the problems that you had in trying to get it done within 50 days. Do you recall where the 50-day limit came from? It was included in the constitutional convention bill that the District Legislature passed; but was there a particular reason for selecting that number?

Guerrero: Well, I for one argued in the District Legislature why we have a limit of only 50 days. You know 50 days is too short. But everybody was concerned about time—we have to get this thing passed, we have to have a referendum, we have to implement it once it's passed.

Guerrero: To my own assessment, the limitation that we had to come up with a product of the Convention within the 50-day period was pretty much based on the funding limitation. The major concern was that we only had limited funds to deal with the Convention. I do not know whether you remember, but during many of our heated debates toward the last days of our week we even stopped the watch at midnight and we had to carry it out all the way up to about 3:30 or 4 in the morning. So we can wrap up what we have to do. I really appreciate all the efforts from you, your staff, the lawyers that assisted us during the time to get this thing really wrapped up, to come up with the appropriate committee reports, and of course for the Convention in the plenary session to adopt it.

Siemer: There was a period of about ten days there when you kept people working from 9 in the morning until 10 or 11 o'clock at night every single day.

Guerrero: That's correct. Meeting after meeting and, like I said, I really praise and commend our delegates at the time and the committee chairmen and what was really important is the assistance from you people as legal counsel to the committee in putting this thing into the right perspective.

Siemer: One of the things I wanted to ask you about was a speech that you made on the floor. When the Convention started there were a number of speeches made about how Rota and Tinian had to be treated fairly and Ben Manglona had a document of all the things they were going to demand. He got up on the Convention floor and right away there were all kinds of opposition speeches and difficulties. You tried to diffuse that and you were quite successful for quite some time. But then they came to the debate about two things. For a number of days it appeared that you were able to cut some delegates off and keep them from making angry speeches and encourage others and kind of keep things moving along. But then two provisions came up. One was constitutional amendment and the other was the initiative. On both of those the Rota and Tinian people insisted on a virtual veto power. And that made a lot of the Saipan delegates, whom you had been able to kind of keep moving along, very upset. Oscar made an angry speech, and you then came back the next day and made this speech. I want you to just take a look at it for a minute and see if you remembered it. It's very good.

Guerrero: Yes, yes. I think you are right. Many of the statements made during all of those speeches from some of our own delegates, rather than trying to unite the delegates, were sort of

splitting the efforts. Like I said, I was very concerned about the progress that had been made by our committee members and that may have distracted or destroyed the joint efforts of all the members with all their different statements. Certainly I kind of warned each of the delegates. I put out sort of a warning word to them that, although we like to protect our own selfish interests, we are all mandated as Convention delegates to set aside our differences and try to come in and work as a whole. You may recall that even some of our delegates from Rota walked out and left the Convention in the hope that no one from Rota would sit in any discussion or in the plenary session which would prevent us from doing our work, because our rules required that we must have a delegate from each of these respective districts. We were fortunate enough to convince some of the delegates from Rota to sit in and that's how it permitted us to proceed, to discuss the issues, to get rid of whatever topics we have to pass, and it was really through their efforts that we were able to complete our discussions.

Siemer: You had your eye on at keeping at least one Rota delegate in the Convention at all times. You had your eye on that from the outset?

Guerrero: Yes, I was alerted that it's a must. We must have a delegate from Rota, a delegate from Tinian. Otherwise that would prevent us from passing any delegate proposal or taking any plenary actions, because our rules would not allow us.

Siemer: A number of the delegates that you sponsored in various ways from Rota and Tinian, for example Pete Atalig whom you made Convention Secretary, Greg Calvo, and some of the others that you recognized in the Committee of the Whole, did not walk out and felt very much a part of the Convention and were really quite committed to it.

Guerrero: I think there were about four of them really. You know Pete Ogo of course was one. He stayed in during the course of discussion and the same with Dave Atalig. He was also from Rota, a representative from Rota. They're all in. I recall it as very sensitive, very sensitive to the people. The delegates represent Rota, the Lieutenant Governor and the Mayor for that matter. Leon Taisican, I recall that he was there also and Joe Cruz from Tinian from time to time would jump up and try to argue the different issues.

Siemer: It looked to me like there were times when, instead of making the speech yourself, you would get Ben Fitial to make the speech. There would be a difficult issue on the floor, people would be angry and you would get Ben to get up and make a speech. In reviewing the written record, it looks a little bit like you would get Ben to make the speech and then you would cut off debate. You wouldn't let anybody else respond and then you would say fine, everything's good, we're going on. Did Ben do that for you on occasion?

Guerrero: Well, as you can recall, Ben is sort of a pacifier. He's the kind of person who, rather than create animosity or try to create a different atmosphere, would try to come in and play jokes as he proceeds with his statement. I allowed him to do many of those because he would come in with a very mild starter and, of course, you could see how he would do at the conclusion of his statement. Ben had some good friends among the other delegates as well. So I used that part of it as a strategy.

Siemer: It seemed that some of the younger delegates, like John Tenorio and Ray Villagomez, however, were quite able to provoke debate with their remarks. They were less capable than Ben of smoothing things over and occasionally, when one of the Rota or Tinian people would discuss possibly walking out, either John Tenorio or Ray Villagomez would say, "Go ahead." And then you would cut off the debate again and say, "Let's talk about something else." But there were some delegates who really had much less patience with the process and perhaps were worried about their ability to even finish the job given how

long all this was taking. When you were in the chair at the Convention, you had a good deal of flexibility with respect to how much debate you allowed on what subjects. Did you feel that there were any political constraints on you from your own party in cutting off debate as you often did?

Guerrero: We did have that. Immediately after the plenary session as we gathered together in the leadership, you could hear complaints from them. You know, that you are cutting them off and we shouldn't do that. But let me say this, you have 39 Convention delegates and you have to give them equal time. If we have to give every delegate an opportunity to speak or to respond and try not to cut off so-called counter-attacks on any of the statements, you know we are constrained by time and the days that we have to finish up the Constitutional Convention and we cannot afford that. But nevertheless, I told them at any given time that we have to recess from the plenary session that they have to be patient because, when the time comes to vote on the issue, the majority of the delegates would dictate the decisions. They understand it, but from time to time they would lose patience. It's no difference to me, imagine 39 delegates with you in all. Thirty eight you have to watch, which way they are talking and which way they are going. So it was not easy.

Siemer: The next sort of crisis that you seemed to have to manage was when the Executive Branch provision came up. Jose Mafnas came to you and said I cannot get agreement on my committee and the committee had been working on it for a week and things apparently were deteriorating. He came to you and you apparently had the idea of forming a special committee. Do you recall that?

Guerrero: Yes, yes.

Siemer: How did you decide who you were going to put on that special committee?

Guerrero: Well, I came up with the idea that perhaps at any given time that the committee chairmen had a problem in gaining support for whatever the committee had to deal with, especially on very important issues such as that particular time, because I think they were trying to pass the committee report, if I'm not mistaken, so we can present it to the plenary session. That's the reason why I felt that perhaps the only way to do it is to select a couple people that would assist in that.

Siemer: You put both John Tenorio and Ray Villagomez on that special committee. Was there a reason for putting those two younger, more sharp-tongued people on the committee?

Guerrero: Well, again Ray seemed to be the spokesman of the other group, although his brother was there also, Jess and Dr. Camacho and others. But Ray seemed to be the most vocal and be the key spokesman. So I figured that by dealing with Justice Villagomez today and placing him on that committee, perhaps that would get more confidence from his side. And whatever he would explain to his own colleagues, of course, they would support it. I think that's what it was. It happened that way. John Tenorio, of course, was another quite aggressive young gentleman. I enjoyed him as well. Do you remember President Demapan? He also was a member. These were the young ones. I call them the young breeds, you know, leaders. They're very bright. John can work practically close to any member and I didn't see him as arrogant at that time, but rather trying to work closely with them.

Siemer: Mafnas came to you on a Thursday and said I can't do this, it's not going to work. You appointed a special committee and they met. John Tenorio recalls coming to you on Friday and saying this will never work. These people from Rota, most particularly your honorable Lieutenant Governor, are completely unreasonable, this will never work, this is

terrible. You have to force them to go ahead. And John recalls you saying, "John, you have to be patient, you have to go back and do it again."

Guerrero: Right, right.

Siemer: Do you recall that?

Guerrero: I told them, of course, that every effort and every patience counts. That they must try to sit down and to reach a better understanding why we cannot allow it. Why we cannot sort of entertain the kind of idea or thoughts that they had in mind.

Siemer: This was the debate over the three lieutenant governors.

Guerrero: That's exactly what it was.

Siemer: They were absolutely adamant. They wanted three lieutenant governors.

Guerrero: Yes. I know that particular issue. They were insisting on three lieutenant governors. I finally said that we would be weakening the central government by having three lieutenant governors and that, by having a mayor on each island who could become a consul to the governor, it would be more appropriate. And I think that's how it came about.

Siemer: This was another occasion, one of the fairly rare occasions when you took the floor and made a speech. From reading it, it sounds like a speech that says, "Now look, I want you people to work this out." And lo and behold, on the next day they did work it out. John Tenorio and Ray Villagomez prevailed, the three lieutenant governors were gone, and things seemed to calm down again. But that was a kind of a key point once you got over that, now you were all set. Now you at least had a draft Constitution and you could go to your public hearings.

