

INTERVIEW OF EUSEBIO A. HOCOG

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Siemer: Senator Eusebio A. Hocog from Rota has kindly agreed to help us with our history project, for which we're very grateful. We're going to begin, if we could Senator, with where you were born and when.
- Hocog: Okay. I was born on the island of Rota, Song Song village, in my parents' home, delivered by local midwives from Rota. They weren't trained, as a matter of fact. That was on the 4th of December, 1951.
- Siemer: What are your parents' names?
- Hocog: My mother's maiden name is Rosaria Hocog Atalig. My father is Tito Songo Hocog.
- Siemer: What did your father do?
- Hocog: My father is a farmer. He tilled the soil, he dug the soil, and he dirtied his fingers from the soil to provide us a livelihood.
- Siemer: Was your father also born on Rota?
- Hocog: Yes. My father was born on Rota in the early 1900s.
- Siemer: How about his parents? Were they also born on Rota?
- Hocog: Yes. My grandparents from my father's side were all born on Rota.
- Siemer: And what about on your mother's side?
- Hocog: My mother's parents were also born on Rota.
- Siemer: And your great-grandparents on her side?
- Hocog: According to my mother, her grandmother is from Guam. She was a Castro; my great-grandmother's last name is a Castro from Guam, de Castro. I would imagine she's a descendant from the Spanish. On her great-grandfather's side, from Rota. That's my knowledge. On my father's side, his great-grandmother, well his grandmother, is from Guam, a Pangelinan.
- Siemer: Was your father educated during Japanese times on Rota?
- Hocog: Yes. My father was educated up to the grade of three by the Japanese during the Japanese occupation of Rota.
- Siemer: And how about your mother?
- Hocog: My mother was also educated by the Japanese to the same grade level.
- Siemer: How many brothers and sisters did your father have?
- Hocog: My father has one brother and two sisters.
- Siemer: Could you identify them for us?
- Hocog: Yes. My father's brother is Prudencio Hocog. The sisters are Kokchong Maratita. The other one is Florencia Manglona.
- Siemer: And how about on your mother's side? Does she have brothers and sisters?

- Hocog: Yes. I believe she has three brothers. And four sisters.
- Siemer: And who are they?
- Hocog: The oldest one is Rafael Atalig, Fortosu Atalig, and Isais Atalig.
- Siemer: How do you spell that?
- Hocog: Isais.
- Siemer: And her sisters?
- Hocog: Her sisters are Consuela Sablan, Francisca Borja and Emilana Atalig. I think that's it.
- Siemer: And how many children did your parents have?
- Hocog: Six of us are living, and one brother and one sister died during the war. One of my other sisters died a couple of years after the war.
- Siemer: Could you identify those who are living for us.
- Hocog: Yes. My oldest brother is Demas, then followed by Lorenzo. My eldest sister is Salome, she's now Salome Calvo, Tita Hocog and Carmen Atalig.
- Siemer: How did the war affect your family? Did the Japanese take any of your land or any of your buildings?
- Hocog: Well, let me just share with you some of the stories that my father passed on to me in the hope that I can be a strong person. My father's father's property was leased by the Japanese, the NKK company or something.
- Siemer: They're a trading company?
- Hocog: It's a trading company. And also there were some other Japanese who leased some of the properties that were owned by my father's father. On my mother's side, I don't recall any land leased by any of the Japanese or the Koreans or Okinawans. The reason that my father mentioned this to me is because they have lost their land really during that time. The economic activity by the people who leased the land could have been theirs if they only had the kind of training or information as to how they could best turn this land into something profitable for them. But they had limited knowledge, limited exposure to economic activity. Therefore, land was just property to plant for your sustenance, and that's it.
- Siemer: What did the Japanese actually do with the land in Rota before the war? Did the Japanese farm the sabana?
- Hocog: Let's talk about what the Japanese did to sabana. Well, at that time it was probably good, okay? But in retrospect, I think they did a terrible thing to the people of Rota. They cleared the land in the sabana, they mined for phosphate, and I don't think that any of the proceeds from the mine were distributed to the people of Rota.
- Siemer: So the phosphate mine was actually up on the sabana?
- Hocog: It's up on the sabana, yes; it's up on the plateau. And right now, we have land in the sabana area that was destroyed as a result of that. And personally I feel that the agreement signed by the United States, absolving the Japanese of their deeds during their occupation of Rota, was wrong. I think the Japanese should have come back to Rota and reclaimed those lands that they destroyed during their occupation, returning them back to what they would have been. I don't know how to go about doing that, and I think it would be a long and involved battle. But I feel very sad looking at that in history. Some of the

areas that were leased by private individuals, I have no problem with that, because that is a matter that affects only two parties, okay? But when it comes down to public lands, I mean lands that belonged to my ancestors, am very, very touched, and I'm still trying to find ways to fight this or at least have this issue discussed at a high level. I don't want any compensation. I want some assistance that would restore the property that was destroyed. Yes, the Japanese did a lot of good things while they were there. They improved the port. We have ports in Rota. But for whose benefit? It wasn't for the benefit of the indigenous people. You know, they had an economic mission, they went down to and colonized Rota. They started with sugar cane, because sugar cane was good here and the sugar cane guy here who was trained in the United States saw this as an area of opportunity. When he was successful in Tinian and Saipan, they thought that Rota also would present that kind of success. They found out to their surprise that the soil in Rota was not similar to what they had on Saipan. But what keeps Rota going is the strong will of the people to meet their adversaries.

Siemer: Was there any difficulty for your family to reclaim their lands after the war?

Hocog: Well, on my father's side there was none. What happened was that there was an announcement that the citizens can claim back their land. So they went in and registered the areas that they felt still belonged to them. There's a property on Rota that is owned by my grandfather, but because my grandfather believed that he leased it out to a particular company, he didn't claim it, and my father told me that don't you get your hand in there, because his father did not claim it, so he [my father] had no right to the property.

Willens: Who's claiming that property now?

