

INTERVIEW OF FRANCIS X HEZEL

by Howard P. Willens

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- Willens: Father Francis X Hezel, who manages the Micronesian Seminar in Pohnpei, has written extensively about Micronesia and has very graciously let us use his research facilities over the past several days. Father Hezel, thank you for agreeing to participate in this project. I have tried to explain off the record what Deanne and I are trying to do, and we certainly appreciate the help that you and your staff have provided. I would like to begin by asking you a little bit about your background; where you were born and where you were educated.
- Hezel: I am a Buffalo boy. I grew up in Buffalo, New York. I went to school there, to Canisius High School—a Jesuit-run school. My preference would had been to go to the Christian Brothers School. It was newer and in the suburbs. But my father and my uncle put their foot down. It had become a family tradition almost that the children go to Canisius. Just as we were raised in the Jesuit parish. So I went Canisius High School—to this forbidding place in an old consistory.
- Willens: What is a consistory?
- Hezel: It would have been a mosaic lodge of sorts. It was also famous in that it was the place where the President who was killed in Buffalo died.
- Willens: McKinley?
- Hezel: Yes, it was where McKinley died. This old building was actually part of the administration building at the high school. So it had a certain historical flavor to it. But it didn't make it any less imposing for us students going there.
- Willens: And that was your high school education?
- Hezel: That was my high school education. After that I got a one-way ticket to St. Andrews; that is the seminary.
- Willens: When did you graduate from high school?
- Hezel: I graduated in 1956.
- Willens: And you born when?
- Hezel: I was born January 29, 1939.
- Willens: And you went directly on to further education after high school?
- Hezel: I entered the seminary which meant that I first had two years of spiritual training and things like that. After that we resumed studies and did five years of what would had been college studies. We did two years of classical languages, Latin and Greek, with a little bit of English and History thrown in (very little I might add) and three years of philosophy. So we took a double major in classics and philosophy. We got our degree from Fordham University through its adjunct branch, Shrub Oak.
- Willens: How do you pronounce that or spell that word?

Hezel: Shrub Oak is the name of the town. It's a suburb of Peekskill. But that is where we had our philosophy. It was a new building, all brick and very modernistic for those days, and hated by everybody who went there.

Willens: Where was the seminary located? Was it located in Poughkeepsie?

Hezel: Yes, it was there.

Willens: Which is not near Buffalo.

Hezel: So in 1956 I went to St. Andrews in Poughkeepsie. It is actually Hyde Park. It adjoins the Roosevelt estate. There are many interesting stories about it but I won't go into that now.

Willens: You described the seminary program as being about five years?

Hezel: Two years in the introductory stage, then two years of what we call Junior range that is the equivalent of the first two years of college, and then three years of philosophy. So a five year discounting the first two introductory years, a five-year studies program.

Willens: And that brings us to about 1963.

Hezel: That's right. I just want to say in the course of all that academic work I managed to get my Masters in Classical languages as well. We were also granted a degree in philosophy. That was part of the degree system that we tied into. In 1963 I came out to Micronesia.

Willens: How did it happen that you came to Micronesia?

Hezel: I was sitting alongside the pool one day reading a book of stories on Jesuits. And I was reading about Hugh Costigan who built up the housing coop here in Pohnpei and had a great vision for a school. A school that he hadn't even started building yet. But something that was to open very soon. I was impressed with that and the other stories of 20th Century missionaries. And I thought why can't I do that. On impulse I wrote a letter to the Provincial, our regional superior for the Buffalo Province at that time. The Buffalo Province was split from New York. I told him that I would be happy to work in Micronesia if he decided he needed a person. About three or four weeks later I got a response from him saying, "Thank you very much for volunteering. Please take the physical examination." I took the exam and passed it, and at that point he said you are in.

Willens: What kind of choice did your contemporaries have with respect to their assignment? Were they basically subject to be assigned wherever their superiors thought the need existed?

Hezel: That's right.

Willens: Anywhere in the world?

Hezel: No. It would normally be anywhere in the Province. As a matter of fact it was a little complicated at that time, because the two provinces were split from one another, Buffalo and New York. But right now what that would mean is that one could teach at McQuade in Rochester Jesuit school, Canisius in Buffalo, Xavier High School in New York, St. Peter Prep in Jersey City, and about two or three other places.

Willens: Was it assumed that everyone who received the Jesuit training as you had would teach?

Hezel: Yes, unless there were extenuating circumstances. Unless the person was older or had a study program going on for a Ph.D. before theology which sometimes happened in math and the sciences. That was unusual. Normally you did a Ph.D. program after theology and after ordination. But sometimes it would happen that the person did that during the

- Regency and when that occurred then the person would not go to Regency. When I am talking about Regency, I am talking about that teaching period.
- Willens: So then in 1963 you came out to Micronesia, more specifically to what was then known as Truk?
- Hezel: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: Was it Xavier High School to which you were assigned?
- Hezel: Yes, Xavier High School was staffed entirely by Jesuits. There was a Jesuit brother in charge of maintenance and repair, a Jesuit principal and director, a Jesuit minister of the community. We must have had at least four priests working there at that time.
- Willens: Approximately how many students were enrolled?
- Hezel: We had about 90 or so at that time. As I say, it was entirely Jesuit-staffed and I emphasize that point because things changed radically in later years.
- Willens: At the time you went to Truk in 1963 there was also a school there known as the Pacific Islands Central School, or PICS?
- Hezel: Yes, that was in Pohnpei. PICS had started as PITTS, Pacific Islands Teacher Training School.
- Willens: Yes, I misspoke. I knew it had moved in 1959 from Truk to new buildings in Pohnpei. Did you take any steps as you reached Micronesia to become familiar with the history of the Trust Territory and what the education policies were in the Trust Territory?
- Hezel: No, that was something that didn't concern me a lot at that time. I didn't know where to begin and I wouldn't have had the books available anyway. This was one of the motivations for developing my own library. In those days communications were by mission radio. We were assigned a frequency and we had a little crystal chip designated at that frequency that was inserted and stamped and we could talk to one another that way. The plane came once a week. Communications and transportation were very poor in those days and so we had to pretty much rely on our own resources, much more than we do now.
- Willens: What was the relationship between a private high school such as Xavier High School and the District Administration?
- Hezel: In those days we had a fellow by the name of Pete Hill who was the education administrator. He was not very well liked by the Jesuits there. You have to understand the context. I think a lot of it was that the Jesuits saw themselves as in battle. They saw themselves as being you know the minority, striving for educational excellence and getting no support whatsoever from the government.
- Willens: Could you elaborate on why they felt they were in a battle in that sense?
- Hezel: Well, there was a strict policy of non-support for church-related schools, of course, that was imported here from the U.S. Most of the local people wouldn't have minded having support for religious schools. As an Australian friend of mine puts it, religion is not an epiphenomenon here. He said it is a very important issue in Micronesia and throughout the Pacific. And nobody sees it particularly as something that impairs your judgment or leads to the closing of your educational institutions to other people. They see it as enriching rather than diminishing.
- Willens: You are suggesting that the doctrine of separation between church and state had no particular relevance out in Micronesia at that time?

Hezel: Well, it was certainly the view of the Catholics out here. The Jesuit educators saw themselves as getting the short end of the stick. I don't mean just resources, because really when you think of it nobody had many resources in those days. It wasn't as if the public schools were lavishly endowed. They didn't have a whole lot either. That was the nature of the game up until the later 1960s, once the Kennedy policy became implemented.

Willens: It was about in 1963 that the Kennedy Administration did obtain a significant increase in funding for the Trust Territory and a considerable portion of that was allocated to education. What is your recollection about the reported change in educational policy that came with Kennedy Administration and resulted in this massive construction of new buildings and so forth?

Hezel: To me that's always been fascinating, because I don't remember any huge changes when I was there. Remember I got there in September of 1963, a couple of months before Kennedy was shot in Dallas. That day I remember well, as everybody does I suppose.

Willens: You don't personally remember in the 1963-1964 time frame any change in Trust Territory policy with effect to education?

Hezel: I don't remember any change in policy. What I remember are the concrete things that were going on at that time. I landed there from the States just at the point of the initiation of this whole reform movement. Let me tell what I saw and what I remember. First of all, there were schools being built everywhere, elementary schools.

Willens: There were schools being built?

Hezel: Yes. There were concrete elementary schools being built. One of the vivid memories I have of those first two or three years was schools going up everywhere. The second thing I remember was new teachers. Not those old timers, you know, who had been teaching there before. But these guys coming out with guitars, people who played banjos, you know. People who weren't hippyish as we saw later on with the Peace Corp volunteers. They were sort of a pale image of what was to come in the Peace Corp volunteers. So you had this new wave of younger teachers relocating in these houses on remote islands. Because essentially that was where they taught, taking over the houses that were built for them. J&G Construction Company was building this stuff.