Guerrero: That's true.

Siemer: There must have been some sense of relief on your part by then.

Guerrero: Right. I do not know whether you recall it, but during some of the public hearings the opposition party was against establishing the Carolinian affairs office. They came in with a written letter that said they wanted to strike that out. We said there was no way. We cannot. We've got to have a Carolinian affairs office.

Siemer: Was there anything about the public hearings that surprised you?

Guerrero: Nothing really that surprised me. We conducted those hearings night and day up to midnight. I think the public hearings went very well. Very well.

Siemer: The position that the Chamber of Commerce took was to be expected and the positions that you heard from the Popular Party people, there wasn't anything that really startled you that came out of the public hearings?

Guerrero: No, no.

Siemer: So now you've got the public hearings over and now you have to get your group back to work again.

Guerrero: That's true.

Siemer: At this point you and your procedures committee took a look at all the things you had to decide. You decided the order in which you were going to deal with them. I wanted to show you that [document] and see if you remembered this. There was a memo from you to the Convention and attached to it was your list of how you were going to go about these things.

- Guerrero: For adoption.
- Siemer: One of the things I wanted to ask you was whether you had grouped them in a particular way to make it easier to move things along and get them passed.
- Guerrero: Yes, of course, that's one of the reasons for the order. On a lot of these issues there was pretty much concurrence; the delegates generally had less reservation. That's how we fixed the order.
- Siemer: What were the things that you expected to have a problem with?
- Guerrero: In my recollection? I really did not think that there would be any one specific particular problem. I think my recollection is that the biggest problem we had there was on the tax issues. From the Finance Committee.
- Siemer: The Finance Committee?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Siemer: You had just been through a big problem on the Executive Branch so you probably were going to have some more debate on that. And one of the things I was wondering about is that you scheduled the Legislative Branch fairly early in the game. It was one of the first things that you put up. I wondered if you were trying to get that one over with because you expected there was going to be a problem with that.
- Guerrero: Well, the only problem that I foresaw was basically on the representation issue.
- Siemer: From the lower house?
- Guerrero: The lower house—the composition of the lower house. You can remember this, I'm sure. You assisted past midnight (with the other lawyers of course) after we sort of drew where the boundaries would be to fix the composition of the Legislature. That's where I had more concern and it was certainly correct that there would be more controversy from the opposition as to the composition of the Legislature. We even were labeled as just fixing our Territorial Party boundaries at the time in order to garner sufficient representation. We were accused of that, you know.
- Siemer: There was a great deal of discussion of that, back and forth.
- Guerrero: Right.
- Siemer: When you got to that point, that first group of subjects relating to the Legislative Branch, you couldn't get them to agree on the lower house. That was another occasion on which you appointed a special committee. This time you went to Oly Borja to chair that committee and you put Ray Villagomez on that committee again.
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Siemer: As your specialist in special committees. But there when the Legislative Branch came up, it came up very early on and, when you couldn't get agreement, you just kept rolling it over on the schedule. Do you recall that, hoping that they would somehow reach agreement?
- Guerrero: Yes. I believe that was the strategy. I allowed them to continue and rolled that thing over in the hope that they would at some point reach a conclusion on it.
- Siemer: You rolled it over all the way down almost to the end of the Convention. Then Senator Borja came to you and said, "I cannot get people to agree on this. I just cannot. Some people want 16 and 3 and 2 and other people want 14 and 2 and 1 and Ray Villagomez wants 12 and 1 and 1 and I don't have a majority. I can't do this." Then you had Oscar Rasa bring it back to the floor and just said, "Well, we'll have to see what we can do." That

was what precipitated the walkout. At that time, did you know that Ben and his colleagues were going to walk out at that point?

Guerrero: Well, I had been alerted. I had been informed that there was a possibility of a walk-out from their delegates. My thought was that I would give them advice, to discuss the issue, and try to convince the delegates not to walk out. At that point after I had a group discussion with them, some of the delegates assured me that they would stay in.

Siemer: So you knew at the time that some of them would stay?

Guerrero: Sure, sure. I was aware of it.

Siemer: At what point was that in the Convention, was that toward the end when you had the group meeting with them?

Guerrero: Yes. I recall that it was coming to the end, when we had this sort of short meeting with them. After they alert me that it's going to happen, I did talk to the Lieutenant Governor, I talked to the mayor myself, and tried to convince them. But they were so upset about the composition and some of the delegate proposals that they had been hopeful that the committee would pass, but the committee did not come out in favor of them. So, that's how things started.

Siemer: Was there someone else with you when you met with the Rota delegation?

Guerrero: Well, our secretary Pete was there when we met about this thing.

Siemer: His father was the mayor?

Guerrero: Yes, at that time. Mayor Atalig, yes.

Siemer: Was David Atalig his brother?

Guerrero: No, cousin.

Siemer: His cousin.

Guerrero: Yes, yes, right. You mentioned David. David was one of the delegates that was in.

Siemer: He was one of the ones who stayed in?

Guerrero: Yes, right, right.

Siemer: Mr. Ogo stayed in?

Guerrero: Yes. Ogo himself, Pete.

Siemer: So at the time that you brought the legislative article back to the floor and told Oscar to go ahead and put it out there, you knew that you had some delegates from each delegation and you were not going to lose them over a walkout?

Guerrero: Yes. I knew it in advance because, like I said, they came to me and those other delegates said they would not walk away from the Convention.

Siemer: Then you were all right. You suffered the walk-out and from then on things went

Guerrero: That's how we managed to pass the so-called reports.

Siemer: Were you relieved by the time you got to the end of this Convention?

Guerrero: Well, certainly. What can you say, I was very pleased with the results. After all, we didn't satisfy each and every delegate, but at least we had the product of the Convention.

Siemer: You must have been extremely tired though. That was a long, long 50 days. You worked every single day, long hours.

- Guerrero: Yes, that's correct.
- Siemer: It was a considerable achievement. I'm sure it was very difficult being in the chair, trying to watch all 38 of them.
- Guerrero: That's correct, yes, and to see that the Convention operates. But, like I said, we had a very capable staff, and you people.
- Willens: I would like to go back now to some aspects of the years before the Constitutional Convention and then ask you some questions about the years since the Constitutional Convention. Let me go back for the moment to 1973. After the negotiations in May of 1973, there was a Joint Communique that announced certain preliminary agreements about a possible Commonwealth relationship with the United States. Two weeks later, three members of the Commission, Dr. Palacios, Joeten and Felix Rabauliman, were interviewed by the *Pacific Daily News*. They criticized the Commission's negotiations with the United States. They complained that they were not as well prepared as the United States delegation was. They complained that the negotiations were going too fast. Did you have any conversations with any of the three of them with respect to the negotiations before they gave that interview?
- Guerrero: Well, if I recall it correctly, certainly there was some discussion among ourselves at the time. I believe that basically what they were saying was that perhaps the political negotiation process was going pretty fast. I think they were saying that perhaps the process required looking into other alternatives aside from Commonwealth status. I believed all three were pretty much interested in another political status such as free association. I think they had a legitimate concern in trying to compare on a section-by-section analysis whatever provisions that the Joint Communique put out every time that you finished the negotiation. That's some of the concern that I recall we discussed during those years. That perhaps it would be to our advantage if we could kind of prolong the process of the negotiations and perhaps try to bring in an independent person other than say a consultant from the United States.
- Willens: All three of the Commission members who gave the interview were members of the Territorial Party at the time. Did you as a member and leader of the Territorial Party meet with those Commission members on any regular basis during the course of the negotiations?
- Guerrero: Well, not really on a regular basis, but from time to time as they felt it was important that we know what's going on. I remember that there were a couple of occasions that they asked the leadership among the Territorial Party group to meet with them in order to share some of their concerns.
- Willens: Was it your thinking at the time that, if the Marianas negotiations proceeded more slowly, the Joint Committee of the Congress of Micronesia might have completed its negotiations looking toward free association and then the people of the Marianas would be able to evaluate the two alternatives?
- Guerrero: Let me just say this, perhaps that's some of their thinking and it's always nice to compare. I'm sure that it's no different that the Micronesian delegates at the time did compare some of our own papers and the condition of our political status during the negotiations. I think that was one of their thoughts at the time, that perhaps we should try to compare the other Micronesian political status position papers, whatever they have in their hands at the time, and compare it with us. Because like I said, the free association concept was one of the first ideas from all of those leaders that you just mentioned.