Hocog: Well, nobody. It's government land. I was informed back in 1984 that certain property in Rota was owned by my grandfather. So I informed my father that we have to claim that. My father told me to stay clear of that because his father did not claim it, and it was not his; the land belongs to his father, and if his father feels that it shouldn't be claimed, then it should not be claimed. You know? That's how it is.

Siemer: Where were you educated?

Hocog: I was educated in Rota, and then I went to Guam for my further education.

Siemer: How many years in Rota?

Hocog: For education?

Siemer: Yes.

Hocog: Approximately six years.

Siemer: Through grade six?

Hocog: No. I went to Rota from 1-3, and then my father wanted me to go to school in Guam, so he shipped me down to Guam to attend school there. I had to come back to Rota because of a disaster in Guam, and I stayed in Rota for two more years. Then I went back to Guam for high school.

Siemer: Which high school did you attend?

Hocog: I attended George Washington Senior High School in Guam.

Siemer: And when did you graduate?

Hocog: 1970.

Siemer: And what education did you have after that?

- Hocog: I went to the University of Guam from 1970, and I got my bachelors degree in 1973.
- Siemer: Any education after that?
- Hocog: Yes. I have taken courses from a couple of universities. The University of Guam is one of them, and also I had three courses from San Jose State University.
- Siemer: The Rotanese seem to have a very strong tradition of education and to making sure that their children get good education. To what do you attribute that?
- Hocog: Well, like I said, when we were invaded by the Spanish, there was not much that we could do but probably try to teach us how to hide or run away. So it makes us smarter not to stay out there and be beaten by these unwelcome, unwanted intruders. So probably we learned through that that if we don't keep up and share information as to how we can protect ourselves from all these intrusions, we could end up being extinct, and we almost were extinct on Rota according to some historical accounts. So maybe there's something in the Rota water that gives us that drive. But seriously I think that it is because of the hardship that we have endured over time. You know, we were invaded by the Japanese, after the Germans. The Germans left very little education. And we were hearing about what was happening around us, in Guam and Saipan, that made us thirst for more knowledge. While I was growing up, one of the things that my father told me was that he was a poor man, he was a farmer. You know, poor in the sense that he doesn't have cash in his pocket for us. And that the only thing that he would do is go out there and work hard, farm, use his hands, dirty his fingers and soil his fingernails, carry on his shoulder a sack of cucumbers a couple of miles to a road, so that his friend's car can help him bring it down to the village, down to the port. Those are some of the things that really influenced the people of Rota to try to stay focused on education. And I'm proud to say that during the early days, the 1970s, we have seen that a lot of our people have gone on to get their education, despite the fact that we only have sixth, seventh, ninth grade school in Rota. The majority of us have gone out and gotten our high school diploma, our high school education elsewhere.
- Siemer: You had a very early influx into college as well. People invested in education.
- Hocog: Yes. As a matter of fact, when I was in college in 1970, I tried my very best to convince the young people who were in school in Rota to come and join us in the university. Because this is the only way I felt that we can have Rota be recognized and that our cause can really be addressed. I don't know if I'm answering your question, but I am so passionately attached to this. During my term in office, I had five young kids in my office, and one of the things that I wanted was for them to do their own work. So I hired them with one condition: the primary condition is that they attend NMC full time. And the time that they are not in school, they come to the office, answer the phone, wait for people to come in, and do their homework. So it may not be proper, but I think that's the reason why we're here—to provide a better standard of living for our people. And I think investing in education will achieve that. So I'm proud that all of these five students have obtained their AA degree, and I said to myself that it's a legacy of mine. While I'm in office, I've invested in these kids, using public funds.
- Siemer: You finished at the University of Guam in 1973?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Siemer: Did you go back to Rota?
- Hocog: Actually, I was hired by the Trust Territory government to work here in Saipan. Because I was a recipient of the Trust Territory general scholarship.

- Siemer: What was your job then when you came back?
- Hocog: I was supposed to work with public information.
- Willens: Was that a condition of your getting the scholarship, that you would come back and work for some years?
- Hocog: No. It was just an academic scholarship. It's a competitive scholarship. There are only two a year from the Northern Marianas district. And I was fortunate to get that. And I was supposed to come here, but my parents were such a very strong influence, that I think I felt guilty. Two things. Number one, I don't want to brag about this, but when I graduated from Rota Junior High, I made a commitment in my speech to the graduates and to the people that I would not come back to Rota until I got a bachelors degree and was able to help the people. So my parents continued to have that in their heads that I made a commitment to come back to Rota when I graduated. So I had to forego the contract that I had here with the Trust Territory government and accept the teaching position in Rota. So I went there and I taught.
- Siemer: What grades did you teach?
- Hocog: Because my degree is in political science, I was asked to teach in the area of social studies at the high school level.
- Siemer: How many years did you teach?
- Hocog: I was there for a total of three years—a combination of part time, being in administration, helping in the office, and half of the time teaching.
- Willens: For many years Rota was a separate district within the Trust Territory, and then in 1962 it was joined with Saipan and Tinian. Do you recall hearing from family or friends how the people on Rota felt about being combined into a single district with the other Mariana islands?
- Hocog: Well, let me just say that I was old enough at the time to understand what was going on. I think I was in the second or third grade at the time. And the people of Rota really in their hearts felt that they were slighted by the U.S. government. They hadn't given them the status of a dignified group of people.
- Willens: When they were a single district?
- Hocog: When they were a single district. They gave them that political stature. And all of a sudden, by a stroke of the pen, we now become a sub-political entity where we at one time were governing our affairs. Well, of course, under the direction of the Trust Territory government. It was not a very comfortable situation, but I think again that the people were not happy. Why should they be happy? But because we don't have the education and the means to express ourselves, you know, in terms that would probably get the United Nations up in arms and say, "Hey, United States, why are you doing this?"
- Willens: Did the people on Rota think that the United Nations could bring pressure on the United States to change its policy?
- Hocog: Well, they knew, but they didn't know the vehicle for getting there. I say they knew because every October we would celebrate United Nations Day during the Trust Territory time. Every time the United Nations mission came and visited Rota, the entire Rota people greeted them. The schools were closed, because they would bring the kids to see this mission, and people were lining the street, because they wanted to meet these people from France, England, Russia, so that they would tell them that our political status as a

sub-district was not right. But we were not familiar with the political tactics that could be employed in a global situation. Unlike now, when we have an idea of how to work on that. But then, our parents were very law-abiding people and they would accept whatever order was handed down to them. I think this is because we are victims of circumstances. And I think our mentality then was that well, we just have to take it in stride because this is how it is or it's supposed to be.