Willens: Who were they?

Hezel: Well, they were a local company, Jones and Guerrero. When I say local company, what I mean is Guam. Jones is a haole who married Guerrero and used her name and developed this company. It is still doing very well up there.

Willens: They contracted for construction.

Hezel: They were putting up these cement block houses. One of the things that I always remember is the redwood water tank. Each house had this redwood water tank so that they had their own water supply. They weren't dependent in any way on the community.

Willens: And those were houses built for the teachers?

Hezel: Yes, for the teachers.

Willens: Just focus on the buildings for a moment, because I recall reading in some of the literature that the program was such a crash program that there were schools reportedly built without toilets and there was serious waste involved in that construction program. Do you have any observations on that point?

Hezel: Well, I was in a couple of these houses. I would not say that they were built without

toilets. The ones that I was in certainly had toilets. There was nothing elaborate about these toilets, just as there wasn't anything elaborate about the shower facilities. But they had that. What they did not have was a real good kitchen. They had no refrigerator, no electrical power. So you see the redwood tank that was mounted up and you got gravity flow. Somehow or other it had to be positioned so that it was getting water falling off the roof but high enough yet to come into the house. So that ended up being a tricky proposition.

Willens: How did the local people respond to the construction of buildings everywhere and the influx of mainland teachers?

Hezel: They loved it. First of all, the construction of the buildings meant jobs for them as local workers. There were some Filipinos who came in. We played basketball with these people on Sunday mornings downtown. I was responsible for helping to start the Xavier basketball team, I want you to know.

Willens: Did you play basketball in your high school and college years?

Hezel: No, I hadn't. I was just a person who took sort of an amateur interest in it. I got to like it, it was a form of exercise and I took it up. People are still amazed when they see me shoot. They wonder how this awkward thing (you know) manages to go in. It does often enough.

Willens: Did the local people see in this new program some deeper meaning in terms of a changed attitude by the federal government towards the Trust Territory?

Hezel: No, they weren't likely to look in that direction any ways. What they are looking at were the concrete results—very much looking at today and not tomorrow down the road. And what they were looking at were (1) the jobs and (2) the fact that these interesting people were coming to stay with them and who knows what they could get from them. Because the Trukese like the Pohnpeians and everybody else have always been tremendously welcoming and hospitable people. And they were indeed to these teachers, life-long friendships were made. The teachers would come in and the people would constantly go to them for help. Not necessarily for money, although sometimes that, but more about teaching my kid how to read. Or can you help me fill out this Sears mail order form, things like that.

Willens: Did you have a feeling at the time that the Micronesian people in that particular community truly wanted to become fluent in English?

Hezel: Yes, they did.

Willens: What motivated that feeling?

Hezel: Because they saw that as the direction of the future. They saw that job opportunities were very much tied to language skills. They saw that what English meant to them was jobs, educational opportunities. And of course both of those things were connected. So the more English they had, the more they figured a person could advance in the education system. The more advanced in the education system, the better the prospects were for employment afterwards.

Willens: The Director of Education for the Trust Territory during the 1950's had a somewhat different sense in terms of training Micronesians to teach Micronesians in the vernacular. Do you have any judgment now as to the merit of that particular philosophy?

Hezel: Well, before I talk about the merit of the philosophy, let me just comment on an irony—I mean the reversal of my position vis-a-vis the government position. When I came out

for the first time in 1963, the official government position had been changed but the educational administrator at that time was still Robert Gibson, who was the spokesperson for the prevailing philosophy—the philosophy of go slow, don't give them more than they need, let them take the reins, don't impose on them. We young Americans on the other hand wanted the whole world. We wanted these people to develop. We wanted these people to see the latest and best movies, learn how to read English, and to be masters of everything that they could master. We weren't particularly concerned with traditional cultures. The viability of the traditional culture was off the screen for my first three years at Xavier. Later on when I came back, I had been sensitized to that concern. By this time it was 1969, 1970 and we had started this huge reversal in the U.S. So I came back to Micronesia and all of a sudden saving the culture became a paramount interest, not only of mine but a lot of people in my generation.

Willens: Let me just get the chronology straight. You came in 1963 and you stayed for three years. And then you returned to the mainland for further education?

Hezel: For three years of theology between 1966 and 1969.

Willens: And where did you go?

Hezel: I went to Woodstock, Maryland. Not to be confused with the site of the famous Woodstock.

Willens: I have seen Woodstock on some of the materials here at the Seminar. When you came back in 1969 did you come back to Xavier.

Hezel: Yes, I came back to Xavier.

Willens: In the same capacity?

Hezel: Yes, I came back as a teacher. This time as a priest and a teacher. But I came back to teach and it was not until 1973 that I took over this school. I became the Principal and Director of the school.

Willens: In 1973?

Hezel: Yes.

Willens: And it was about that time or the preceding year when you established the Micronesia Seminar?

Hezel: In 1969 I brought the Micronesian Seminar holdings to the library with me. I was the last of a line of scholastics from the U.S.

Willens: What does that mean?

Hezel: Scholastics are people who are Jesuits who are not ordained priests. So these would include people who come out and teach for three years prior to ordination. During the period of regency as we call it. So when I came out from 1963 to 1966 I was a scholastic. When I was ordained I was no longer a scholastic, I was a priest. A scholastic simply means someone in study, someone in the route of preparation for ordination.

Willens: You described an attitude that you said you identified with as a young American. And that was the attitude that you brought and lived with for your first three years here?

Hezel: Sure I was teaching, but I got to do a lot of things that I was really [not] competent in. But that is part of the marvelous experience of teaching in Regency. I directed the band and we did John Philip Sousa music. I taught them some calypso songs. They would put rice in coconut shells and shake that. One guy would play the spoons and washboard.

- Willens: Was Xavier still getting a student body from throughout the Trust Territory in the 1963 to 1966 timeframe?
- Hezel: Yes, very much so. One noteworthy fact is that the Palauans consisted almost 50 percent of the enrollment at that time, maybe 40 percent. Palau was 10 or 15 years ahead of everybody else in terms of valuing education. I mentioned I think in *Strangers In Their Own Land* that after the war the Palauans said just help us get the materials and we will build the schools ourselves. They were famous for putting up the schools before they put up their own houses. That is how much they valued education, as a route for achievement.
- Willens: Do you think that was a legacy from the Japanese Administration?
- Hezel: No, I think it was something else. The Japanese certainly helped with this, but I think the Japanese were playing into their cultural hands. There were already certain cultural values and ways of doing things in Palau that were quite established and not threatened by any of these changes. It's not, indeed, even to the present day. And that is what moves Palau, what is at the bottom of values-wise for Palau. In my reading of the situation, what is involved is competition for advancement and the competition involves accumulation of material valuables, i.e., traditional Palauan money. That was what it would had meant. So that warfare is only valuable in so far as it gets you money from the conquered party, not that you take women or land or something like that. And it gets you money; and as you get money, you move up the status ladder. So a lot of it depends on your ranking relative to one another. That has always been the way Palau works. Let me just explain that I think that is an important point. The question that I have asked myself in history for a long time, "Why didn't Palau do what Tahiti and Hawaii did." What Tahiti and Hawaii did, of course, is that a local chief allied himself with Westerners, used their guns and everything, and took over the whole smear. That happened with Pomare IV in Tahiti and Kamehameha in Hawaii. Well, it didn't happen to Ibedul, who certainly had the opportunity to do that, because again and again for a hundred years about the only person who had any contact at all with the British Navy was the Ibedul on Koror. I finally came to the conclusion that he wouldn't have done that. No Palauan would have done that because the game would then have been over. It would mean the end of the game. The competition which meant so much wasn't going on anymore. It wouldn't been continuing anymore.
- Willens: You are suggesting that the process of competition itself was the desired objective?
- Hezel: Yes. It means so much to people that the occupation of power is something. It's not regarded as valuable in Palau as this consistent striving and competition. That's what Palauan society is all about.
- Willens: During the 1963 to 1966 period did you get to Palau?
- Hezel: Yes, I did twice.
- Willens: And did you travel to any of the other districts in that period?
- Hezel: Yes.
- Willens: Did it include Saipan or the Northern Marianas?
- Hezel: No, I didn't go to Saipan until January 1970.
- Willens: Had you traveled to the Marshalls?

Hezel: I went to the Marshalls in 1965. I was there once in the '60's. I wasn't looking at it from the point of view of what was going on politically at that time. Indeed, I really didn't know much about that. I was very interested like everybody else in the development of the Congress of Micronesia. I mean that was big news.