- Willens: One of the problems that the Marianas Political Status Commission had in that regard was that the legislation creating it directed it to negotiate looking toward a close and permanent relationship with the United States. So when the point was made to the chairman of the Commission, for example, that he should be looking at other alternatives, he said the law would have to be changed in order to authorize the Commission to look at alternatives. Is that a familiar thought to you?
- Guerrero: Well, that's basically what it was. You're right, you know, in other words the political negotiators at the time had no choice but to comply with the intent of the law that created the Marianas Political Status Commission and what political aspirations or status that they looked into had to be consistent with the statute.
- Willens: But by the middle of 1973 the Joint Committee of the Congress of Micronesia had conducted at least four or five rounds of negotiations with the United States and had reached somewhat of an impasse as I recall on the level of financial assistance that the United States would provide them. In the summer of 1973 the Joint Committee conducted hearings in each of the districts of Micronesia including the Northern Marianas. Lazarus Salii and several members of the Joint Committee had hearings in Rota, Tinian and several meetings on Saipan, including one with the District Legislature. Do you recall participating in a hearing presided over by the Joint Committee?
- Guerrero: Not really. Perhaps I was not present at the time of the presentations of the Joint Committee. But like I said, I'm sure it's pretty much that the Marianas were basically looking toward a much closer political affiliation with the United States. You know, I don't think it would cause any change in the minds of the people or in the minds of the majority of the negotiators, whatever that Joint Committee of the Congress of Micronesia presented before us at the time.
- Willens: During these hearings the Joint Committee leadership tried to elicit from the people some sense of whether they would go along with free association and stay with all of Micronesia rather than go off their separate way. Were you personally familiar with Lazarus Salii and other members of the Joint Committee?
- Guerrero: Oh yes. Andon Amaraich was a member also and no different from former President Salii.
- Willens: What were your impressions of those two individuals, for example, as political leaders?
- Guerrero: Well, I know that they were very highly capable and respected leaders within their community and as representatives of the Congress of Micronesia. I strongly believe that the two leaders were basically looking after the interest of their own—looking in the interest of our Micronesian people. And that's how I valued these two guys; they're pretty solid and, I must say, very articulate people. They know what they're doing.
- Willens: Do you think they were representing the interests of their own districts in the course of their work on the Joint Committee?
- Guerrero: Well, it would be my recollection that perhaps in the interest of Micronesia as a whole, because at the time the Marshall Islands were part of that. I think they were trying as much as possible not to break up the Micronesian entity as a whole. They would prefer to see it bound together and, like I said, the people of the Northern Marianas had decided that the only way to do it was to break off from the rest of Micronesia and go our own way and proceed with our own negotiations.
- Willens: When the Congress of Micronesia met each year in 1973 and 1974, there often were resolutions passed that were very critical of the Northern Marianas for pursuing its own

- status goals. Did you have any contact with the Congress of Micronesia with respect to those resolutions?
- Guerrero: No. I didn't have any direct contact. I'm sure that you know that the chairman of our Marianas Political Status Commission at the time, Eddie Pangelinan, was a member of the Congress of Micronesia at the time. At the same time he was a member of that Political Status Commission. Those are basically the people we entrusted with that responsibility and they represented us as a whole.
- Willens: In 1973 there was another U.N. visiting mission that came to the Trust Territory. As you know, the visiting missions in those days came every three years, 1961, 1964, 1967, 1970 and 1973. The U.N. visiting missions were without exception strongly opposed to separate Marianas negotiations. Do you personally have any recollection of meeting with the visiting mission on any of those occasions?
- Guerrero: Well, yes. We did have meetings with these visiting representatives from the U.N. Trusteeship Council. They were here on various occasions, especially with respect to every referendum when they came in and wanted to witness the political process of education as well as the referendum. I believe strongly also that they themselves from the standpoint of the U.N. Trusteeship Council would like to see that the Micronesian entity as a whole will remain bound together in their future destiny.
- Willens: Why do you think they had that view?
- Guerrero: Well, because I don't think they really favored the so-called separating from the rest. When from time to time we had to present our views before the U.N. Trusteeship Council, all kinds of statements were said before them—how the Marianas wanted to separate. But they sort of ignored that approach, because I think they would prefer really to see Micronesia as one political entity.
- Willens: Do you think that the U.N. visiting missions served any useful purpose in bringing about change in the administering authority's actions here in Micronesia?
- Guerrero: Sure.
- Willens: Can you think of any examples where you think U.S. policy was changed because of criticism by the United Nations visiting mission?
- Guerrero: Well yes. They certainly were trying to make sure that the administering authority (the United States) as mandated by U.N. resolutions after the War, would administer the whole Micronesian entity under the American flag. They just wanted to make sure that, you know, one was education, of course the economy of the islands would be fostered, and try to attain more self-government. I believe the United Nations representatives were very useful in evaluating, reviewing the status of practically all of us at one time in all the six districts. The U.N. representatives were very valuable to us here, because you know from time to time the United States was criticized, not only by the people who represented us during any given hearing before the U.N. Trusteeship Council but by U.N. representatives themselves based on their own fact finding.
- Willens: In 1973, after this second round of negotiations where the plans for Tinian were announced, you and other leaders in the Marianas learned that there was a moratorium on homesteading and economic development on Tinian. This became a very important issue during the summer of 1973 and Mr. Wilson had to come out and meet with the District Legislature, and then Ambassador Williams came out and met with the District Legislature in August in 1973. What is your recollection of that moratorium and its significance?

- Guerrero: Well, I believe that the moratorium was set to effectuate at that particular time the military's need to obtain substantial acreage or hectares of land.
- Willens: The moratorium was designed to preserve land that the United States might be able to negotiate to get access to, is that correct?
- Guerrero: Yes, that is correct.
- Willens: One of the complaints was that this moratorium was decided upon in Washington without any consultation with local leaders. What is your recollection on that point?
- Guerrero: Well, Howard, like I said, I'm sure that you people probably have more knowledge on really what transpired between the leaders of the two negotiating delegations. Because there were times that the Legislature was not being consulted about what's being negotiated until the negotiation was being finalized or completed. I would say that those are very sensitive issues and the negotiators from both sides must try as much as possible not to make the public aware of what really they are trying to conclude with. My recollection is that there was very little, if any, communication about that particular issue.
- Willens: The U.S. delegation expressed concern about speculation on Tinian, some of which allegedly involved members of the Marianas Political Status Commission. Were you aware of any land speculation on Tinian involving members of the Commission?
- Guerrero: Well, there had been some alerts that perhaps there might be some potential conflict of interest during those rounds of negotiations and the speculation that was made possible. During those days, I don't have it with me but let me say this there are some footnotes among the negotiators, it leaks out, you know, that they have some interest themselves in parcels of those lands. Those are the things that were very sensitive and I am sure that many of the negotiators, on our side especially, in as much as possible did not want anything to be publicly known about what they have in their minds of their own interest in the speculations of the land. That's exactly as you can see it, it is in the public records, that some members of the negotiators had interests in Tinian.
- Willens: Did you think that undercut their credibility as negotiators for the Northern Marianas people?
- Guerrero: I don't think so. Like I said, they had to act in the general interest of the public and, as professional negotiators, they should not be involved in any of their own personal interests. So again, I mean they were responsible leaders, they knew what they did, and I really hoped that those negotiators at the time should try to avoid any actions that may cause a conflict in the future.
- Willens: In the fall of 1973, Herman Manglona resigned as a member of the Commission and was replaced by Joe Cruz. Was Joe Cruz someone that you knew personally and politically?
- Guerrero: Oh yes, yes. I knew Joe pretty well.
- Willens: What was your assessment of him at the time as a political leader and a potential member of the Commission?
- Guerrero: Well, there is no question that Joe is a pretty smart fellow. He has been elected several times in his own community. He certainly represents the interests of his own people. Joe on many occasions opposed many of these particular issues or provisions of the technical agreement. Many times he came out also bluntly in saying that the people of Tinian would have to sacrifice themselves for the status of the Commonwealth and the needs of the military. So Joe in my own true assessment, as a person knowing him for many years, was a great leader.

- Willens: Did you regard him at the time as being a supporter of U.S. military requirements on Tinian or as an opponent?
- Guerrero: Joe was basically, I must say, a supporter of whatever needs of the United States basically. But he himself kind of alerted the negotiators and us in the Legislature from time to time that he must continue of course to protect the interests of the [Tinian] people.
- Willens: Over the next year, late 1973 and into 1974, the people of Tinian seemed to be divided between those who wanted to give only one-third of the island for use by the U.S. military and those who were willing to give two-thirds of the island so long as the village wasn't relocated. At one point there was a proposal for a referendum on Tinian in early 1974 that District Administrator Ada ultimately vetoed. Did you have any participation in the events surrounding that Tinian referendum?
- Guerrero: No, I was not involved in that particular approach or in that particular referendum. It was pretty much left in the hands of the administration and the people of Tinian.
- Willens: Joe at one point was quoted as saying that if the people of Tinian voted to provide only one-third of the island he would have to obey that dictate. Do you think he really meant that?
- Guerrero: Well, like I said, Joe was a representative of the people. Joe was pretty much a staunch person but, if the people went that way, I'm sure that he would support whatever the people's position was. So, I'm sure that Joe would oppose it [the U.S. position], if the people went to referendum and voted only for one-third of the use of Tinian.
- Willens: In late 1973, Joeten resigned from the Commission and was replaced by Pete A. Tenorio. In his letter of resignation, Joeten said that one of the reasons he was resigning was that his participation in the Commission was viewed by many on the Commission as being designed to protect his own economic interest. He did not think that was, of course, fair but he didn't think it enabled him to serve as a constructive member of the Commission. Do you recall having any discussion with him before he resigned or shortly thereafter?
- Guerrero: Well, yes. I think the expression that you just said is correct, that they viewed him as representing only Joeten interests. He was seen as being very successful, and we can see it today, of course, that he is one of the most successful entrepreneurs locally here. Anything that he would do or anything that he would oppose, the other group of political leaders would label it as mainly as Joeten only for Joeten. Rather than Joeten for the entire people. So through that frustration, he decided that occasionally that they had been blaming him, that he was trying to stall this political negotiation because he just wanted to protect his business.
- Willens: Were there particular leaders on the Popular Party side who were critical of Joeten?
- Guerrero: Well, not to name names, but that's true. I must say that's how the political leaders on the opposition party viewed Joeten's presence as a member of the Commission.
- Willens: What do you personally think were Joeten's preferences as to future political status for the Marianas?
- Guerrero: Well, like I said, Joeten is a person who is very capable of making assessments or plans before saying it's okay or not okay. In other words, what I am saying is that he would like to make a true assessment before he takes any positions, especially as to the future destiny of our people. He thought that the best political status for the Marianas at the time was the free association status. Knowing that free association is more liberalized in terms of your own self-government, both internal and external, and in the future should we decide

of course to be independent, then the people of the Commonwealth or today could become independent. Much easier, at the same time you still enjoyed being part of the United States under free association status, as we see today with the other members of the Micronesian entity. That's how Joeten really felt, knowing him as a friend and as a leader in our community, he wanted to make sure that the political status that the Marianas would pursue is something that would be good for many years, for the children of today and tomorrow. That's Joeten's approach, and knowing that it was so important to him to make sure that our people understand very well where we are heading and what will be the outcome too.