Willens: The Northern Marianas in 1963 created the District Legislature.

Hocog: That's right.

Willens: And Rota had how many representatives?

Hocog: Three representatives.

Willens: Three representatives in that body. Was the District Legislature a means for Rota's leadership to express its point of view?

Hocog: Well, it was a means for Rota to express its views. And let me just tell you, I am a minority here in the Senate. I think I'm the only one now.

Willens: Politically?

Hocog: Politically I'm a minority here. I can yell and scream out there, but when a vote comes to be taken on an issue, let's say we want Rota to be a district again, okay? I can yell and scream whatever until I am blue. When the vote comes, this thing is deep-sixed, right? So what I'm saying is that at that particular time in history when Rota was a sub-district, the three representatives can scream until they're all blue in the face, but their proposal will not be passed, because they're faced with nine other people with opposing views. So that in itself should answer your question. I know that our people have tried hard, but there's just that fundamental problem of being a minority.

Willens: The people of Rota, as I recall, elected Benjamin Manglona to the Congress of Micronesia when it was created in 1965.

Hocog: Yes.

Willens: Did the people think that participating in the Congress of Micronesia was a more effective way of representing their interests?

Hocog: Yes. As a matter of fact, let me just say that Benjamin Manglona did his best really to change the status of Rota. I remember this very vividly because at one time I worked as a page boy in the Congress of Micronesia and at that time he introduced a resolution calling for the secession of Rota. Because we wanted to get it district status. Secession of Rota to join Russia, you know. I think it was a means to get everybody's attention. But it didn't do much good. I mean it didn't move the issue forward. Okay? It created an awareness, but that's just about it.

Willens: How long did you serve as a page boy?

Hocog: One summer.

Willens: Do you remember what year it was?

Hocog: It was in 1968, I believe. And the following year, I was promoted to work in the production room.

Willens: Was that a promotion?

Hocog: Yes, because you know, you get to supervise some of those page boys.

- Willens: Well, it was about that time when there was a lot of activity in the Congress of Micronesia about political status.
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: What is your early recollection of how you felt about political status?
- Hocog: You know, let me just say I would give a lot of credit to this guy, Francisco Uludong.
- Willens: Why's that?
- Hocog: Because he was the clerk of the Senate at that particular time. He was a student at the University of Hawaii, and he would discuss political ideas. I didn't consider them radical ideas. They're just political ideas that (I think right now) if we had sat down and looked at those issues seriously, probably we could have tried to cement the commonalities of Micronesia. He raised an awareness of the U.S. Administration's study on how to contain the people of Micronesia. And the famous report, the Solomon Report, that is always cited as a grand design for containment of the people in the Trust Territory.
- Willens: What did he mean by containment?
- Hocog: Well, he said in order for the people of the Trust Territory not to choose another political status different from the United States philosophy, the people should be provided with the means to create dependency. And you can see from that point on that the budget of the Trust Territory from \$1 million some increased to so many millions. It's policy really. You know from 1960 it shifted, and you see that you have more food distribution programs designed for third-world countries. I'm not saying they're bad, but giving people food, you know, sure makes people lazy.
- Willens: Do you think that it did influence people's judgment about their future political status?
- Hocog: It did. Let's say, for example, you're so involved on the political status for the Commonwealth. I was a roommate to Benjamin Manglona when we were at the University, and when he was a member of the Political Status Commission. You know, I would sometimes ask him a question. As a student at the time, I would like to see how the future political situation of the Marianas District and Micronesia would unfold. One of the underlying reasons for the Commonwealth was economics—economics in terms of not what we see now but economics in terms of direct U.S. assistance. It was at the time, you know, a very big thing on Guam that Congressman Won Pat was bringing all these federal dollars to Guam, millions of dollars to Guam. So we looked at that and said, man, he's a small guy and he's bringing a stack of money bigger than he is. Ooh, that's great. So that's why we looked at the United States as our choice. We didn't know at the time that the coffers of the United States government have a bottom. I didn't think that it did at the time. I thought it had a coffer that was similar to a bottomless well.
- Siemer: What did you think about U.S. citizenship back in those days when you were a student?
- Hocog: When I was a student back in those days, U.S. citizenship for me or in general? Actually I wasn't looking at U.S. citizenship for me at the time. As you know, some of the thinking in the colleges during those days was tending to radicalism. Right? So that's all you read, right? So you tend to be influenced by the U.S. thinking, right? So when they started questioning authority—criticizing the Vietnam conflict and burning the U.S. flag—we said hey, what the heck is this? They're U.S. citizens, right? And they are embarrassing themselves. So what am I going to say? Okay, let me go in there and join you and embarrass your own country? That's not how I looked at it. I looked at it with caution, and I asked myself at the time, if I am to become a U.S. citizen, if I am to join the United

States political family, what am I going to do? What am I going to do? I see the United States as a land of opportunity, not only in economic terms but I can go out there and tell you what I think without you coming with your clubs and handcuffs and taking me to jail. So that's how I see this, as an opportunity to express myself the way I think fit and, without being afraid that because of my expression contrary to the establishment's position, I can go home and sleep.

Siemer: Had you traveled to the U.S. back in those days?

Hocog: No.

Siemer: When did you go to the U.S. mainland for the first time?

Hocog: I think it was in 1982.