Willens: What was your personal reaction to that decision to create a Territory-wide legislature?

Hezel: I think I was delighted. I was delighted—but from an American point of view—because I thought all people needed a legislature. I remember saying here is the Executive Branch, here is the Legislative Branch, and here is the Senate and the House of Representatives. This is how a bill goes, by joint committees, etc., and here is what a veto means. One of the first projects I ever had in Micronesia was a little book called "You and Your Government". It was just a curriculum package for social studies students at Xavier, no more than 40 or 50 pages in all.

Willens: Had there been a course in civics?

Hezel: Yes, but I revised it.

Willens: Did you get the sense that the local leaders that you knew the best wanted to have the Congress of Micronesia? That the impetus came from the local population rather than from the Department of Interior?

Hezel: The local people certainly did. They wanted a Congress. They were delighted when it was announced that they had the Congress.

Willens: Did they have a particular set of grievances with respect to the Trust Territory at the time that they thought might be better addressed through a Congress of Micronesia?

Hezel: No, I don't think so. I don't really think that there were grievances. I think the grievances developed as the Congress of Micronesia moved along. I am searching, I am scanning for information. The only thing that I can think of (and I heard about this rather than saw it) was that in 1959 or so there was a petition to make liquor available to Micronesians. There were community clubs in each place and only Americans or non-Micronesians could go to these places. There was real pressure put on the U.S. to open these things up, but that is no surprise because it happened all over the Pacific at that time.

Willens: There was also the incident you recall in your book where a group of Palauan women opposed the opening up of the clubs to the local people.

Hezel: Yes, you have a good memory.

Willens: I just happened to see that one this morning. But one of the points you draw from the post-World War II development out here, of course, is the emphasis of the Naval Administration and the Interior Department on creating government instrumentalities beginning with the municipalities and the district legislatures. I am interested in your sense about whether the educated leaders in the community had sort of mastered these tools of self-government and were eager to achieve greater visibility and hopefully power through the Congress.

Hezel: I don't know that they saw that at that time. I think maybe what they saw was that the Congress was a vehicle of expression for their own. I guess I would put it this way—that it was a natural form towards what they had in the past years would evolve. They had the Council of Micronesia, you know, and they had representatives in that. They had more and more of a voice to express themselves during the early '60's. When I say "express themselves" I mean on a territorial basis. They had the district legislatures by that time for several years. The fact that these organizations didn't really have any power didn't matter

so much. People didn't aspire to power at that time; what they aspired to was jobs and to take advantage of the new wealth—to tie in with some of the development programs. The Congress of Micronesia probably created its own windstorm. It probably generated a lot of the subsequent desire or thirst for Micronesian input. If there had been no Congress of Micronesia, perhaps it would have happened anyway. I don't know. The world was changing so quickly at that time. But I often think that the Congress of Micronesia created its own little environment that created added pressures on the U.S. to provide more and more. Not just more jobs; I am talking about more input. It became more and more critical, more and more strident.

Willens: As you know, Dr. Meller and others singled out the Congress of Micronesia as being one of the few important contributors to a possible sense of Micronesian unity. PICS and to some extent Xavier are other forces within the community that could also be so described. One of the interesting points is whether, when you brought people together in the Congress of Micronesia, over time the issues that divided them also became very visible. What is your sense about the extent to which the Congress of Micronesia contributed towards Micronesian unity?

Hezel: How did it contribute to

Willens: Yes, would it be considered as a factor encouraging Micronesian unity?

Hezel: Yes, I think it was. I think it brought people together. Not just brought them together, but together they pondered, you know, which way to go. Together they read newspapers and they listened to the reports of the takeover of the President's office at Columbia University. They went through this whole freedom of speech with the Mario Savio at U.C. Berkeley. You know, they had the experience of watching the world turn. They were asking themselves, "How does this apply to us. Can we mount pressure to get the U.S. to bend. Initially nobody wanted the U.S. to bend?" I don't think that was the name of the game. But when I keep talking about this creating of their own environment, I suppose this is what I mean. That there's input, there are reports coming back from the University of Hawaii, from which most of these people matriculated, about student uprisings and things like that. And then there are aspirations that they didn't know they had until all of sudden they are sitting there one evening talking to these other people. It becomes a cumulative force, you know, that moves them in the direction of self-government. I don't think this would have happened as quickly or as neatly without the Congress. I think I mentioned the irony—the fact that it was ironic in a way. I came out here in the early 1960s; I was full tilt behind the people who were intent on modernizing. The sooner these guys learned English, the sooner these guys learned how deal with escalators, supermarkets and checkout lines, and everything like that, the better off they were going to be. So I never did what one Jesuit had done in the past—to set a dining room table and tell people what to use the second fork for, here is the dessert spoon, and things like that. But almost all of us went a little bit in that direction. By the time I came back I was very conscious of enculturation. Maybe it was partly theology, maybe it was also the spirit of the times. You know that we were self-consciously anti-colonial, and self-consciously trying to support the people's cultural values and traditions. And trying to impose as little as possible.

Willens: Well, was this in part then a sort of reaction to the civil disturbances with respect to the Vietnam war in the sense that we were in Southeastern Asia trying to impose an American system on people who had their own way of life?

Hezel: Yes, I think that helped to raise the national consciousness. But I think it was something that happened all at once. The anti-war protest was as much a product of this as it was a

cause of what was happening in Micronesia. There was a new awareness at that time for whatever reason. I don't think it was all based on Vietnam. It was something in church circles that was related to what had happened at the Vatican Council.

Willens: What specifically at the Vatican Council brought about some change in thinking?

Hezel: The Vatican Council recognized that there was a legitimacy to the common world view. There is a legitimacy to this that is to be taken seriously. It's not to be discarded as something [at odds with the Church]. We can't just unpack our bags and say oh well, we have a theological vision that we would like to present to you people and what your own traditions and values are don't make too much difference really because we are talking about eternal realities. We realized that we couldn't do this. It didn't make a change all at once. But it certainly had an impact on the style and the way in which people approached their missionary work. I am sure that it affected me.

Willens: Let's apply that to your re-examination of the Trust Territory when you returned in 1969. Did you have some sense that more had been lost from local culture and customs then perhaps was necessary and that your previous commitment to progress had been overblown?

Hezel: Yes, I think it was. I think that three years of sitting there at Woodstock away from Micronesia gave me a chance to ponder my mistakes. It gave me a chance to realize that, while I had tried to do good things while I was a scholastic, I also acted very precipitously and I had jumped on the whole modernization bandwagon without thinking too hard about it. By the time I came back remember this is the age of Ivan Illich and his followers. These are the iconoclasts—the people who were knocking down the institutions. The education system, the health care system, you name it. He wrote a book about it. Essentially saying that the Western models are costly and not terribly well-suited for Latin American societies. And that could be extended to other places. It was ironic. Here you were in a situation where we were beginning to realize this. We were also just coming out of a situation in which the U.S. believed that there were no eternal verities. I can make that kind of comparison. Just as the theologians of the past had their eternal verities, the U.S. had its beliefs, its rock bottom beliefs that states needed democratic institutions. That capitalism was almost (what should we say) built into the nature of people. That it had a formula that had to be transmitted to other people regardless of any cultural barriers. Remember what Kennedy said, when he blew the trumpet for the New Frontier. What was the New Frontier about, what was the program? The program was bringing American things and to some extent American people with that can-do spirit across cultural frontiers to places like Micronesia, rolling up their sleeves and saying we got something for you folks. Let this be a token of our great regard for you people. We will instruct you, shabby souls that you are, unequal to the task of developing yourselves. (I am editorializing.) But we bring you the best things that the West has to offer. We bring you a program that can't fail because it is universal. So we believe in universal verities.

Willens: That was certainly a strong message and a set of policies that underlay the Alliance For Progress in Latin America. But out here in the Trust Territory by the time you came back, did you think the wishes of the Micronesian people themselves had changed? Were they resistant to this U.S. message and set of programs?

Hezel: In the 1960s when I left to go back to the States my view was that the Micronesians didn't have a sense of political direction. They didn't know what they wanted. People would come up to us all the time and say, "What do you think is best for us, what political status should we choose?" They had no strong political goals at that time. By the time I returned

in 1969, things were beginning to crystallize. There was much more discussion on the political future than I had ever noticed before. Maybe I was more sensitive to it. No, I don't think so. I think there was a lot more.

Willens: Were you back by May 1969 when Secretary Hickel showed up in Saipan?

Hezel: I was back in September, but actually I read about that.