Willens: When he ran for Governor in 1977 on the Territorial or Republican ticket, do you think he was convinced at that point in his public career that Commonwealth was an attractive alternative for the Northern Marianas?

Guerrero: Well, because the people overwhelmingly voted, he had no choice but to join the majority, the vast majority of our people. But knowing him, like I said, he'd run for Governor but he always said that it would be better off for us to cautiously approach the status and perhaps he still remained firm that free association would be the most appropriate for us.

Willens: There are some people that I've talked to who recall that he also had a feeling that staying with the rest of Micronesia would have been a desirable objective for the Northern Marianas. Do you think that is accurate?

Guerrero: Well, yes. It is accurate because that's how he expressed, that rather than us parting from the rest of Micronesia, I think we would be better off economically, politically, no difference if we are all bound together. In other words, rather than separate from the rest of Micronesia we have more voice to say or to appeal before the U.S. government and no difference that we can voice it as well to the U.N. Trusteeship Council.

Willens: One of the concerns that the supporters of separate negotiations had was that, if the Marianas were part of a united Micronesia, Marianas interests would not be adequately protected because the population centers are in Truk and other districts. What is your sense as a political leader of how the numbers would have worked out given the relatively few voters here in the Northern Marianas?

Guerrero: Well, that is true of course. They would out-number us by population, but I believe that it can be looked at by another view because we can see the success today of the Micronesian entities. You know the Federated States of Micronesia are established as one entity and the Republic of the Marshalls. The Republic of Palau is finally in the final stage and they have approved their referendum again to become a republic. So the Marianas in itself could very well have had the same status and, in other words, we didn't have to follow Micronesia as a whole and try to be in one entity. Because we could easily be outnumbered by population and that argument has been the biggest argument from the beginning.

Willens: Joeten was replaced by Pete A. Tenorio, who I know you had worked with for many, many years. Did Pete Tenorio share some of Joeten's views on status at the time or, as you knew him, what were his views?

Guerrero: Well, yes. He did share some views of Joeten about our future political status or the need to stall. I think Pete played a very important role as well, because on many of the technical agreements, on land issues, Pete took the lead. He was appointed to be the chairman of that particular committee and he did very well. I am sure that you remember as well that Pete did make on several occasions arguments over issues on the alienation of land and the technical negotiations about land use to meet the military requirements.

- Willens: You are referring to his work on the Land Committee during the negotiations that resulted in the technical agreement?
- Guerrero: That's correct.
- Willens: Did you personally become involved in that at the time or are you thinking of it that you had the chance to review it when it came before you as a member of the District Legislature?
- Guerrero: Well I knew that all of us would have an opportunity to review it. I recall that in fact, if I'm not mistaken, Pete argued strongly that the value on the land must be increased as well as the size of the military requirement. So to me Pete was another eloquent gentleman, very capable, and I think he did an outstanding job.
- Willens: You mentioned the land alienation problem. I wonder if you could recall for me how you felt about the general issue of land alienation and whether it was in the interests of the local people to impose some restrictions on the sale of land?
- Guerrero: Certainly, I believe that the land alienation clause in the Covenant and the Constitution does serve the best interests of our Commonwealth. As you know, we had a pretty heavy deliberation during the Constitutional Convention about this particular issue—whether we should open it or close it—and I think that the conclusion of our delegates at the time was that the restrictions on the alienation of land were in our best interests. That means we allow the opportunity, of course, for our next generation to make that decision regarding their future transactions of land. As we can see, there is some sad experience in other countries or other areas that we know of, Hawaii and Guam as well. And that's basically why we feel strongly that the land is so important for our people. And we feel strongly that, if we allow the land to be in the hands of foreigners, then what will happen to our future generations, of the kids of our kids as well. This is very important and I think the delegates and that Marianas Political Status Commission did very well in protecting the alienation of land here.
- Willens: There was some suggestion in the documents that some of the people here among the political leaders did not want to have restrictions on land alienation and that the United States government sort of forced those provisions on the people. That is not my personal recollection. I do remember a few people recognizing that restraining their ability to sell land limited individual freedom in a respect. Do you think there was any substantial opposition to the land alienation restrictions back in the middle 1970s?
- Guerrero: Well, of course, there were some people who questioned such restriction when the land belongs to and was inherited by the members of their families, and say it is privately owned and inherited from the parents or the great grandparents. We can see the arguments of these people that are concerned. But I think the majority view on the issue and the sentiment of the people was that providing such restrictions would protect the future generations as well as the present from selling the lands. I think the vast majority of our people agreed with that. You can see now all these cases about land disputes coming back to court. So it's proving really to me that the land alienation clause, or the protection of the local residents' land in the hands of foreigners, served a good purpose.
- Willens: Do you think if the issue came up for a vote today in the Commonwealth that the majority of the citizens would support some ongoing form of restrictions?
- Guerrero: Oh yes, definitely. I think the people would prefer to have the long term leasehold interest rather than outright sales of the lands.

- Willens: Another land issue that came up in late 1973 and for the next year or two when you were in the Legislature at the time, was the return of public lands by the United States to the districts. The Marianas District Legislature, I think at some point either in 1974 or 1975, enacted a public land law that met the requirements of the U.S. policy and created a legal entity. Do you remember any issues that were of concern to you personally as the public lands issue was being debated?
- Guerrero: Well, yes. I had much concern, especially over the public land disputes that the former administering authority and the transition government (before we become a Commonwealth) were supposed to administer and settle all of these land disputes. However, these administrations left with a lot of lands disputes that have never been resolved. That's why much of this land [problem] today is coming back to the Commonwealth, either in the Superior or the Supreme Court. This could have been a much smoother transition from the prior administering authority (such as the Trust Territory or the transition government). Many of those land disputes, some involving land taken over for public purposes, have never been resolved.
- Willens: You had hoped that the administering authority would resolve those disputes before returning the public lands to the legal entity that the Legislature created?
- Guerrero: That's basically what I am saying. Because otherwise, as you can see, many of these things now are still popping back and should have been settled by that time by the previous administering authority. At that time the value of private lands versus the value of public land would be in a much better perspective or much more appropriate to deal with, because the exchange of public land versus private land perhaps would involve much less cost than what it is today. Today we have problems because the statute requires the land to be appraised and it has to be exchanged on an equal value. You know how it is, many of these exchanges that are taking place today from private land are so expensive, in many acres or hectares, I must say, or square meters. All of the public lands are very much undervalued compared to private land. But it left us no choice because that's what we have to do. I mean we have to settle these matters, once and for all. But it would have been much cheaper and the people at that time would be much easier to deal with because of the value of the lands at that particular time or years under the previous administrations. So you see the interest of the people, it's very much in favor to their own benefit. Otherwise it could have been different.
- Willens: One of the issues at the time was whether to create a legal entity like a corporation to take title to the public lands or whether to give them to the Legislature or in some districts the tribal chiefs, in Palau for example. Did you have any reservations about creating a corporation to handle these responsibilities?
- Guerrero: Well, I don't think it's really a problem because we have a corporation today such as the Marianas Public Land Corporation.
- Willens: Tell me, how did you think that's worked out. I mean over the last 15 years.
- Guerrero: As you know, we established that through the Constitution. That's how we created a Marianas Public Land Corporation to be entrusted with all of the public lands. Today it's in the hands of the Marianas Public Land Corporation.
- Willens: I hear some conversation from time to time that the corporation should be abolished and the Legislature or the Executive Branch ought to assume responsibility for the lands. What do you think of that idea?