Siemer: Where did you go?

Hocog: I went to California, and I went under a different arrangement. There was this program in California, at the University of San Francisco, where they teach the Vietnamese English as a second language. So I went there to see how they work on this program, presenting English as a second language.

Siemer: Were you still in the Education Department at the time?

Hocog: No. I was with Economic Development.

Siemer: Let me just go back a moment. You taught for three years?

Hocog: Yes. I taught for three years. Then after the three years of teaching, I went to work in 1976 with the Department of Economic Development.

Siemer: The TT Department?

Hocog: Yes, TT Department. And then I went into Commerce and Labor under the constitutional government. I was out of government service in 1981.

Siemer: So you were in the Department of Commerce and Labor during the Camacho Administration?

Hocog: Yes.

Siemer: And then what did you do in 1981?

Hocog: I worked for an airline company in Rota.

Siemer: Which one?

Hocog: This is now the South Pacific Island Airways. This is a company which originated in American Samoa and has a bigger operation in Honolulu providing services to Guam on a weekly basis. Because of the need for transportation at the time in 1982 from Guam, Rota and Saipan, the company came in. The Regional Director was our President at the University, and conveniently he plucked me out of the government.

Siemer: How long did you work for them?

Hocog: I worked for them up to 1985.

Siemer: Then what did you do?

Hocog: In 1985 I was hired by another airline, essentially to do their marketing.

Siemer: Which one was that?

- Hocog: This was Maui Airlines, another small air carrier no longer in operation. And after that, I felt that I had enough business experience, so I went out on my own.
- Siemer: What was your company?
- Hocog: My company in Rota?
- Siemer: Yes.
- Hocog: Hame Enterprise.
- Siemer: What did it do?
- Hocog: It does essentially business consulting. We do trading. We handle insurance products and other financial products. We do a lot of sales.
- Siemer: How do you spell the name of the company?
- Hocog: H-a-m-e.
- Siemer: When did you first run for office?
- Hocog: Successfully?
- Siemer: No. When did you first run?
- Hocog: For public office, right?
- Siemer: Anything.
- Hocog: Oh, well, when I was in college I ran for office. I was elected into the student body senate, and I was elected also as a vice president for the student body at the University. I first ran for public office in Rota in 1976.
- Siemer: What did you run for?
- Hocog: I ran for a delegate seat in the Constitutional Convention.
- Siemer: The Constitutional Convention?
- Hocog: Yes. And I lost by about nine votes.
- Siemer: That's all, nine votes?
- Hocog: Yes, ma'am. By nine votes. And we were challenging, I mean our group was challenging the establishment. And in those days, you know, challenging the establishment, you'd be defeated 100-2. But I think my message was somewhat clear, that although the odds were 100-2, I was pretty well within winning range.
- Siemer: So then when did you run again?
- Hocog: I ran in 1993. 1976 the first time, and then 1993. So then in 1993 I won by a good margin.
- Siemer: Did your mother and father have a political affiliation back when you were going to college?
- Hocog: Political affiliation means party?
- Siemer: Yes.
- Hocog: Well, why didn't you ask me whether I have a political affiliation?
- Siemer: I'm going to.
- Hocog: Oh.

- Siemer: I was trying to get the sense, and maybe I can ask the question more broadly, whether the party system developed on Rota in the same way that it did on Saipan with Territorial and Popular and then Republicans and Democrats, whether there was the same clash of parties on Rota?
- Hocog: Okay. Let me just say this, because I am very much interested in that subject. And when I was going to school, my friends were from the opposition party.
- Siemer: You roomed with Benjamin Manglona.
- Hocog: No, I was in the Territorial Party, and he was in the Territorial Party.
- Willens: At the time.
- Hocog: At the time.
- Willens: And when you were at the university.
- Hocog: And when we were at the university, yes. And he got me my job really in the Congress of Micronesia. But let me answer your question first. I think the development of political parties on Rota came about when influential members of the community on Saipan visited Rota in connection with the beginning of the Congress of Micronesia. That is my recollection as to the time that the political parties came to be, when they had this Congress of Micronesia deal. Why is that so? Because Rota, Tinian and San Antonio [on Saipan] belong to Precinct 1, and we have one representative for the House of Representatives, and then we have two members of the Senate that are elected in the entire Marianas district. So they needed to convince people that the formation of a party is the answer to putting somebody in office. And what they did, the influential individuals from Saipan (and they're very smart), they came in with the same kind of idea that the Spanish came in with (and every conquering nation that came into Rota did), they picked a person that is well-respected.
- Siemer: In Rota.
- Hocog: In Rota. The reason why he was well-respected was because he had advanced training during the Japanese occupation and his position during the Japanese occupation was somewhat elevated. So they looked to this person and that this person was somewhat connected with those people who had gotten high school educations, such as Benjamin Manglona. So the first ones to get their high school education were called in. And the guy that they visited was Tomas Mendiola. He was the Chief Commissioner. Right after the war, the Americans picked him up. So they're smart. They know what to do. So who is going to go against a man that is respected in the community, the man that was very well educated in the Japanese time?
- Siemer: Who came from Saipan to talk to Tomas Mendiola?
- Hocog: I'm not too sure on that, but
- Siemer: Political leaders from here?
- Hocog: Political leaders from here. So it was that and then you know we have family respect. You don't want to hurt your family, so you just have to join, even though you disagree. Then you had another Popular Party group that came from Saipan to Rota. And the only person that they have is maybe one or two.
- Willens: So the people that came first from the Territorial Party designated the influential people on Rota to affiliate with that party and so there were not many leaders left at the time the Popular Party came over?