Willens: By September the Congress of Micronesia had received the final report of its Future Status Commission, which had been assisted by an Australian academic named Dr. Davidson. The Commission report proposed free association or, in the alternative, independence. Do you recall having any discussions about the free association alternative at that time? I know there came a time later on when you wrote about it and had seminars with respect to it. What was your reaction when you first became aware of this as a possible future status?

Hezel: When I first came back, I didn't know much about free association. It seemed to me that somebody picked free association out of a hat. In point of fact it was something. There was one piece of it that everybody was examining and that was the Cook Islands, of course, and New Zealand. If it hadn't been for the fact that this example of free association already existed, I am not sure that we would have stumbled on to it. Because we had been accustomed to putting this as an either-or choice, you know. The road branches out so that you can go this way or you could go that way.

Willens: You mean either independence or assimilation?

Hezel: Or assimilation, right. Here was a new status; here was something that presented dollars which people needed, time which they needed to make a final, ultimate choice, and experience before they jumped into independence. That isn't the way it worked out, of course, but that is what we thought at the time.

Willens: Well, there are those who think it did work out more in that direction than might have been thought possible in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. We were discussing the political status situation in 1969 when you remember it was much more in the forefront of public concern than it had been in earlier years. Did you think at the time that true independence for all Micronesia was economically viable and politically desirable?

Hezel: Economic independence?

Willens: Well, was independence as a status something that could work?

Hezel: Yes. That was the problem. You see, the way we looked at the situation then, we saw economic self-reliance as the big question mark in this whole relationship. We didn't know. There were two logical possibilities. One was that the cost of government could be cut down. By that time I already recognized that it was a mistake. I was looking back on the 1960's with a certain amount of regret, and maybe I wasn't the only one. You didn't see much of this in the press. You didn't even see much of this among Micronesians, who were more than happy to take the money—particularly for the infrastructure that hadn't been built up all those years—and say we will worry about a slowing down later. We will worry about detaching ourselves from dependence on the U.S. later.

Willens: Did you find any support within the Micronesian leadership for the kind of downsizing of government that probably would had been necessary in an independence status?

Hezel: Let me answer that question very concretely and pointedly. Who was the person behind the Micronesian single pay plan in 1969?

Willens: You tell me.

Hezel: Andon Amaraich. And he was also the head of the independence movement. Did he see any inconsistency with this thing, I don't know. But for him you see there was a self-esteem question. This is what is interesting. And the self-esteem thing was and the slogan that was bandied about. I have written about this. The slogan that was bandied about all the time was "equal work, equal qualifications, equal pay". I used to sit in my room thinking that's not true. That's not all there is. There is a fourth dimension in there somewhere. The other dimension is the adequacy or inadequacy, the relative wealth, of the economy that supports these people. I mean they don't exist in a vacuum after all. Doctors get paid so much in Ecuador, so much in Guatemala, so much in the Philippines, and so much in Guam. You know it depends on these factors, the strength of the market and the political economic system in place. I just use that as an example. For him this was a self-esteem question. He wanted Micronesians to be every bit the equal of Westerners and I could believe that. I could subscribe to that. But we were also looking at self-esteem in a different way. We were saying, "How could you hold your heads up? How can you regard yourselves as proud Micronesians, proud individuals in the future, if you are lackeys. You know if you're independent or if you're people who are just political toadies dependent on somebody else. What do you want to be—Puerto Ricans for the next 50, 100 or 200 years." So the sovereignty question came up. What does sovereignty mean, how much can we trade off and still be self-respecting people in the future? I emphasize this because the self-esteem element was a very important dimension of the political question for practically all parties. I mention this because this is the way we link self-esteem. When I say we, I mean people like Bill McGarry who sits up there now at the Jesuit residence at Pohnpei, myself and Jack Curran. The people who were not perhaps officially in charge at that time. The people who were the spokesmen through the church and getting to be sort of this kind of the kitchen cabinet in the church even at that time. This was the way we were looking at it.

Willens: Did you see any examples of island communities or mini-states that really had been successful in achieving that measure of self-esteem that is reflected in sovereignty?

Hezel: Well, maybe it is only fair to add that I am going to have to do some thinking on that afterwards. Now I am primarily concerned with people, particularly psychologists, who are looking at suicide. I am always standing up there saying be very, very careful when you invoke self-esteem. Self-esteem is no more of a concept that travels easily between cultural barriers than some things that I referred to before, such as democracy, equality or human rights, and so forth. There are cultural elements attached to these concepts and there is to this also.

Willens: I am not disputing the importance of self-esteem or disputing anything. I tend to agree with you that it was a very important attribute that motivated those who favored free association, as they came to define it, as well as those who were openly advocating independence. Increasingly people who aspired to free association seemed to think it was an interim step toward independence. The free association style as it eventually emerged included many of the attributes of sovereignty that would be recognized in the international community in my judgment. Many of the people who spoke about independence in the late 1960s and early 1970s thought they had such a strategic value here in Micronesia that the United States or other major powers would be prepared to fund them as an independent nation. Did you have any sense at the time of how people perceived the strategic value of the Trust Territory and whether they thought that was something they could bargain effectively with?

- Hezel: Yes, they did. There was a lot of talk at Xavier among the kids about using this as a bargaining chip. There was no doubt about it, with the Cold War raging at that time. People were saying, “Well, if the U.S. doesn’t pay we will go to the U.S.S.R.; and if they don’t pay we will go to China; if they don’t pay we will go some place else.”
- Willens: What would you say to an observation like that?
- Hezel: Well, I guess deep in my heart I always thought that maybe the Trust Territory was not this valuable. But I didn’t want to pour cold water on their political sentiments at that time. So we pretty much let it pass.
- Willens: But that really is one of the issues you have to confront. Because if you don’t think that the strategic value is marketable in sufficient measure to support an independent government, then you are faced with that other set of problems about where are the resources here and what are the governmental costs that we can afford under independent status. Were those issues getting serious consideration?
- Hezel: Yes, they were getting serious consideration particularly during the early 1970’s. I know that these were issues that came up again and again, even in 1969 and 1970, in our social studies works. “Micronesia a Changing Society” was the first one and then “Micronesia Through the Years.” These were two social studies courses that we did. We put them out for Trust Territory schools. They are hardly used at all anymore, but they had a good run for 10, 15 or 20 years.
- Willens: A commendable run. Why do you think it was that the leadership of the Independence Coalition seemed to find its base in Chuuk?
- Hezel: That is an interesting question, because Chuuk is the most unlikely spot for that. I will tell you why. Without spending so much time and using up all your tape on this, my theory in short (as you probably heard me say the other night) is that Chuuk fell all over itself doing what the German government wanted it to do in the early 1900s when the Germans came in. And they said, okay boys this is our place now and you are taking your orders from us. Yes master, was the response. Okay, hand in your weapons, your guns and they did. The Chuukese were very compliant with the Germans, but the Pohnpeians weren’t. It almost looks like it should the other way around—at least before I had a chance to observe a little more closely the Pohnpeian personality. Why are the Chuukese doing this thing? Because as I told you the other night, I think they recognized they had a need to be governed. I think they recognized that they are—remember our conversation on little units, political rules for self-government in traditional times—and I said that the Chuukese were masters of the negotiated settlement. But they knew nothing whatsoever about paramount chiefmanships. Forget about paramount chiefmanships, any kind of chiefmanships that really matter, where a chief had a sway over considerable amount of land even if that land was only one little island in Chuuk. It didn’t happen because they were divided into little districts or “sopw” the Chuukese would call them. So all of this meant that the Chuukese had no mechanisms for governing large groups. When they had large scale inter-district warfare, they needed somebody to come in and to create sort of a settlement. The Germans did this.
- Willens: So bring it up to the present time.
- Hezel: Well, the Chuukese never lost that need, that psychological dependence on an outside power to come in and say this is the way things are going to be.
- Willens: So that would be a natural for commonwealth?

Hezel: Sure it would have been. Why the independence movement emerged from this I don't know. Let me just mention one other thing in connection with this. The other thing that is important about Chuukese is that a lot of their personal relationships are client relationships. This is the point that I emphasize to teachers and counselors again and again. A client relationship, meaning that we in the West think of it as somehow demeaning to put ourselves in a position where we have to defer to somebody else. And we have to be that person's lackey or we have a valet or chauffeur relationship to that person or our client so that we are regarded as a hanger on. Like one of the Elvis Presley Graceland's group. We think of this as demeaning to put ourselves in this kind of a relationship. The Chuukese don't. For Chuukese the way a conversation starts is "Could you give me this?" or "Can I borrow that?" or "You are so wealthy or so smart, could you help me out on this sort of thing?" So a request for help is actually the first move often in establishing a relationship with Chuukese. At first I didn't notice this. You know, I thought to myself God, these guys are a pain in the ass. They are constantly after you for things. Then I realized that no, this is a pattern. It's a pattern of something that they do. It's a way of establishing a relationship.