- Guerrero: In my opinion, regardless whether you abolish the Marianas Public Land Corporation, it will be the same when you are putting all the public land it back again into the hands of any department or agency within the government. I think what we need to do is either extend the Marianas Public Land Corporation or they can repeal it by law, because that's in the provision as well that it can be repealed at this time. But you have to transfer it or create a similar entity, so whether you repeal it or extend it I think the Marianas Public Land Corporation is in operable condition. Many of the transactions have been done by the Marianas Public Land Corporation. They have their own independent agency within that particular statutory authority and they are responsible to it. Rather than abolishing it perhaps you can transfer it, but it will be the same body again because you have to create an independent agency anyway to deal with many of these things. Otherwise, if we have to take the responsibility, within the Executive or the Legislature for that matter, many of the previous transactions may very well be false responsibilities or cause liabilities in the future. You know, a future agency or future body that would have to be responsible for it. So in my opinion, I think not necessary to totally abolish the Marianas Public Land Corporation but it could be either independently created by law and have the same functions as the Marianas Public Land Corporation under that new statute, whatever the Legislature and the Executive Branch can agree to.
- Willens: In early 1974, the Congress of Micronesia finally enacted legislation authorizing a Constitutional Convention throughout Micronesia. There were elections for delegates to that Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1974, I think in early June. This was very confusing in the Marianas because you had the Marianas Political Status Commission in negotiations with the United States for a separate commonwealth status and then you had this Constitutional Convention being proposed for all of Micronesia. You were in the Legislature at the time, isn't that correct?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: What was your reaction to whether the Marianas ought to participate in a Micronesian-wide Constitutional Convention?
- Guerrero: Well, I felt rather different because the people of the Marianas have decided that they would prefer to go on their own separate political negotiation. I thought it's only appropriate that we should not, in other words, involve ourselves in sending delegates to the Convention because we have pretty much a mandate already by both the wishes of the people and the Legislature that created the Marianas Political Status Commission. So, as much as I see the importance and perhaps I'd like to have our participation, but we have decided that we have to proceed on a separate political negotiation.
- Willens: Did the Territorial Party take any position as to whether or not to run delegates for the Micronesian Constitutional Convention?
- Guerrero: No, not to my recollection.
- Willens: Do you remember whether the Marianas delegates in fact participated in the Micronesian Constitutional Convention which I guess was ultimately held in 1975, a year later?
- Guerrero: I doubt that there were any of our delegates other than the members of the Congress of Micronesia at that time. I believe they pretty much abandoned it at the time after the so-called referendum took place.
- Willens: Referendum on the Covenant?
- Guerrero: On the Covenant.

- Willens: I think that's right. In the fall of 1974, there was an election for the Congress of Micronesia and both Ed Pangelinan and Herman Q. Guerrero were defeated. Pete A. Tenorio and Oscar Rasa won those positions.
- Guerrero: That's right.
- Willens: One of the questions is whether political status was an issue that affected the outcome of that election. There are those who view the election as a warning to the Popular Party leadership to go slow with the status negotiations which were nearing their conclusion. Others say that political status had very little to do with it and it was a matter of personalities and political loyalties. Do you have any recollection as to what went into that campaign?
- Guerrero: Well again, Howard, as I said in the early stage of our interview, some of these political groups have different views regarding political aspiration or political status. Certainly, the Territorial Party at the time would prefer to go slowly on negotiations of the political status, whereas the Democrats (or the Popular Party at the time) wanted to wrap it up as early as possible. I believe strongly that it had some, in my opinion, impact for those two candidates who lost their seats. That's one of the issues we raised during the campaign, that the Territorial Party at that time wanted to have a direct annexation with the United States. In other words, we wanted to come closer with the American political family on a direct approach, rather than the Democrats at that time wanted to have the reintegration of the Marianas with Guam. So those were factors why some of those people did lose the election.
- Willens: Let's turn now to the period after the Covenant was signed and approved by the people. There was the question of getting it approved by the United States Congress. Did you participate as part of the Marianas delegation from time to time to go to Washington and try to persuade the members of Congress to approve it?
- Guerrero: Yes, that's very true. At that time I was the minority leader in the District Legislature when the people overwhelmingly approved the Covenant on the political status that was negotiated. I was one of those that traveled to Washington on several occasions to lobby with the U.S. Congress to gain their support. Let me just for record purposes, I just received a letter from Senator Wallop that he did remember those days back in 1975 when I came in and gave my testimony as a minority leader of the Legislature and before the U.S. Congressional committee. It was a remarkable day, according to the good Senator, and he remembered us coming in and all the lobbying efforts that we did for that particular purpose.
- Willens: That's very nice of him to remember the experience. In the House of Representatives, of course, Congressman Burton more or less took charge of the matter and I think the record will show that it went through quite rapidly. Do you remember having any encounter with Congressman Burton or members of the House of Representatives before it was approved?
- Guerrero: Well, the late Congressman Burton really championed the Covenant and we owe deference to Scoop Jackson, Senators Jackson and Bennett Johnston. Bennett Johnston was the chairman of the insular areas subcommittee at that time in the Senate. So both the late Burton and his fellow Congressmen were very supportive of the effort in trying to garner support and have the U.S. Congress approve the Covenant and late Congressman Burton and his colleagues were very instrumental. I know you know several of those good colleagues of his during those days. I remember the day when he took the issue on the

floor and, just for your information as well, we got in into the chamber and we found out that particular issue just went on a voice vote instead of a roll call.

Willens: That was in the House of Representatives?

Guerrero: That's correct, yes.

Willens: Now let's turn to the Senate side. There I think to the surprise of many, the legislation became more controversial. It was referred to the Armed Services Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee as well as to the Senate Interior Committee. Did you have any contact with either the Armed Services Committee or the Foreign Relations Committee as they conducted their hearings on the Covenant?

Guerrero: Oh yes. We took every effort like I said to get in touch with as many of the Senators as possible.

Willens: What was their principal objection or difficulty with the Covenant as you remember it?

Guerrero: Well, my recollection is that many of their reservations related to adding another responsibility of the U.S., by adding a Commonwealth status that is pretty much different from other political entities within the insular areas or other territories. That was basically one of the major obstacles that I saw—why the Northern Marianas was being granted a commonwealth status that was much more unique than the other territories and at the same time granting them U.S. citizenship.

Willens: What did you say when you heard that objection?

Guerrero: Well, you know, it's not much we have to counter them, other than trying to convince them. That's the approach we took in order for them to extend or grant us their so-called blessing in the committees or on the floor for the Covenant. And I believe many of those vocal ones, of course, went and even tried to lobby against it. One was Senator Pell and Senator Hart and even Senator Ted Kennedy. That, I remember. There were several strong Senators.

Willens: Did you think that some of the opposition was caused by the fact that the more liberal members of Congress did not want to have any more military bases out here in the Western Pacific? There was some question raised in the Armed Services Committee I know as to whether the Tinian facility was needed and would ultimately be approved. Do you remember that?

Guerrero: Yes, because those issues came up during the deliberations of the Congressional committees. But of course those were the early stages when the Defense Department still strongly supported keeping the base in Tinian for contingency purposes. Like I said, Tinian was one of the very important strategic locations for defense needs. I believe that is why after a series of public hearings and debate about the Commonwealth status and the need for the Tinian base, they were convinced that it's in the interest of the Defense Department to keep Tinian as a strategic area.

Willens: As I recall, there were some in the Foreign Relations Committee who thought that the decision should be deferred until the United States had negotiated a future status with the rest of Micronesia and there was much testimony about fragmentation and United Nations approval. Did you find yourself discussing those topics as well?

Guerrero: Well, from time to time we were confronted with or discussed those issues. But like I said, my recollection is that the CNMI or the Marianas at the time, based on what had already been built and was readily available for military purposes should any emergency arise, was

pretty much different than the rest of Micronesia. Some areas are very limited, other than the Marshall Islands at the time because the Kwajalein Atoll was so important for them as well.

Willens: What do you think ultimately carried the day in the Senate in order to get approval for the Covenant? What persuaded the majority to go along with it?

Guerrero: I believe that, among the very important issues that they discussed, Tinian was a bargaining point for the needs of the military.

Willens: Did you feel that the obligations of the United States under the Trusteeship Agreement made any difference to anyone in the Senate?

Guerrero: Well, I didn't view that really as one of the major factors. You know there was pretty much debate between the United Nations and the U.S. representative at the time, because the United Nations was not willing to let go of the Marianas—in other words, to release the Marianas to negotiate its own political status rather than just stay with the rest of the other Micronesian islands. That was one opposition that I recall. In other words, a statement from the Trusteeship Council that, in spite of the obligations mandated by the United Nations that the United States is the administering authority of this island, they would like to see a future political status for Micronesia as a whole rather than a separate status. Or at least one government, decentralize it, and go with whatever political entity that the people choose. But I believe that the Tinian issue was one of the important factors.

Willens: Was there ever a point during the Congressional consideration of the Covenant that you thought it might not be approved?

Guerrero: Well, the Senate of course was very conservative and there were strong statements about why the Marianas should become part of the American political family at this time. But like I said, my recollection is that they were pretty much convinced after the committees and the House voted in favor of endorsing the commonwealth political status for the Marianas to be part of the American political family through that negotiation process. I believe the committees were convinced that it was in the interest of both the United States and the people of the Marianas to enter into that relationship. So at that time the Northern Marianas was basically so important for strategic purposes and that's why in my view the final assessment and overall evaluation of this political status issue was based on United States defense and national security interests. That's one reason why they said it was better to endorse the Commonwealth status. I remember that during the mid-1970s there were several occasions that members of the U.S. Congress were on "Good Morning America" or CBS News talking about how important the Northern Marianas was for defense purposes.

Willens: That's interesting. You made reference to the fact that you were part of the delegation sort of as the leader of the minority in the Legislature. Were there any differences between you and the majority leadership as to how to conduct the lobbying effort in support of the Covenant or did you all work together as a team?