- Hocog: That's right.
- Willens: So the first party that came was the one that became established.
- Hocog: Exactly.
- Willens: So who ended up picking Benjamin to run?
- Hocog: Remember what I said about our history, right, that back in the Spanish days they wanted to get us out of Rota, right? One of the things that we have learned is that we have to make sure that we try to assert our position. Our position was that we need to have somebody in Rota from Rota in order for the people of Rota to be content. Because number one, the separate Rota district was pulled out from under our feet without us knowing. So we have to have somebody in there.
- Siemer: Now in that context, what was your father's approach to politics? Was he in the Territorial Party?
- Hocog: He voted Territorial, yes.
- Siemer: Now in your own context, what caused you to switch over to the Popular Party?
- Hocog: Here is the thing that changed my whole perspective. After I came back from college, I believed very strongly that the letter of the law says that the election of delegates to the Constitutional Convention is supposed to be done without political influence. I was called in by the Territorial Party to see if I was interested. Of course I was interested. But I believed firmly and strongly that it should not be political. So just because of that, I kind of stayed back and said hey, wait a minute, something's wrong. In addition to that, in about February 1976 I suggested a political party in Rota. I was still a classroom teacher helping at the same time the Administration. I suggested a political party known as Commonwealth 76. Because the negotiation of the Covenant was already there. I mean you cannot fight that. It's there. Given. Capitalize on that. That was my thinking. Commonwealth 76. So I engineered Commonwealth 76. We silenced the Popular Party. We silenced it and said well, why don't we do it this way, Commonwealth 76. So we organized and called in people to be members of our slate, for the Mayor and the Municipal Council. We almost won again, very close. I mean in those days, I'll tell you, they'd crucify you. But I was involved in the mechanics of politics.
- Siemer: Who was your candidate for Mayor?
- Hocog: My candidate for Mayor at the time was Fidel Mendiola. He's the guy in charge of the Rota Airport.
- Siemer: Fidel Mendiola, his father owned a boat that he turned over one time. Didn't he have an accident one time with a boat?
- Hocog: That's him.
- Siemer: I'm thinking of the right person?
- Hocog: Yes, that's him. He's the guy.
- Siemer: He floated out there for 36 hours?
- Hocog: Yes, that's the guy.
- Siemer: And saved several people's lives, I gather.
- Hocog: Yes, that's the guy.
- Siemer: Sounds like a very good guy.

Hocog: Yes, he's a good guy. Well, he has his ups and downs. But he was my candidate at the time. The reason why I had him picked was that he's very compassionate to people who are so unfortunate. When people would have their car break down, he would assist them. He would just charge whatever was necessary for him to go on. And life was simple.

Siemer: Commonwealth 76 was an attempt to get around the Territorial and Popular division and have a Rota Party?

Hocog: Exactly. That was my dream at the time, that once we are successful, Commonwealth 76 is Rota's. It's not a Popular Party originated on Saipan, it's not a Territorial Party originated on Saipan. That was the intent really, the motive behind it.

Siemer: Now the Territorial Party put up a whole slate of candidates for the Constitutional Convention election, did they not?

Hocog: Yes.

Siemer: How did you go about campaigning?

Hocog: Well, actually what we did, we somewhat stayed back and watched what they were going to do. We went out, we designed our strategy, to meet our needs. What I did was number one, we were the first ones to put up billboards. I mean we tried to employ U.S.-style politics. Gatherings, we had public speeches. I don't know if you witnessed public speeches during those days. Our public speeches were designed, for example, you've been to Rota, right, in the Memorial Plaza?

Siemer: Yes.

Hocog: That's an area that's so big, right? You cannot afford to get in there because our numbers are so small. So what I designed was to find a house that's very close together so that when you put maybe 15 people in there, you see a crowd. If you put 15 people here in the plaza, you're defeated, right? So I went on the premise that I think we need to have a bandwagon, design this so we create a bandwagon. My group was against it, because that's not the normal thing. I said "Hey, that's why we're here. Because we're not normal."

Siemer: Who were some of the people who ran with you for Constitutional Convention delegate?

Hocog: The Mayor. The present Mayor.

Siemer: Mayor Inos?

Hocog: Mayor Inos. Vincent Calvo. Aniseto Mundo. Let me see. Actually, we were supposed to be eight, right?

Siemer: Yes.

Hocog: We ran only seven. The Mayor, Vincent, Aniseto Mundo, Fidel Manglona, of course myself, two more guys. But mostly the people that we have here, or all of us, had gone to college. So we presented really a force to show them that we promised to come back. You said you wanted us to be educated, come back and serve. So that's what we did. We went and we came. So we're here.

Siemer: So vote for us.

Hocog: So vote for us.

Willens: Were there any consequences politically to you as a result of your creating a separate Party and challenging the establishment?

- Hocog: Of course, yes.
- Willens: Politically, or how about your job in the school system?
- Hocog: Oh, I was running against the principal.
- Siemer: That's right, Pete Ogo was the principal.
- Hocog: Yes. Then, when I ran for the Constitutional Convention, I was running against Pete Dela Cruz. You know Pete Dela Cruz, the Secretary of Commerce?
- Siemer: Yes.
- Hocog: He was my boss. But you know, I told him, I said, "Hey Pete, you and I are both educated, okay? And you know what it means to present good candidates to people. I think you're a good candidate. I hope you respect my opinion of running." So that's how we approached this, and he was very professional. So in terms of my job, no, I didn't experience anything. Because I had to be up front with him and tell him straight. I know that at the time also, trying to find people to fill that job that they needed done was very difficult.
- Siemer: You had some job security?
- Hocog: Exactly. And also at the same time I had a job offer someplace else, and if he fired me, I would go. I mean I'd provide that justification, right? I'm doing my job, you fire me because we differ on politics out there, after 4:30, I'll go.
- Siemer: What did your family think of your political activities?
- Hocog: My father really talked to me about the hard core, the influential individuals in the opposition party who talked to him regarding my joining this group that will never win and that they feel bad because they're looking at me as a potential candidate.
- Siemer: Candidate for them?
- Hocog: Yes, a candidate for them. And I told my father, I said well, you know I never had things easy, never. You had to go and farm, you had to go and dig, I had to go to Guam during my early age, I had to learn how to cook, iron, wash and iron my uniform, because I went to a private school in Guam. So, it was never easy. And I don't think I would appreciate what I accomplished if it was handed out to me. So everything that I have, everything that I did, I had to work for it. And I think that's how it is. I was even called a Communist.
- Willens: You were called a Communist?
- Hocog: Yes, I was even called a Communist, because probably I'm expressing a belief that is anti-establishment, and during those days if you have a belief that is not in conformity with the establishment or the majority of the people, you're a Communist, because that's what we think of Communists. We think of Communists as the bad people, right?
- Willens: Let's go back to the Congress of Micronesia just for a minute or two. Benjamin over the years that he was there did make some very strong statements about his constituents on Rota wanting to have a relationship with the United States, and when the other districts decided they were looking for some other relationship, he and other representatives from the Marianas spoke up for separate status for the Northern Marianas. Did you have any reluctance to go along with the separate status point of view? Did you want to remain with the other districts based on what you knew?
- Hocog: No. At the time you're making reference to, I felt that we, the Mariana Island district, could forge our political status on our own—be it independence, be it a relationship that meets halfway between independence and U.S. relationship, or be it with the United