Willens: I still don't understand.

Hezel: No, this is still the *au contraire* part. This is piling on reason after reason for saying this shouldn't be, this emergence of the independence movement from there. I am as surprised as you are, and I was as surprised then. The only other thing I can say about that is that the independence movement was always a very small force in Chuuk. Outside of Chuuk it was a much larger force. Secondly, it depended on the force and the personality of two individuals, maybe three individuals. Two of these people (Tosiwo Nakayama and Andon Amaraich) plus Hans Williander.

Willens: I heard from a young American who was present at some meetings in Chuuk when these leaders spoke to their people. He recalls the presentations being very forceful, elegant but quite abstract. And he sensed that in fact the constituents were not able to understand, much less to agree with, the kinds of direction that their leaders were advocating. But the leaders were performing as leaders; namely, we have reached these judgments and we're asking for your confidence that the direction which we want to go is in our interest. Does that make sense to you?

Hezel: It does. But there was a big force in Chuuk itself that was very much anti-independence. In fact, it was called an anti-independence movement. I used to listen when I was in Tol in 1972 and 1973 on the radio to speeches by Tosiwo Nakayama and then Nick Bossy. And then Tosiwo and Nick Bossy again.

Willens: Nick Bossy defeated an incumbent in 1974 for re-election to the Congress of Micronesia. And one question that has come up is whether that defeat was a reflection of his advocacy of independence.

Hezel: Partly that. But you know it partly was a lot of things. Because in 1974 there were little kids that use to sit outside the Bayview Restaurant, downtown Chuuk, and count the number of cars. How many were owned by more lackeys and how many were owned by people from the lagoon.

Willens: Would you elaborate on what that means?

Hezel: Okay. What I mean is that there was very much a consciousness of "us and them" at that time. The "us and them" wasn't foreigner vs. Chuukese; it was the guys that owned the

place. The people from the lagoon were the owners and the outsiders were the people who moved in. And the principal group of outsiders, the principal target were Mortlockese.

Willens: That is the name?

Hezel: The Mortlockese is a name of a group. That's where Andon Amaraich is from. He is a Mortlockese.

Willens: Wasn't Bailey Olter?

Hezel: Bailey Olter is an outer islander, yes. Outer islanders have always been high achievers relative to people who are district center islanders. They have more at stake. They don't have land to fall back on and they had to make a go of it with their education and so on.

Willens: So there was some growing resentment of the positions that had been achieved by the outer island people?

Hezel: Yes, at that time. I don't why it would have happened in 1974 but it did. Around 1974, 1975 there was very much of a backlash against the Mortlockese.

Willens: I may have my districts messed up here, but was John Sablan the District Administrator of the Truk District at that time?

Hezel: That's right.

Willens: He was a Chamorro by family and there is some sort of debate in the literature as to whether placing a Micronesian from one district in charge of another district was supportive of an overall sense of unity or was counter-productive. Did you have any sense of how that system functioned in the real world?

Hezel: I don't know. I never heard anybody bad-mouth John because he was a Micronesian from another place. Just as the Chamorros assumed that they were superior to everybody else, everybody else assumed the Chamorros were superior to them. So if you couldn't have an American, the next best thing might be a Chamorro. You didn't have any Japanese left, you know. The next best thing might be to get a Chamorro. And the people didn't seem to resent it. There was a lot more fuss following him when Mitaro Dennis came in as District Administrator. He was a Trukese, he was from Udot. A very nice, personable, quiet guy. But even so, he ran into some opposition. Not a tremendous amount of opposition but you know this is to be expected, because it is harder for the local guy to do that sort of thing. I think that is why the Trukese tended to shrug it off. You know, if it had been a Palauan or somebody else they would have said, "Well you know, maybe it's better that we have one of these than if we have one of our own." There would always be political figures that would stand up and say, "No, this is not fair, this is not right to have somebody else in charge of us. We should be doing this ourselves." But that didn't happen. I mean, it would have been a minority position anyway.

Willens: There is an occasional reference in the documents to the effect that Xavier High School was sort of a focal point for independence. Did you find the school was ever challenged by the TTPI Administration, the Department of Interior or other U.S. officials because it was believed to be participating in political matters?

Hezel: They wouldn't dare because the State Department was on them.

Willens: Was on whom?

Hezel: Well, it was on the Interior Department. It has always been the watch dog for the Interior Department and Defense here. This goes back to the turn of the century. I don't know if your documents go back that far.

- Willens: No, they don't.
- Hezel: There was a time when the Navy Department simply wanted to take over the place, after the Spanish American War, and the State Department said, "No, we can't. It is not going to look good." I noticed even in the stuff that was going on in Washington after the war that the State Department was always the most liberal of the other departments. The Defense Department was saying, "This is our territory, we don't care what they think. We paid for these islands in blood," and so forth. So you always had that little tension there between these different departments.
- Willens: Once the status negotiations began between the United States and the Micronesians in 1969, did you feel that the school had to adopt any particular posture of neutrality on these issues so as not to endanger its status?
- Hezel: No. I never felt like that at all. I never felt that we were under the knife. I never felt that anybody was checking. Actually people were a little bit proud of Xavier when they would come out and call for independence. There was never a unified call for independence. There were people like Cisco Uludong who led the charge.
- Willens: You told us recently that you married Cisco and his wife. I don't recall meeting him, although I might have briefly once early on. What was your evaluation of him in the early 1970s?
- Hezel: Cisco was a freedom fighter. I mean Cisco was been at home with his wife and with those people in the liberation front or whatever organization. He was sort of a Micronesian, no, I was going to say Micronesian Huey Newton, but he's not. He wasn't violent at all. He talked tough but he was actually a very gentle person. Although he did become strident when he was at the University of Hawaii. He almost got himself kicked out for protests and so on. He ended up publishing. He did a great service (I think) because he published part of that Solomon document.
- Willens: Do you know where he got that document?
- Hezel: I was told it was Tom Gladwin, who was at the University of Hawaii at the time in the Anthropology Department.
- Willens: I know the name. Gladwin provided him with the document?
- Hezel: That is what I heard. Now that is just hearsay, you know.
- Willens: Gladwin was active and came to the Congress of Micronesia from time to time to suggest that the models of China and Tanzania might be useful for the Micronesians to study. Did you have any dealings with Dr. Gladwin?
- Hezel: I had a lot of dealings with him. It started off when I was in theology. We would go over every month to his house for dinner. When I say we I mean the Micronesian guys, the people who had been to Micronesia. We would go there and would have.
- Willens: In part of your career is this?
- Hezel: This is theology. This is 1966-1969.
- Willens: Where was he?
- Hezel: He was in Washington. He was working on a book, the book that he did on navigation, "East of the Big Bird." The subject really was a big one. What he was looking at was what are distinctively Micronesian forms of cognition. How do their minds in the circuitry work? Can we deduce anything from the way in which they practice navigation? Well, he

wrote an add-on chapter to this book he did on navigation. The book on navigation was excellent. The add-on chapter was ridiculous.

Willens: I never read it. So he was in Washington while you were in Maryland and you got together?

Hezel: We would get together every month. We would go to dinner at his house and then we all go marching off to this Washington Anthropological Association meeting and hear somebody talk about tombstones. And that was it. We would say our goodbyes and we would do the same thing again next month. Gladwin was a very serious person. He had become a Catholic when he was instructed by Bishop Kennally, and took it very seriously. When I knew him most of his kids were going to Catholic University in Washington. His wife was all involved in retreat movements and the various kinds of religious things in school. Gladwin was a real zealot.

Willens: How did he begin to take a turn here that sounds, if I may use an outmoded word, somewhat radical?

Hezel: Well, there were a couple of things that happened. He did work for Jesuit missions for a year. He was working in New York for either the Jesuit Seminary Mission Bureau or perhaps it was just the Jesuit Mission itself. The Jesuits at that time were trying to work out ways in which they could collaborate more with informed lay people and he seemed to fit the bill particularly in respect to Micronesia. We were looking at ways in which we could acculturate and assimilate, localize (you know) to avoid use of jargon. Well, I guess that is all jargon. In which we could begin to embrace, first of all to understand and recognize, and then to embrace some of the values that we found in these cultures, if we wanted to. And Gladwin was a special help here. But they brought him on to the Philippines and had him do a project at the Ateneo de Manila. That is a Jesuit place.

Willens: Say that again.