Guerrero: There's got to be a team. We cannot go and try to present different testimony. In the interests of our people of the Northern Marianas, the Legislature and the Administration conferred and reviewed what we had to present before them. We had some differences but, after the people voted for the Covenant, it left us no choice. But we had to put in our teamwork and show that everyone supported the status.

Willens: Do you remember working to any extent with members of the United States delegation

during the lobbying efforts or did they conduct their efforts separately from the efforts that you and the other Marianas leaders were engaged in?

Guerrero: You are talking about the Legislature?

Willens: No, Ambassador Williams and OMSN were actively engaged in a lobbying effort. But I've been told by one of our colleagues that the Marianas leaders wanted to make sure that they went in and did their own lobbying effort and that it not be made to appear that the United States delegation was telling you what to do. Do you have any recollections along that line?

Guerrero: Well, it is true, because when we went for any given hearing we certainly had our own group. This is how we did it ourselves. I'm sure that you are very much aware of how the strategy worked when we were in Washington, D.C. But never did we think we should join forces with the United States delegation as well. On several occasions these people were in the same hearing room or chamber because both parties had to be heard. To my own recollection, through all of the hearings and lobbying efforts we acted independently. We felt that it was important for the Marianas to do it ourselves, because we felt that the Congress must be sympathetic to the people of the Marianas delegation if we are to garner their support.

Willens: Did you come to any conclusion as to how well the Executive Branch defended the Covenant before the Congress; did they do a good job in your opinion?

Guerrero: Well, I believe that the Executive Branch on the federal side did very well. They presented a good argument and justification as to why the U.S. Congress should approve the Covenant. I believe both delegations did a very good job in those efforts.

Willens: Do you remember that Senator Bennett Johnston was a key supporter at the time?

Guerrero: Oh yes. Like I said, he was a subcommittee chairman during those days regarding the insular areas. The late Scoop Jackson, Senator Jackson, was the chairman of the committee. Senator Bennett Johnston was like the late Congressman Burton. He was very supportive of the Covenant. His staff members, the key staff members of the Senate, were very well versed and knowledgeable about the Covenant. That's why it was very useful.

Willens: During the negotiations, when I and lawyers from my firm went up to the Hill to speak to members of Congress and their staff about what we were doing, we were frequently told that we should pattern the Covenant after Guam. They warned us that if the Covenant had too many unique or different provisions it would run the risk of being defeated in the Congress. Do you have a recollection of the unique aspect of it coming up during the congressional hearings?

Guerrero: Like I stated earlier, some of the reservations of many Senators or Congressmen at the time were that we were coming up with very unique political status provisions in the Covenant as drafted compared with other insular areas—Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa for that matter. Those were the reservations of many of these Senators and Congressmen, but I think you and your people did a very good job on the lobbying effort and in keeping the negotiated provisions, despite our many unique provisions that don't apply to other territories, or insular areas for that matter, or even States of the Union.

Willens: Did you feel that there was any opposition from Guam to the Covenant? One of the concerns was that Won Pat and other political leaders from Guam during the negotiations were complaining to the United States that the Northern Marianas were getting a better

deal. There was some concern that the Guamanian leaders might oppose the Covenant on those grounds. Do you have any recollection of that?

Guerrero: There's no doubt about that. There's no doubt about that, because that was one of the areas of concern to the late Congressman Won Pat, who was a member of the committee. He had very little to say on how he would like to support us, knowing that we would have many things that are not the same Guam's status.

Willens: Did he become a supporter of the Covenant or not?

Guerrero: In my opinion he was a silent supporter. During those days he was pretty much a silent supporter. I would say perhaps that from the other insular areas, Congressman DeLugo was a strong supporter and made a strong pitch.

Willens: Let's skip ahead then a year. We've talked about the Constitutional Convention in an earlier interview. After the Constitution was finally approved by the Convention, it was the subject of a referendum at which the people in the Northern Marianas could decide whether to approve it. Do you remember what issues came up in the campaign with respect to the Constitution? It was approved by a substantial majority, but there was opposition. What were the issues that you recall coming up in the referendum on the Constitution?

Guerrero: Well, I believe there were not many issues that concerned the people because the mandate of the Constitutional Convention was that it's got to be consistent with the Covenant. And that's basically where we patterned. Some people remained opponents of the Covenant, but it was not majority. Let me say this, if my recollection is correct, I think we garnered about 96 percent or 93 percent of the voters. It was a very high turnout in approving the Constitution.

Willens: I see.

Guerrero: It's a good majority of the people.

Willens: One issue that came up late in the negotiations, and was of course very much an issue during the Constitutional Convention, was the power given to the islands of Tinian and Rota in the bicameral legislature. And as you probably remember, the issue came up in the very last round of negotiations for the Covenant, when the Tinian and Rota people insisted that there be a requirement of a bicameral legislature and that the three major islands have equal representation in one of the two Houses. The Marianas Political Status Commission after many days of discussion felt that they wanted to keep the islands together and so they agreed to propose that to the United States. Did you come to any view based on the Covenant and your experience in the Constitutional Convention as to whether the authority given to Tinian and Rota was going to be a real obstacle to governing the Commonwealth?

Guerrero: Well, I think it's always been an issue—not necessarily an obstacle—that has prompted some reservations from the people of the different islands, such as Saipan compared with Tinian or Rota for that matter. I think that the people of Saipan at the time were basically asking why Tinian and Rota should have equal representation when the population variations are so big. As you can recall it yourself also, Howard, the leaders of Rota and Tinian always maintained strongly that, in order to protect the interest of these minority islands or less populated islands such as Rota and Tinian, one of the Houses has to have equal representation. That's why everybody (in my recollection) agreed to have equal representation in the Senate. At the time, the Senate was pretty much regarded as the strongest House within the Legislative Branch. They have the confirmation power, aside

from participating in the legislative process. What made it much more important to them to have equal representation in the Senate was the confirmation power. They wanted to make sure that they had a say-so regarding any appointees. I think the representatives of those islands are pretty much aware of the potential or the possibilities in ignoring their part in that process.

Willens: Based on your experience in the Legislature in the early 1970's, do you think that Tinian and Rota were not treated fairly by the majority of the legislators from Saipan?

Guerrero: Well, that's the argument. You have to expect that when you only have one representative in the unicameral legislature. You only have one vote and a couple votes from Rota. You see the difference. This is basically how they feel, because they have had a sad experience with many years in the Legislature with a dominant majority of members from Saipan. Either you have to be a good lobbyist or have friends among your colleagues to get your things done. But finally in my own recollection we made some tremendous progress by garnering support from the opposition members of our own legislators.

Willens: When you saw the requirement for a bicameral legislature, was it your feeling that that was a legitimate effort to deal with a local problem?

Guerrero: Well, it was. I think that is the only way that you can really protect the interests of these people. Otherwise there is no other way. Even if we go unicameral, you have to construct it so that these people on the two islands will have the same representation as the Saipanese.

Willens: Now let's look back on it with the benefit of hindsight here in 1993. Do you think that the bicameral legislature and the authority given to Rota and Tinian has been an obstacle, for example, during the four years of your governorship in getting legislation enacted for the good of the entire Commonwealth?

Guerrero: Well, not very much. Unless it's the gridlock on the budget. That's pretty much the legislative process—everybody's looking and trying to attack that as they have their interests. I would not blame the obstacles that we had with the Legislature so much on the bicameral legislative process or having two Houses. Other than I must say that they have their own different interests and agenda so that the representatives from these islands very strongly put their efforts and interests together when it comes to the budgetary review process. They want to make sure that they have their own interests protected in that process. So you know, that's what it is.

Willens: You think that it can be dealt with if you have good political leadership and some reasonable effort of compromise. I don't want to put words into your mouth, but I gather that you don't think that the structure of the Senate by itself prevents effective government in the Commonwealth.

Guerrero: Yes. Like I said, the two Houses should have to get together in trying to reach their compromises. You can see it yourself in the U.S. Congress, the U.S. national Congress, where each House has a different interest and certainly at times there must be some compromise. I would say that they have to see really how to extend, or how much they could reach, that compromise without jeopardizing the interests of the vast majority or the population of the other islands. But you know, we have been in the first legislature under the Commonwealth.

Willens: Yes, I wanted to get to that. You ran for the first Commonwealth Senate in 1977 and just to get the facts. You stayed in for the full term?

Guerrero: Yes.