States. I think at that particular time in our history, I felt that we could do it without the rest of Micronesia. But again, like I mentioned earlier, there are some common interests that we have with the other Micronesians, and had we identified those common interests, I think our political status right now could be such that there would be some connection to the rest of Micronesia. I don't know how to do it, but those are some of the thoughts that I was thinking during the time. Politically, I thought we could do it at the time on our own.

Willens: Some of the leaders from the other districts argued strongly that the Marianas should stay as part of a future Micronesia....

Hocog: Nation.

Willens: Micronesian nation. And others have suggested that the cultural and other differences among the districts are very substantial and would make it difficult to have a common nation. Did you have any feeling on that subject?

Hocog: At the time? Yes. But like I said, as we look deeply into the history of the United States, you see extreme opposites, and yet they have a government that is so tight. They have a history of the United States Government that is built upon those differences, and I think that's the reason why it became strong. After years that we are in the status right now, when I look back, I say probably the rest of Micronesia can join, I mean we can form an association, a political association, that would meet everybody's interests and we could continue to move on. And I think they're correct, you know. Because right now, looking back at it, it's just that we're missing the Law of the Sea relating to that 200 mile economic zone, where you control massive ocean resources. I mean, it's as big as the United States. Maybe we have tons and tons, I mean barrels and barrels of oil down there, or minerals. And the whole thing. I don't know. But I'm looking at it right now. Before, we only thought about the dry land. When we talked about economics, we only talked about dry land. When we talked about politics, we only talked about dry land. And right now, as we get into the global village, we don't see this water any more. I think probably they weren't defining what they were saying in the other districts, what they meant, but now it's happening. APIL, for example, the conference in Rota. One of the issues discussed was economic development. Economic cooperation. So these things can be translated. Later on I think, I mean you're erasing all these things. Eventually, probably during my lifetime, this political question will come up. You know, once the economic issue is settled, then we'll say hey, why are we out here in this vast Pacific Ocean? Can we create a bridge? I don't know.

Willens: During the negotiations with the United States, Rota was represented by Benjamin Manglona and Joannes Taimanao. Did they from time to time have meetings at which they explained what was going on and solicit the views of the people on Rota?

Hocog: Maybe they have or maybe they have not. I don't know. But my recollection is that when the Marianas Political Status Commission came down to Rota, they would have a public hearing. And that would be the time that most of the people were gathered. People working for the government, department heads, were called in and briefed as to what was happening. And it was assumed that the information would be passed down, you know, to the community.

Siemer: To the family members and relatives.

Hocog: Right. So at that time we were only about 2,000 people or less. And most, say 80 percent, worked for the government.

- Willens: At the very end of the negotiations, just before there was supposed to be a signing of the Covenant, the representatives of Rota, joined by those from Tinian, made a strong request that the Covenant draft be changed to include the requirement of a bicameral Legislature in which the upper house would have equal representation for the three populated islands. The Rota Municipal Council drafted a resolution to this effect, and that was presented by Benjamin to the Marianas Political Status Commission. Did you play any role in the drafting of that resolution or the discussions that led to that strategy?
- Hocog: I was an employee of the Municipal Council in the summer of 1972.
- Willens: This resolution would have been drafted in late 1974 or early 1975. It was dated January 1975.
- Hocog: Well, the resolution had been drafted really from 1972...
- Willens: I see.
- Hocog: ... supporting the stand taken by Benjamin and Joannes, addressed to the Marianas Political Status Commission. I was aware that a stronger resolution came about because there was almost an internal collapse of the Marianas Political Status Commission, because members from (my information) the Saipan area tried to put down, I mean tried to call for a unicameral legislature similar to the Mariana Islands District Legislature. And our experience, as well as Tinian's experience, in the Mariana Islands District Legislature was that we could not move an agenda that would benefit us because we didn't have the necessary votes. Like I said, we could yell until we were blue, but it's not going to happen. So a bicameral legislature with equal representation in one house would provide us a forum where we could check the larger population and that through compromise we may be able to move the agenda of everybody. So that was how we viewed this. And we had been discussing this since back during college days, that if this is successful, that the only way for us to have our voices accepted is to have a forum with equal footing. So yes, all of us in Rota agreed to having a bicameral legislature to even out the playing field.
- Siemer: Who actually did the drafting of those resolutions for the Municipal Council back then?
- Hocog: Well, we didn't have lawyers, so we resorted to ourselves doing that drafting.
- Siemer: So it was the college-educated in Rota who worked on those kinds of... .
- Hocog: Mostly, yes. If not, if they didn't have the people that they felt comfortable with and they thought were competent, they would call the political information office on Saipan. So they would send people down to help out in drafting.
- Willens: Were there any Peace Corps volunteers on Rota at the time?
- Hocog: Yes. I think, if I am not mistaken, but I don't think it was David Weisman. David Weisman was there in 1976. He was there after 1977. There was a Peace Corps volunteer, yes, but I don't know who. But David Weisman came in as a Peace Corps volunteer.
- Willens: How do you think the bicameral legislature has worked out?
- Hocog: From my perspective?
- Willens: Yes.
- Hocog: From the Rota perspective, I think it should be the first branch of the government, because we came first on the Constitution, right? So I think that's how the first branch of the government should be, that the Legislature should be a forum that provides an equal

playing field to the islands in the Commonwealth. I think it is the Senate that can create the bond that is necessary to move the Commonwealth forward.