Hezel: He was working at the Ateneo de Manila. It is the flagship Jesuit university in the Philippines. We have five Ateneos and this is the largest and most prominent. He went to the Ateneo de Manila and looked at ways in which he could made some suggestions for its improvement and greater effectiveness. He was brought out as the expert, but he sort of stepped into a snake pit because at that time hostilities were just beginning between the Americans and the Filipinos. And between the social activists and the school people. So he had these two little battles going with crossfire there. He got caught in that and people looked at him and said, "Who is this guy to tell us what to do and how." So he went back very disappointed at the poor reception that he got. This jaundiced him. I don't think it really led to his forsaking Catholicism, which he did later, and forsaking anthropology. But it was a time of disillusion for him. He was a person who was 100 percent, quick in his enthusiasms, a characteristic embedded in American culture. I really believe this to some extent. I think it is possible to exaggerate, of course, but we do have a tendency to jump on the bandwagon and to ride that for awhile, and then jump off and get on another one. It brings to mind the thing that Peter Berger said. Now Peter Berger may not be the best person to cite for this thing, because he was regarded as a bit of a conservative when I was going through theology. But I always remember him quoting Canon somebody or other to the effect that "He who marries the spirit of the age will soon become a widower." And I think that is what happened to Gladwin. I think Gladwin was forever marrying the spirit of the age. He was always getting into whatever sort of a thing was coming along. When he came to Truk he noticed that the people were religious, and he joined the bandwagon. Later on in the late 1960s when all the flak started flying about a new age, the

whole counter-cultural movement and the anti-Vietnam movement, he jumped on that bandwagon. And eventually he forsook his anthropology and he turned over his books. He fancied himself a political scientist for awhile and then I think he gave up on that too. Then he developed a case of Alzheimers much later and the last I heard he was in Florida some place or other. His wife had left and his children had left the church.

Willens: How did it come to be that he was retained by the Chuuk delegation to the Congress to assist them?

Hezel: He spoke Trukese. And they could see that he was a very interested and passionate person. He said all the right things. He got to be an itch as time went on, more of a liability than an asset. I don't know what Andon said about this, but I think if you were ever able to get Andon and Nakayama drunk they would probably say that. Because I am sure that's the way the situation developed by 1972 or maybe 1973.

Willens: How did introducing someone like Dr. Gladwin impact the efforts of the Congress of Micronesia through its joint committee to take a single negotiating position. What was your sense of Chairman Salii and the Joint Committee, which comprised so many strong minded people with different views?

Hezel: Salii, of course, was a free association person from the start. And he never dumped that as far as I know. I mean he was committed to it and he got in trouble early on for doing the same thing that he did in Palau later on. And that's incidentally what the Governor here seems to be doing. He lost his confidence in the people. When I refer to Salii as arrogant, what I mean was that he didn't believe that the people had the brains or the practical wisdom to go with what was the best idea. I think he always felt that there are certain elements of the truth that are accessible to people like him but that the man in the street doesn't have.

Willens: How about his political situation in Palau? Didn't that make him somewhat vulnerable?

Hezel: Yes.

Willens: In the Congress?

Hezel: I know. but I don't understand how the politics of Palau work anyhow. I never understood how he kept getting elected. Never understood, still don't.

Willens: Did you see him interact with people like Andon?

Hezel: I didn't see them, no. I heard about it and read about it. I didn't see the relationship between them. I only had a sense that at one time early on he was happy Andon and Nakayama took the independence line. Because you see what he was doing was that he was starting negotiations at that time. And he was in position where he was going to say "Look, you want me to keep these guys over here on the left in line you got to offer a much better deal than you are now." So that would give him additional negotiating leverage with the U.S. Until the time that independence became a real challenge to the free association position. There was something I vaguely remember about it becoming real, but I can't remember when this was or how it was resolved.

Willens: In August of 1972 at a special session of the Congress in Pohnpei, the Congress heard a report from the Joint Committee about the status negotiations and revised the instructions to the Joint Committee. The Congress instructed the Joint Committee to negotiate for independence at the same time that it was negotiating for a compact for free association. This was a significant change in instructions and, when it was communicated to the United States in October of 1972, Ambassador Williams and Chairman Salii basically

agreed that the negotiations could not go forward. Ambassador Williams said he had no instructions with respect to negotiating independence. The Micronesians would not provide further illumination on what they meant by these changed instructions and so an impasse was reached. Which many think caused a very substantial passage of time and loss of opportunity. There were others on the Micronesian side (including their counsel) who thought that notwithstanding these changed instructions the United States should go ahead and continue negotiating the compact. And for reasons that are somewhat unclear the United States refused to do that. It created quite a stir back in the Executive Branch. So it did come to a head in a very dramatic fashion and one of the things we are exploring is was this impact anticipated and was it desired? Does that refresh your recollection in any way as to how the independence advocates sort of ended up bringing the negotiations to a standstill more or less for some time?

Hezel: But they faded away, didn't they?

Willens: Who?

Hezel: The independence advocates.

Willens: That seems to have been the case, yes, indeed. I don't know why though. Do you have any sense of that?

Hezel: No, what happened was the passage of time ultimately strengthened the free association side. Although it did lead to this horrible delay that you talk about. Actually the delay might have been important though. Another point that we insisted on again and again was that you've got to get a constitution in place before you work out the final details on this free association thing. Your constitution is the backbone of the government. And a lot of what we were saying then, was not by any means generally accepted by the people at that time. They would say that the basic document is the Compact of Free Association. We were saying well, no, it shouldn't be.

Willens: That is a very interesting issue. Guam for at least two decades was sort of unable to decide whether it should negotiate its future status before it turned to its constitution or should the constitution be drafted before it sought to revisit its political status. You could go either way. Your sense was that the constitution was the basic legal document of a sovereign nation and since that's where you thought the people should end up it . . .

Hezel: Remember we were talking not just about me, but remember by that time certain alternatives had been eliminated. In one of the very first sessions of the negotiating teams, they eliminated the U.S. desire for control of land and law. And they later on objected to the commonwealth status. And articulated later on the four principles about what the Micronesian governments would have to maintain.

Willens: Do you know where those four points originated?

Hezel: No, I don't.

Willens: Do you know of any external advisors who participated in their drafting?

Hezel: There was an external advisor. I am trying to think of who that was.

Willens: There were a couple.

Hezel: It wasn't Robbins was it?

Willens: I can mention a couple of names. Dr. Davidson was involved.

Hezel: Jim Davidson.

- Willens: Was it Jim?
- Hezel: Yes, from Australia.
- Willens: Another one was Gene Mihaly. Do you remember Gene Mihaly?
- Hezel: No, I don't.
- Willens: He worked about 18 months as an advisor to the Joint Committee and ultimately recommended that they hire Washington counsel. But Mihaly was involved with Salii in some of the early sessions with Ambassador Williams. Your sense was that the four principles were principles that embraced and defined a status objective that you thought acceptable?
- Hezel: Yes, what this said to us was that we are willing to negotiate for free association, we will negotiate for nothing less than this. Maybe if free association doesn't turn out, we will go for independence. In any case, we are talking about a status that may or may not contain sovereignty. What we were calling sovereignty at that time, although it was disputed as to what precisely sovereignty meant. We were saying that as long as Micronesia was interested in either free association or independence then you didn't even have to consider the possibility of having the constitution be ineffective in determining what the U.S. would be willing to, or what Micronesia would be willing to, negotiate on. It should be some sort of definition or resolution of this before the compact of free association is spelled out. Particularly now that the commonwealth alternative was excluded.
- Willens: Did you ever meet Ambassador Williams?
- Hezel: Yes.
- Willens: In what context and how often?
- Hezel: I met him once. Once was enough.
- Willens: When was that?
- Hezel: It could have been 1972, 1973 I am not sure. I was at Xavier at the time but I was there for a number of years.
- Willens: Did he visit Chuuk for some particular reason?
- Hezel: Yes, he visited Chuuk. I think it might have been 1972 or 1973. I am not absolutely sure. It could have been as late as 1974. Although I think it might have been earlier than that.
- Willens: Had the separate negotiations with the Northern Marianas already begun, if you remember?
- Hezel: I don't know.
- Willens: Was he in Chuuk for some kind of a District Administrator's conference?
- Hezel: I don't remember what brought him here. But I think he came in part to talk to the Bishop. He came to talk to the Bishop about a document, a letter that the Bishop put out to the Micronesian people.
- Willens: What was that?
- Hezel: The letter was a general pastoral letter. It was a short one as I remember, advising the people to prepare well for the political status choices that they had to make. And to remember that they couldn't just relinquish all responsibility for their islands and for certain ethical issues that were related to warfare or peace by turning over the islands to the U.S. By saying that, "Oh, the U.S. is in charge of that." They had to look at this situation ethically

and ask what are the chances of the U.S. declaring an unjust war like the Vietnamese War. This was the implication, although that was not stated. Of course, people read between the lines and said, "Yes, something like this perhaps." To take a farfetched example, the Bishop was saying, "Can you really allow your air bases to be launching pads for B-52 bombers to bomb Hanoi." That was unlikely to happen you know since none of these air bases were long enough for a B-52 anyway.