- Willens: Until what, 1980?
- Guerrero: 1980.
- Willens: 1980.
- Guerrero: Yes, because the Senate was on the staggered term.
- Willens: So you had what, a three year term?
- Guerrero: I got a two year term.
- Willens: You had a two year term. Then did you run again?
- Guerrero: No.
- Willens: You retired from politics for a while?
- Guerrero: Yes.
- Willens: When did you run again for political office?
- Guerrero: I ran in 1984 for the second Con-Con.
- Willens: For the Constitutional Convention?
- Guerrero: Yes. That was back in 1985.
- Willens: Right.
- Guerrero: But then
- Willens: Did you run for the Senate again?
- Guerrero: No, I didn't run for the Senate. My first comeback in politics was when I ran in 1989 for the gubernatorial seat.
- Willens: Just recall for me, if you will, the political decisions that went into the designation of the candidates for the first governor of the Commonwealth. I've heard that, for example, Senator Borja originally expressed an interest in running on the Popular Party (now the Democratic ticket), but Dr. Camacho got a higher number of votes and then Senator Borja made himself available to the Territorial Party. You must have played a role in the decisions on the Territorial Party side. What is your recollection of how it came to be that Joeten was selected to run as governor and Senator Borja was on his ticket.
- Guerrero: Well, at the time the late Joeten aspired for the governorship. We felt that was quite appropriate and proper since he was the founding father of the Territorial Party (formerly the Progressive Party), and he has been very successful in business and as a civic leader. So we felt that he would be one of the best candidates, of course, and deserved to be given the opportunity. The party officials met together and we finally selected him after the consultation process.
- Willens: There were other candidates like Frank Ada and Pete A. Tenorio.
- Guerrero: Right. Those people of course. We had our own primary or so-called primary and they ran.
- Willens: Was it a primary system or a convention system?
- Guerrero: No, it was a primary. It's similar to a convention but then we turned it into a primary. We finally picked Joeten. He got the highest number of votes from the Territorial Party. Then, of course, through the process in selecting the second man, some people introduced the late Olympia Borja to be on the ticket for Lieutenant Governor with Joeten. There's a

couple of other members of the Republican Party and the names of some non-Republicans were tossed in for Joeten's second man.

Willens: Do you remember why Frank Ada wasn't chosen to run on the Territorial ticket?

Guerrero: Well, Frank Ada had been an administrator for a number of years. He had an administrative background and there was no question that he possessed that background. But I think you have to go through popular votes and Joe got majority support because, like I said, many people viewed it as only appropriate, now that we have to elect our own governor, that he be given the opportunity. Being the founding father of the party and so loyal to the party, very dedicated to the community, a very successful businessman, a good leader. That's how he was chosen. Now I do not know why Pete A. was not chosen to be the running mate of Joeten. I think some people close to Joeten selected differently and felt that maybe by getting the late O.T. Borja with his supporters we may garner a good turnout on the general election.

Willens: Were you surprised when Frank Ada turned up on the ticket with Dr. Camacho?

Guerrero: Well, I was not surprised. It's different with the late Olympio, you know. He used to be with the Territorial Party and then he switched. Then he came back. I think too many things needed to be done at the time for the parties to get support from both sides rather than divide it. That's exactly what happened. You know, when the candidates divided many of the supporters went over and voted for the other side. But Joe, we were really surprised because so many people showed up at the rally the night before the election. We just don't see why, or what went wrong, Joeten was not elected the first Governor.

Willens: What is your explanation? I've heard it suggested that the Popular Party came on very aggressively with what would be called today a class argument. That your candidates were wealthy and therefore they would protect the business and wealthier segments of the community, whereas the Popular Party portrayed itself as the party of the poor and the lower middle class.

Guerrero: The argument there was that two businessmen would get together and would certainly protect their own business.

Willens: Do you think that argument did have some impact?

Guerrero: Oh yes. You know, like comparing the poor and the richer. You know the rich become richer. That's how the argument came about. I think sometimes that happened, but it may not happen at another time. But that's how it works here.

Willens: What is your assessment of the first Administration under the new Commonwealth Constitution? I know that your party controlled both Houses of the Legislature and the Executive Branch was controlled by Governor Camacho's party. Did the divided nature of the two branches of government adversely affect the ability of the first Administration to govern?

Guerrero: Well, not necessarily. Although we in the Legislature had a simple majority, on many of the issues you need to have two-thirds vote of the members and we didn't have that. We are very fortunate of course that some of the members from their own political party came in and gave support based on the merit of the issues. But, for instance, in the creation of many of the pillars of our first Commonwealth government, from time to time it was a controversy, but then they came in and showed support. Or say, for instance, a veto from the first governor, Governor Camacho, but then it happens that the Legislature overrides him. Many of the overrides in the first Legislature were what made implementation possible. On a number of issues.

Willens: Do you remember what the important issues were that the leadership had to deal with in the first year or two of the new Commonwealth government?

Guerrero: Well, the first disagreement was about the budget. The unified budget concept. When we drafted the Constitution, we called for a unified and balanced budget. That's exactly one of the major issues when we first got into the Legislature. The Executive Branch has to consolidate and unify the budget and then present it to the Legislature. And not only just the Executive Branch budget without recognizing the other important agencies or departments, but even the Legislature.

Willens: Did the Executive Branch adopt a different course?

Guerrero: Yes. They felt that they had the veto power and that's why we had to take them to court.

Willens: I heard there was a debate or controversy also about the Covenant funds that were allocated to Rota and Tinian and the Executive Branch took issue with whether that was mandatory or not, is that correct?

Guerrero: Well, yes. For instance, the EDA funds that were reserved basically for the purpose of helping the people of Rota and Tinian through their shares of that money. That was one of the issues during those days. You are also right on the distribution of funds under the Covenant. But those were agreed formulas that were discussed by the Covenant.

Willens: I know it's hard to put the politics aside, but I've heard from some of our colleagues that the Commonwealth government really wasn't well equipped to begin governing. For example, I was told that people were not ready to take an order from the Governor. The Governor would issue an order, but the order had to be communicated to an agency director and I've heard it suggested that the machinery of government was something that people were not prepared to direct. What's your sense of that?

Guerrero: Many of the first experiences under the first government of the Commonwealth involved their efforts to operate through executive orders. We in the Legislature felt that it was not appropriate that you could create practically anything by executive order. That's the reason why you have a legislative body, to enact laws and send them over to the Governor for evaluation or whatever. So it would have a check and balance on these things. And sometimes it all depends on the people who are executive officers in the government and have different ideas about operating the government rather than doing it in the most appropriate way or whatever you have to do to go through the legislative process. Many of the issues that we confronted at the time arose from our differences as to what could be done by an executive order. We felt that we have line departments within the government to go through that legislative process and not duplicate services under a different approach. You know that was one of the issues raised during the Constitutional Convention—that we want to make sure that our so-called central government is a strong and manageable government for the people so we would not duplicate agencies or departments within that particular municipality. That's what we delivered during the first Constitutional Convention. We wanted to hold down the size of the municipal government by not establishing counterparts within the municipal government that would duplicate services.

Willens: Was that an issue that came up in the first Administration?

Guerrero: Oh yes.

Willens: Was the Executive Branch and Governor Camacho, in particular, in favor of more instrumentalities of local government?

- Guerrero: Well, not necessarily in favor of more local government instrumentalities. But he wanted to create his own special assistants or executive directors within a particular department through that process. So, it was really a duplication. That's why you have the mayor there. That's why the people elect their own mayors. Then today, of course after the second Constitutional Convention we empowered the mayors to have more authority to oversee day-to-day operations within their own respective municipalities.
- Willens: Do you think that has worked out satisfactorily?
- Guerrero: Yes, it's working satisfactorily. Except the municipal councils that have been created are perhaps another body within the municipal government that is not warranted. But that's what they wanted. They wanted to have at least minimal representation through their own council so the municipality will have a say so within their own community.
- Willens: It's been suggested to me that one of the problems the new Commonwealth government had was that the Trust Territory Administration and the United States government hadn't fully prepared itself for the transfer of authority and there were issues about who was going to use the buildings up on Capitol Hill and other issues of that kind. Do you have any recollection of problems along that line?
- Guerrero: I don't think there was a major issue about who's going to use the buildings. We felt eventually that the Trust Territory would make its facilities available, up here on Capitol Hill or practically any place that they have occupied. Because they were here only on a temporary basis. That's part of the agreement between the Trust Territory government and the District administrations, that once the Trust Territory headquarters is relocated someplace, the facilities would be made available for whatever government remains for the District.
- Willens: Why did you decide not to run for the Senate again?
- Guerrero: Well, in 1979 I decided because I had an interest and had been following up with a previous associate who was now the president of the shipping line called the Pacific Micronesia Orient Navigation Company, the PMO lines. These ex-Matson line executives were coming to set up a shipping line and, since I had been associated with him for many years in the shipping business, he asked me to join him in that particular company in representing an interest in the entire Micronesia. So I was been appointed to be the special representative of the Micronesian islands for this particular line. We set up the shipping line that now is very successful, that has been very successful in providing shipping services to the entire Micronesia.
- Willens: So you decided it was time to leave politics and go back into business?
- Guerrero: That's right.
- Willens: Did you work in that capacity then up until the 1985 Constitutional Convention?
- Guerrero: I worked in that capacity at least up to the point that I became the official candidate for the Republican Party back in 1989. At that time I decided that in order for me to run my campaign more effectively, I had to resign from the company. That's exactly what I did.
- Willens: Okay. To conclude the interview, I'd like to get your impression on a few issues that I know were the subject of a lot of political debate during the recent campaign and get your judgment for the historical record as to what you think have been some of the strengths and the weaknesses of the Commonwealth here under the Covenant and its Constitution. One of the issues of course was the relationship with the federal government. You have told me previously that you think that some of the problems here stem from ambiguity

in the Covenant, the lack of clarity in some of the provisions. What's your thinking now about the best way to deal with Congressman Miller and the kind of Congressional oversight that he and others seem to want to exercise over the Commonwealth?

Guerrero: Well, Howard, as you pointed out very clearly, some of the issues need to be resolved. I'm sure that the major reason why we have section 902 of the Covenant is so at least from time to time the U.S. and the Commonwealth government can sit down and go over some of the areas that perhaps needed to be clarified and try to reach an agreement which would be mutually agreeable and beneficial to both governments.