Willens: We spoke earlier, actually, before we went on the record, about economic development in Tinian and in Rota. Could you give us a little historical perspective about economic development on Rota and in particular why it seems to have lagged to some extent over the past 20 or 30 years?

Hocog: During the German time, very little if any economic activity happened on Rota, perhaps because of the physical setting of Rota—the ports, the channel is bad. You don't have the kind of God-given lagoon that you have on Guam. On Saipan the port is better than Rota's. So it makes transportation very difficult. So I think it somewhat falls in line with economic development. The Japanese came in, the Japanese worked on the west harbor, but again what they could do was just enough so that a small boat could go in and out of Rota, just to deliver imported goods into Rota and take out some of the manufactured products from Rota. For example, the saps from the papaya. Sugar that was refined by the mill on Rota. Bigger vessels would go over to the east side to take phosphate. So I think our physical makeup limited the kind of development that we would like. Now, when we are in the U.S. Administration, the harbor will improve, we see economic activity slowly come into the hands of local entrepreneurs. Under the United Nations rule, under the most favored nation clause, we didn't really see American investment in Rota. We heard of investments coming in from places other than the United States in a disguised form. When we came into the constitutional government, investment opened up. We opened up investment. I'm sorry; let me backtrack. When they lifted the most favored nation clause from the United Nations agreement, we saw Japanese investment coming in during the 1970s. We saw the Hafa Adai Hotel came in [on Saipan], followed by the Rota Coconut Village. But that was during the constitutional government. Then you see now another investment, the Rota resort by SNM development. So as we removed the political barriers, we tended to have this economic climate moving into Rota. Now we have an infrastructure problem. The infrastructure, the port, when it was first built, we said oh, it's going to be a seaport, it will serve us probably 25 years. It didn't last that long. I mean, we are now saying that the port is too small and we need to expand. But it's just so many feet away from the reef, right? So the improvement of the port will take a lot of funds from the Commonwealth.

Siemer: I guess that's the only viable port right there at

Hocog: Not really.

Siemer: There's only a limited port on the other side?

Hocog: I think that the bay on the east side would be a much better location. I'm not an engineer, but I think the bay would be a much better place for a port if we could put a breakwater. Right now on the west side, if we have to put a breakwater, we have to go and extend it maybe way out into the open water, see? But on the east side, on the bay, we could just connect to the nearest mountain on the other side and create that. But of course I don't know. So that's one barrier for economic development on Rota. The other thing is, if we have improved the airport on Rota. Now we are saying (it's not even finished, right?) it's too small. It's already too small. Why did I say that? Because when we come in, when all these flights come in, two flights—one flight from Guam and one flight from Saipan—come together, you have a 64-capacity of both planes, right? Then you have another flight that comes in, there's another 30. So you have say about 90 people there. At one time. I mean we're really crowding there, because all the flights come in. And you have

- a lot of people on the arrival, a lot of people on the departure. There are a lot of people everywhere. So the facility is getting small.
- Siemer: Did the political situation on Rota have any effect on the rate of development?
- Hocog: I don't think so. I think it's just our physical makeup.
- Siemer: The limitation of the port and the limitation of the airport?
- Hocog: Yes.
- Willens: Do you think that the people over the years have aspired for more economic development, the way people on Saipan seem to have?
- Hocog: Yes. Let me just say this. The time that the Congress of Micronesia was in operation, when Benjamin was in, he was calling for port development, because this is the only way we can improve our port, this is the only way we can improve our economy and improve the standard of living of the people. I heard that in the 1960s, and I continue to see that today. So it is really, like you said, the port imposes the limitation.
- Siemer: Go back for a minute to the Constitutional Convention. You said you challenged the election outcome. How did you do that?
- Hocog: What outcome?
- Siemer: When you lost the election for the First Constitutional Convention by nine votes.
- Hocog: Oh, I didn't challenge it.
- Siemer: You did not challenge it?
- Hocog: I did not challenge that. What I meant to say was that during those days when you come close, only nine votes from the opposition, wow, that's really a victory. Nobody's coming closer than that. They've been having elections, but it's never been close.
- Siemer: Did anybody else in your group get that close?
- Hocog: Well, the three of us. The Mayor, myself and Vincent Calvo. So we came very close to winning.
- Siemer: What happened to the Commonwealth 76 organization after that first Constitutional Convention election?
- Hocog: I must take this thing back. In Commonwealth 76, we came close to winning. Then we had a candidate after us, Vincent Calvo, we put him into the Marianas Island District Legislature. Commonwealth 76, it's not Popular Party. Commonwealth 76 candidate. So we put him in. So we wanted to see. So we created an awareness, and it was mostly young people.
- Willens: What happened then in the first election for Commonwealth offices in 1977? Did you put up any candidates for Commonwealth positions?
- Hocog: I need to give you the history on this, because it's very important that I give you the history of what happened. Actually I went and I talked to the former Mayor of the Municipality, and I talked with Antonio Camacho Atalig, and I talked to Prudencio Manglona, the Resident Commissioner's Representative on Rota.
- Siemer: Is Mayor Atalig a relative of yours?
- Hocog: He's an uncle. And I talked to them separately of the need to unify Rota and create a voting block when it came to issues in the Commonwealth. I presented the argument

that if we had a political party on Rota that represented what was happening on Saipan and Tinian, I thought some of our agenda would be lost along the way. Let's just say that a governor from a different Party was successful, the governor would consider the needs of Rota, but he would look for votes, right? And he would put his attention to where he would get the most votes, and would make the most impact. So my thinking then was let's forget about the political parties.