Willens: Did you have any role in drafting the letter?

Hezel: I was not the principal architect of the letter, but I had a minor hand in it.

Willens: And it's your recollection that the pastoral letter precipitated the visit?

Hezel: All I remember is that Haydn Williams made a great point of seeing the Bishop and talking to him about that pastoral letter. Essentially warning him about being misled. Not by the likes of me, I wasn't leading the Bishop in one direction or the other. I don't think I was influential enough at that time to do so. There were other Jesuits who were though, like Bill McGarry. Haydn Williams was warning the Bishop to not be misled, to not misunderstand. "I think I told you the other night not to think in terms of the 18th century French definition of sovereignty," is the way he put it. He said, "Are you thinking of the French?" The Bishop didn't have a clue as to what the 18th century French concept of sovereignty was.

Willens: Were you present at the meeting?

Hezel: No, I knocked on the door at one point figuring the Bishop might be grateful for a little bit of help. But I was met with a stony glare, you know.

Willens: Did they just meet one-to-one?

Hezel: Yes, they met one-to-one.

Willens: So was it after that meeting that you met Ambassador Williams?

Hezel: Yes, I met Ambassador Williams for the few seconds that I was there and I met him afterwards also.

Willens: Did you discuss the letter with him?

Hezel: No, we didn't discuss anything at all. I don't think that he ever felt that I had sufficient merit or status for him to waste his time talking to me. I think he put one of his men on that job. We chitchatted.

Willens: You told me earlier that you had began to go to Saipan on a somewhat regular but infrequent basis in the early 1970's.

Hezel: Yes, in 1970.

Willens: Was there any particular reason associated with your work that took you to Saipan?

Hezel: The first time that I went up there in January 1970 was while I was going to Guam. My friend, Dick Becker, said, "Come up to Saipan with me you will never regret it." And he was right, I didn't. It was a whole new world. It was the world of the government. I wouldn't call it bureaucracy, it was tremendously interesting. I mean to be in Capitol Hill. I remember the song "Killing Me Softly with His Song", Roberta Flack. I remember driving along Beach Road and along Middle Road there on the way to Capitol Hill. It was an exhilarating feeling.

Willens: Was that because you contrasted it sharply with Chuuk?

Hezel: Yes, I had island fever from Chuuk and this was a much bigger world. You know, we talked about what the kids got in their math tests and things like that. There wasn't much intellectual conversation. There wasn't a whole lot on Micronesia, on the larger picture. But that was all I did when I got to Saipan. I was talking to people about planning projects. I was talking about social projects. We were talking about infrastructural development and naturally there was political stuff. The reason I kept coming back again and again was because of the education projects, the curriculum projects that I began working on at that time. Two curricula for the high schools that I mentioned before. And after that it was curriculum council meetings and after that it was library meetings. But there was always some reason that brought me up here.

Willens: Were they soliciting your advice and input with respect to TTPI educational material?

Hezel: I came up first with a proposal to them. I decided that I would like to do a social studies course for the high school, myself and a Peace Corps volunteer. So we presented this to the Director of Education at that time, and he looked at it, talked to some people about it, and finally agreed with it. So did John Richard, who was the social studies specialist, and with the Director's consent we began working on the project. We finished in about a year. We spent the summer doing a revision of it and the final edit. We had the thing typed up and put out. We ran a workshop the following year for teachers on how to use it. So you see, there were things that were going on for two years while I was doing that curriculum work.

Willens: I want you to focus on that for the moment. You were then dealing with a very wide range of TTPI officials?

Hezel: I was doing most of my work in the education department. There was Norm Smith, Len Kaufer was there at the time, he was still a Jesuit. There was Burl Yarberr as I said, David Ramarui, Felix Rabauliman was in the office, Pete Temengil, Ed Temengil.

Willens: What was your assessment of the TTPI officials at the time and the way they implemented their responsibilities?

Hezel: I wasn't in a position to make a judgment at that time. They were very kind to me and very warm. I was at that time 30 or 31 years old. I had not much experience in Micronesia. I was gratified that they were willing to hear me out on a project and allow me to try the project. I didn't come in with a particularly strong hand, as I would have some years later. I had no track record at all at this time. So I was really interviewing for sort of my first job.

Willens: Did you meet any of the Marianas political leaders in the course these visits to Saipan in the early 1970's?

Hezel: I met a few of them. I met Olympio Borja, whom I had met before, and Joe Tenorio through business. Dr. Palacios I knew because he had a son going to Xavier. And I knew his son rather well.

Willens: Which son was that? Rex.

Hezel: No, it wasn't Rex. It was Ramon, no, I forgot his name.

Willens: Do you remember any conversations with Dr. Palacios about future political status?

Hezel: No, but I remember that he seemed to be rather sympathetic towards the rest of Micronesia. I always remember feeling comfortable with him politically. Not that I saw him too much, a couple of times really was all.

- Willens: As you know, in 1972 the United States agreed to separate status negotiations with the Northern Marianas. Did you have any reaction at the time to that particular decision?
- Hezel: Well, the students at Xavier did.
- Willens: What happened?
- Hezel: We had the old Trust Territory flag. Remember what the flag was like, with the six stars? Somebody ripped off one of the stars. They sewed it back on later, you know when Kosrae was made a district about four years after that. But yes, there were strong feelings at Xavier at the time. I thought that Saipan would become a commonwealth and betray Micronesia. That was the feeling of many people at that time. Oh, they are only interested in money or they are only interested in themselves. Or they have always looked down on us Micronesians. That was the way it was put. I mean for sure there were tensions for sometime between the Marianas and the rest of the TT.
- Willens: What kind of tensions are you recalling?
- Hezel: Well, I mean the feeling that, well let's go back a year or two. It's 1971 at Mt. Carmel School. Do you know anything about Mt. Carmel School?
- Willens: Not for this purpose, I don't think so.
- Hezel: See Mt. Carmel School had a big dormitory. And the "creme de la creme" would go to school there. They would be put up in the dormitory. I mean the "Who's Who" of prominent women in Micronesia, just like the "Who's Who" of the men would be at Xavier. This was the female counterpart of Xavier. Well at that time they were working on two issues as I remember. There was a matter of who would be valedictorian for the graduation and a question about invitations to some kind of a party. The big issue was the choice of the valedictorian, and at that time it happened that a Micronesian girl (and I honestly don't remember who it was) had the highest average and everybody felt that she should be the valedictorian. But the decision was made not to make her valedictorian. One of the Mercendarian sisters who was also a dorm prefect at the high school suggested that they have a walk-out by way of protest. And so they marched around much to the consternation of the priests on the island. The kids had a walk-out and a walk-around. They had signs and all this stuff protesting the injustice in not giving this position to a Micronesian, this honor to a Micronesian student.
- Willens: Were they all girls who did the protesting or were the boys angry also?
- Hezel: No, it was the girls. It was just the dormitory students. Well, how the other issue figured I don't know—maybe it was class rings, maybe it was invitations. My memory fails me. But the authorities went out and took pictures and when I went to stay the next time they had these big 8 x 10 glossy photos all over their dining room. They were lampooning the efforts of the sisters leading this walk-out because it was an attack on authority. But it was also an attack against the established Chamorro, if you want, order.
- Willens: Was the Micronesian going to be subordinated then to some local girl?
- Hezel: That's right. The decision was made to give the position to somebody else—the honor of being valedictorian. There was much ado about this and, if it hadn't been 1971, it would probably have been handled differently. If it had been, let's say 1984, but that was 1971. Those were the kinds of things that happened and that reflects the polarization that occurred in those days.
- Willens: By some of the criteria we were discussing earlier, the voluntary choice of commonwealth under U.S. sovereignty must have struck you as counter-intuitive.

Hezel: Yes, it did.

Willens: Not immoral?

Hezel: It did. There was a reaction among the Jesuits. Most of the Jesuits had a reputation for nurturing independence—to release the spirit of independence if not in fact that particular political choice. And we took it hard. We had the Red Mass at Mt. Carmel. I happened to be up there at the time and I felt like a traitor when I had to explain this afterwards to people. When was that, 1975 or 1976 when they signed this thing? I felt as though I betrayed my fellow Jesuits because, you know, they all said, “You went to this thing.” I said, “Well, the people have spoken. They hadn’t said what I would have liked to hear them say, but they made their choice.” I have always felt that once they made a political decision it’s time then to give them the old bear hug and say, “Look, I will be around to do whatever we can for you.” I mean, I felt that strongly.