Willens: Under your administration, you designated the Lieutenant Governor to spearhead those [Section 902] discussions, and based on my limited participation it looked as though you and he were using the 902 mechanism very effectively. Apparently it wasn't satisfactory though to people on the Hill. Is there some different kind of strategy that you think is necessary to deal with Congress?

Guerrero: Well let me just say this, you know that politicians change from time to time, and I think that the policy should not be dictated by just the politicians who are in office today and several years later will be out. I think it is more important to be more precise and be consistent with the intent of the Covenant because that is the basic agreement that we are referring to. When the need for clarification arises regarding different issues, the governments of both sides should consult and try to reach an agreement regarding the clarification or interpretation. I think this is very important for our own self-government as a young government of the Commonwealth. We pledged during my inaugural that I would prefer to use the Section 902 process and that section of the Covenant in trying to bring any differences of opinion or interpretations regarding local government jurisdiction over different issues versus how the federal government should address or should administer those matters. This is basically how we dealt with the Section 902, although under Section 903 in the Covenant we have a process to bring matters to court. But that is not our intention. We prefer to use and exercise that 902 process, so we can consult and discuss it issue by issue. Perhaps we did not accomplish a lot in bringing many issues up for discussion. But at least we brought to their attention what we felt was important and needed to be dealt with. I believe that several of the issues we have discussed have been resolved amicably.

Willens: But there are several current issues that you and now the next Administration will have to deal with. For example, you just signed the law that altered certain provisions of the minimum wage but seemed to commit the Commonwealth to steadily increasing the minimum wage here over a period of several years. Do you think that step will be viewed as an important step toward reaching some compromise with the federal government?

Guerrero: If we are talking about specific concerns, including the issues raised back in 1992 when we were before the U.S. congressional committee chaired by Congressman Miller, there were some issues raised at that time. This particular issue is not new to our Administration. Even before we appeared before the committee in 1992, we had addressed those problems in 1990 when we got into office. Such as it's about time for us to start adjusting minimum wage, how alien labor should be treated, and taxes.

Willens: How about the tax rebate issue?

Guerrero: That's exactly what I am saying. The tax rebate was one area where I was very well aware of the concern of the U.S. Congress. Back in 1978 I met with the late Congressman Burton in his own office and we worked out how we can come up with the best taxation legislation. And try to adopt ourselves into a mirror-image type of tax system such as the IRC. At that

particular time, we were trying to adopt legislation of rather less complexity that would be much easier for our own taxpayers to understand the conditions and provisions of the tax through the abatement type process of our legislation rather than a rebate. But the Congress at the time gave us a so-called grace period for us to enter into that and at the same time for the Commonwealth to come up with the rebate type of taxation, to adopt fully a mirror image tax law. That's what he continued to insist on. Some of our previous legislators felt the Executive Branch failed to follow what needed to be followed. And that's the reason why back in 1983 I recall, he went ahead and introduced legislation in the Congress that required the Commonwealth to make public records available to the Congress. In other words, the names of taxpayers and how much they paid, and rebate for that matter, because he was kind of frustrated over our own local government and the Legislature for not acting in good faith about the so-called mirror-image tax system here. So like I started to say, many of the issues that were raised during the 1992 July 30 hearing back in Washington, D.C. chaired by Congressman Miller had already been addressing even prior to the Congress raising their concern. The most sensitive issue is about the abuse of alien labor here. That's why he wanted to introduce the minimum wage and try to be compatible with the minimum wage law in the United States. Aside from the rebate, there are issues here over the garment factories—with business people coming in from abroad, building up garment factories, employing alien labor here, competing with mainland USA manufacturers, and putting a label of "USA product" on the Commonwealth-produced items. These are the major concerns in the U.S. Congress. They claim that we have some sort of slavery labor here which, in my opinion, is non-existent. Perhaps mistreatment or so-called abuse of some of these alien laborers may be true. But that has been corrected over the years. We have established more stringent regulations that these employers must follow and also have given more opportunity for employees that are being abused or mistreated by their employers to report it to our Labor Department. That's been constantly monitored. Our people have been working very efficiently in trying to correct those deficiencies. No difference with some of the barracks concern, they claim that many of these people are just like slaves because they are being put into some barracks that perhaps do not meet OSHA requirements. Let me go back again to the minimum wage issue. You raised the most recent statute. I signed the amendment. The reason I signed the amendment was because that was never the intent when I created the so-called minimum wage task force. We created a wage review board under the task force's recommendation by way of trying to meet some of the concerns and at the same time recognize that increasing our minimum wage will impact the private sector. And the task force recommendation is to adjust salary over the years, over the seven-year period. We felt that it's also appropriate to make a true assessment of the economic situation or condition of the islands, whether the employers can afford to pay a higher wage from time to time during these years. The Legislature passed that minimum wage bill back in 1992 and it was signed into law in 1993. What went into effect by virtue of that statute meant that ten days later after the first increment of increase in December 20, by January 1 of the following year, they had to increase by another 30 cents per hour. And that had a great impact. The business people should be given ample time for them to make their adjustment, because ultimately whatever increase we impose on the private sectors, no different from the government, a taxpayer will have to shoulder that and eventually would pass it down to the consumer. So that's the reason why I signed this most recent amendment of that statute deferring the second increment until next year in December rather than January. In other words, the law that was signed means that the first increment is still in effect as of December 20—the minimum wage has been increased to \$2.45 from \$2.15—and then the second increment of the increase is one year later. The wage review board established by law would have an

ample opportunity to assess the economy, the economic conditions of the islands, whether it's sustainable or affordable to increase by 30 cents again. They would by statute have to make that recommendation. We have representatives from different groups of people. So by the year 2000, I would say that we would be able to reach the minimum wage of the U.S. standard of \$4.25. But let me say this, in the government sector and perhaps some of the private sector, people are already earning \$3 or \$4 an hour over and above the U.S. minimum wage. So it will really not have much impact today because these people are already receiving that minimum wage in some companies or even the government, where they are getting more than \$3 per hour.

Willens: I appreciate that. Let me just ask you if after at least 22 years in public life, serving as governor for the last four years, you played a central role in the Marianas District Legislature, as the President of the First Constitutional Convention and as a leader in the First Legislature in the Commonwealth, and now as Governor. How do you basically assess the governmental structure that has been established here that has formed the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands? Do you think it has worked and can it work even better in the future?

Guerrero: Oh yes. Like I said, it's a proven fact that the government is working. It's a workable type of government structure, what we created in the first Commonwealth Legislature when we created different departments. Perhaps some of the agencies being newly created by statute could be incorporated into some other department, or the department could have been turned over to the agency, whichever would be more effective to extend services to the people. But overall it's working.

Willens: Have the people benefited do you think by the basic political status decision that they made 15, 20 years ago.

Guerrero: Well sure. I don't think the people are regretting what they chose to become in the nature of a close political relationship with the United States. The people made the right choice and I think what we need is to continue to grow in the years ahead. I think it is important that we have to also make those adjustments as we see necessary. In other words, regarding the relationship with the U.S. government, I hope there will be a more liberalized type of local government for the people—that the local government will be given more authority, from the national to the state to the local. I think that by that process the people will appreciate more of that. Let me say this, Howard, you know it's always nice to come back to the issues that were negotiated at the start, for instance the minimum wage. Everybody agreed, both parties and negotiators, that it was in the best interest of the Commonwealth as an infant government, with the people newly aspiring for their own economic enhancement in the future, not to adopt the U.S. minimum wage. Everybody agreed to that. So why is the U.S. Congress today saying that we have to comply, that we must try to meet and abide with the U.S. minimum wage? When in the first place we were not the advocates for non-compliance. I questioned that in the Fourth Legislature and you know this issue came out. If it could have been reached at the time, perhaps everything would follow and there would be no problem today. But why now? I think and I hope the U.S. government would give us more time, ample time, and try to let the local government deal with that kind of a problem. I think, if the local government would work together in partnership with their own private sector, the industries that we have, I'm sure that it will have a much longer and more prosperous resolution in terms of the economic growth of the island.

Willens: Have you been successful in diversifying the economy here to the extent that you wanted to?

- Guerrero: It's too bad that we have to leave office very soon. We have many of those ideas and plans that we have studied and gone over. In fact, we have looked at the possibilities of trying to diversify our economy so we will not only rely on tourism or the garment industry for that matter. What we would like to see is more of the agricultural and the fishery, because I believe strongly that we have those resources. We can do it here because we have a vast ocean surrounding the islands with many fish. Despite the small size of the island, we could make it productive by new technology such as hydroponic. If it is required, we should develop the land through hydroponic.
- Willens: On a forward looking note, let's terminate the interview. I thank you very much, Governor, for taking the time and supporting this project. I hope that when we complete our work you will find it to be a contribution.
- Guerrero: Well, Howard, I have always valued our relationship, I really admired you in many ways. I respect you for being a very competent and very honest attorney in my opinion and with your profession as a constitutional lawyer and all the background that you have. I think the relationship that we have established is for the interest of our young Government here and the people of the Commonwealth. We thank you very much for all the nice work and a job well done in assisting us here in the Commonwealth. My regards to you and your family. Your wife Deanne also helped us a lot during the Constitution Convention. I valued our relationship. Like I said I value all the good assistance that you have rendered us.
- Willens: Thank you.