Siemer: In Saipan?

Hocog: In Rota. Let's forget about political parties on Rota and let's not have the Commonwealth 76, but let's have something that's for Rota, okay? And advance a candidate to represent us. And this person can be good friends with whoever wins the Executive Branch. Well, it appeared to be a good idea, but it didn't materialize. So when it didn't materialize, I was asked to run under the Democratic Party. I said no. I don't think I'm eligible. I was not eligible at the time. Yes, I was eligible. Anyway, I told them that I could not do it because I was thinking that my goodness, if we try this, and if it works, it is good for everybody. If it doesn't work, I don't think there's much damage. Anyway, there's going to be damage if you have two parties, right? So I went to Guam, and I enrolled in the University and picked up some graduate courses for one semester. I was not active in the first election for the Legislature or the Governor.

Willens: Do you recall whether Frank Ada campaigned a good deal on Rota for the Camacho/Ada ticket?

Hocog: I think he did. I mean, I believe he sent his group down to Rota.

Willens: Did he have a particular affiliation with Rota? He recalls that his ticket was more successful on Rota than the Democratic ticket usually is, and that was because of some of the steps he took when he was District Administrator. Do you have any recollection of whether Ada was a particularly well-regarded politician on Rota?

Hocog: Well, I don't know. Because his district administrative representative was Prudencio, and Prudencio ran at the time also under a different Party. So I cannot even comment on that, because I was not really involved.

Willens: I see.

Siemer: When did the Democratic Party began to gather more strength in Rota?

Hocog: Well, when Camacho came into office. Yes, when Camacho came into office.

Siemer: What happened to the Commonwealth 76 supporters—for example, the people who had run with you for the Constitutional Convention? Did they tend to go to the Democratic Party?

Hocog: Well, they were evenly split. What's his name, the Mayor, ran with the Republican for the Senate. Calvo and Mundo ran as Democrats. And everybody just went their different ways.

Siemer: And how about yourself? What was your political view back in the 1980s after you got out of the government and you were in private business?

Hocog: What were my political views? I am a person at the time who wanted to get a unified party for Rota. So after I got out from government service, I worked for the private sector. I tried to be non-political.

Siemer: That's hard to do in Rota.

- Hocog: Well, that is true, you know. But when I worked for the airlines, I would accommodate members from both parties, so they didn't look at me as if you are a one-party airline or like that, but I would bend my back to get them on so that they could get from A to B. I would do the same for members of the Democratic Party. I think that's the reason why Benjamin asked me to work for him. He asked me to work for him in 1984. Well, in 1983 I continued with still working for the airlines, I continued to move the agenda. Victor Hocog was elected in 1983.
- Siemer: To the Senate?
- Hocog: To the House.
- Siemer: Oh, that's right.
- Hocog: 1983 or 1985? I think 1983. Anyway, about that time, Victor Hocog was elected, and we started the Coalition—the Democrat and the Republican. Julian Calvo from the Republican Party and Victor Hocog from the Democratic Party, we put them together. And Julian ran under the Republican and Victor ran under the Democrat, and we supported both of them. So they both got in. You know, after that, I was doing some free work for Victor, because when he asked me if I could take care of this, why not? It was for the good of Rota.
- Siemer: How is Victor related?
- Hocog: He's my cousin.
- Siemer: First cousin?
- Hocog: No, second. So what happened is that from that work, Benjamin saw that I could be neutral on issues that were very sensitive politically. So he asked if I wanted to work for him. I'm still working. But anyway, when we started developing this relationship and being open on issues, I suggested getting together and forming a Democratic and Republican group so that we hope one of these days we would have only one party on Rota. Then eventually, there's no more hand picks. It would be whoever wants to run, throw your name in there, no public speeches, just let the process go, and then you do your own thing on the grassroots. So that's what I hoped to accomplish. So we were successful in the beginning, but again influence from the outside broke the unity that was established. So from that point on, it's now a Republican or a Democrat, and they will move forward.
- Willens: I think we've pretty much reached the end of our interview, Senator, but we usually ask our interviewees whether they have anything that they'd like to say about the way in which the Commonwealth has functioned over the last 20 years.
- Hocog: Well, you know, we can't turn history back, but I'm pretty much content with our progress and our development with the Commonwealth. There were a lot of pains along the way, but I think as we mature politically, we try to address them in a way that we believe will alleviate problems in the future. I know that you wanted to ask me about economic stuff, and I was prepared to do that, and one of my agendas when I ran for office was to try to have the government develop a physical and economic development master plan. And I'm very happy that Governor Tenorio approved of this plan. It may not be a good plan, but a plan really is necessary. What influenced me to have this is because back when I was working for the Municipal Government under Mayor Atalig, we had a master plan for Rota. In addition to that, I was chairman of the first Rota Land Planning Commission, and I think had it been followed with funding and dedication, we would have had a society or a community in Rota that is orderly developed and that would address most of the needs of the community. And I would like to think that one of these days it could be a model

community to the world. So I pushed for this one, and we have it, it needs to be adopted by the delegation from Rota and supported by the leadership of Rota. And along with this line, I see Rota in the whole economy of the Commonwealth as an area that can play a very important role in tourism. One of the things that I am doing here in the Legislature, trying to put into the fore, is introduce legislation to advance the cause of development in eco-tourism, where we would continue to have our culture, our customs. We would like for people to come in to Rota and appreciate us for our customs, our culture, and for our waving whenever we meet in the street, even though we don't know you. We want you to feel comfortable and welcome. That is an area that I would like to have accomplished before the end of December 1997. These are just some of my objectives as Senator. It has been a great privilege to represent the people of Rota in the Commonwealth Legislature, and I hope that my service as a Senator has advanced the cause of good government in the CNMI.

Willens: Thank you, Senator.