Willens: Did you feel the decision was motivated largely by materialistic goals?

Hezel: In large measure. What else would it be motivated by? There’s not too much principle on the side of the Commonwealth except time, if people perceive themselves as relatively inexperienced and needing the opportunity to develop. Pretty much in fact what should have happened with free association and independence. There was a way station towards this. I guess there was if you saw this as a practical necessity to gain time, but it didn’t seem to be that. It seemed to be pretty much well, we have gotten used to what we have gotten used to. Our history is different from your history and we may have ties like the Chamorros who are in Yap and certain historical ties. But what cuts even deeper is our association with our cousins and so forth in Guam. And some of the strong differences the 200 years of Spanish colonization meant. In fact when the Japanese were here we were regarded as third class citizens.

Willens: If the Northern Marianas had reintegrated with Guam would that in your opinion had been more understandable?

Hezel: I suppose it would have because it would have been easier to justify this as, “Oh, well, blood is thicker than anything else.” I guess it would have been an excuse, because I don’t think from what I have always heard that they ever had been on particularly strong and friendly terms. But it would have made it easier to justify this from a principled point of view. Looking at it from the position of years afterwards, I am not so sure that it was a bad choice. It was a different choice. The only thing that I wished is that people had considered much more seriously the matter of independence and some of the other alternatives. Maybe this is doing an injustice to them in the political education program (in which you probably were involved). But I wished they had considered the alternatives more seriously. Rather than take a real fixed lock into the Commonwealth status as quickly, look at the different options and get a strong sense of the pros and cons of each one. That was one thing I wished. The other thing I wished was that they had looked more seriously at the social fallout—the social implications of their choice. I wish this in the case of all governments and all peoples. What can we expect of institutions like the family, what can we expect of social organizations, what changes can we expect down the road that are going to change life so drastically. And, of course, that was very much of a failure in the 1980s here, but even more so I think in Saipan with the garment and tourist industries and the social changes. I am not talking about the pavements and the number of hotel buildings and stores and things like that. I am talking about the social order.

Willens: I understand that, and I think it is an important point. It was a rare person who could have projected the kind of economic development and its social consequences that the

Marianas has seen over the past twenty years. One issue that seems to have separated the Northern Marianas people from the other districts was the extraordinary value that they found in U.S. citizenship. It was based in part with their familiarity with Guam and the fact that the U.S. passport gave them ease of movement to and from Guam and to the mainland. But it also seemed to have been wrapped up with a set of other objectives associated with the availability of education and medical facilities.

Hezel: Exactly.

Willens: Mobility leading to better opportunities for advancement. And that is somewhat of a different package of values that I think can't be completely characterized as materialistic in substance.

Hezel: I think since then I have come to see a little bit more of that when you talk to some of these people from Saipan. They know more Jesuits in the States than I do. Many of them have gone to Creighton, Marquette or one of these places. They have planes flying that direction. It is amazing how much interchange there is between the Marianas and Stateside. It is part of their world. It is much more a real part of their world than these islands here.

Willens: All that does I suppose is highlight the differences among the districts that many people have written and commented about. The records in the Congress of Micronesia reveal a growing sense of divisiveness (if that's not too strong of a word) among the districts as they began to address some of the concrete problems of living together as six districts with their different interests in economic development, their different assess to revenues, the different roles of tribal chiefs and so forth and so on. Some people have suggested, indeed the former Secretary of Interior, Mr. Hickel, whom we have talked to recently, thought that he could have swept all of these differences aside if he could have persuaded the people in the Trust Territory to all come into the United States. That there would be a way to work out these differences. What is your sense of that?

Hezel: I think he's talking about the wrong people, not the people I know. I don't know what his take was when he was here, but that wouldn't have happened. It wouldn't have happened, it would have been frustration. It would have been that these people here maybe would have grown to love the American system. I don't know. They live comfortably enough under it now in some places. But it would have denied them something that they needed, which was the chance to run their own place. If nothing else, the chance to thumb their nose at the colonialism of the past. Maybe people need that. Maybe people when they are growing up need this period where they shake their fist at their father, and do that sort of thing. Maybe we need this, I don't know. Maybe it's a need that some people feel. I suspect that the people here needed that rather strongly after running through four colonial governments in a row.

Willens: People in all of Micronesia—in all six districts?

Hezel: At least people in the FSM, Palau, and the Marshalls.

Willens: How do you assess now the separatist movements that materialized in the Marshalls and in Palau? Let's take the Marshalls first. There are some who think the Marshalls were always going to go their separate way in order to retain full control over the Kwajalein lease money. Did you have a sense of the leadership's views in the Marshalls during the early 1970's?

Hezel: No, I was surprised and disappointed. I was very disappointed that the Marshalls split and that Palau also split actually.

- Willens: What factors do you think led to the decision in Palau?
- Hezel: A couple of things. I think one of the things is that the Palauans thought the Trukese, the Pohnpeians and the Yapese were so far behind it as to be a the dead weight on Palau's development plans. Now they are partly right, you know, because of the extent of education and ability and so forth. You know, Palau is an amazing place. You can walk into any noodle shop, take any taxi, and you get into a good political conversation. A very sophisticated political conversation with the people who shouldn't be able to do that sort of thing. But somehow are. The value placed on education there is amazing. They have done something very good. I think they see that they have lost something too. I don't just mean their association with Trukese and Pohnpeians, but they lost the protection and so have the Marshallese. Sometimes you need other places to protect you from your own leadership, you know. Just as I was saying that the Trukese needed the U.S. to protect them from warring chiefs and this fighting that they had in their islands. I think that may be true also in places like Palau and the Marshalls. The Marshalls could have used a dose of it. Because who do they have? You know the person who was the top dog, Amata Kabua, when he was alive. Now who is the top dog, Imata Kabua! Well, I mean do you really think that this is any better from a human development standpoint than having Tosiwo Nakayama or Bailey Olter or Lazarus Salii or somebody like that. It might be more of a protection to have somebody from the outside and the answer to that is, yes, in a way it would.
- Willens: The Micronesians to whom I have spoke said that Amata Kabua may be king in the Marshalls but he is going to have no respect at all in Palau. And they can say the same thing about the leaders from the other districts. Aren't we all sort of fighting the idea that for 400 years four colonial powers administered these disparate parts of the world under a single administrative framework, and our initial assumption is that there is an identity there that is worth preserving?
- Hezel: That reminds me of a conference we had recently. I got very emotional at one point because there was a revisionist historian friend of mine who teaches at UH. He started off as a Peace Corps volunteer here, David Hanlon. And he got up and he started his thesis that there is no such thing as Micronesia. Micronesia is a colonial construct. And I said, "Are you kidding?" It may be a construct actually, but not entirely. This was not just that this island happened to be next to this island and everything. There is a cultural basis. You can go on and on about the common cultural features, even while recognizing the differences, and this constitutes a foundation. You know some kind of a foundation for the Micronesian identity. The other thing is that experience does count for something and that working together all those years under foreign rulers does mean something. And the friendships that develop. If you had asked the young Micronesians that I was teaching in 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973 does Micronesia mean anything? They would have said, "You bet your sweet butt it does, it sure does."
- Willens: And would that have been a difference from ten years earlier? It has been suggested from what I have seen they might not had responded that way in the early 1960's.
- Hezel: No, it was partly an artifact. But the thing is that it was not just an artifact in colonial rule. Any society is an artifact. I mean the U.S.A. is too. It is the Louisiana Purchase and the 13 original colonies, the Oregon territory and so forth. And this whole thing comes together and you got Vietnamese, etc. You got the Irish-Catholics, the Mexicans who swim over the border, and all the rest of it. Somehow or other out of this thing comes a kind of commonality or unity. At least we hope so. And we always thought if something like that could be produced on a grand scale in the U.S., who are we to deny the possibility that it

might happen in Micronesia. Particularly since the people of Micronesia at least have had contact with one another in the old days. They did have after all sailing lines and canoe travel.

Willens: Have you traveled very much south of the Equator to other island nations?

Hezel: No, I have seen Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, PNG—that's about it.

Willens: As I thank you for your time and your assistance, I would appreciate any thoughts you have about Micronesia or this particular project that you want to share with me?

Hezel: No, I think it's terrific that you are doing the project. I think it is so much bigger than what I imagined when you first wrote. It's bigger and much more ambitious and it's something that will be much more helpful to all of us here. I mean it would have been even if you had gone ahead with the original conception, or at least as I understood it, where you were focusing entirely on the Marianas. But there is so much of what we have gotten into that deals with FSM and so forth. I don't mean just in this line of questioning but I mean over the past few days. I think it is terrific and wish you the best of luck.

Willens: Thank you.